

B. The Nature of the Intermediate State

By the Intermediate state is meant the state or condition of human beings from the moment of their physical death until their resurrection and judgment.

1. The intermediate state of the unrighteous

In connection with the intermediate state of the unrighteous, there are two scriptural words that are relevant. They are *sheol*, **שְׁאוֹל**, and *hades*, ᾍδης.

The Hebrew word **שְׁאוֹל** is used 65 times in the Old Testament. It does not occur outside the OT, except once in the Jewish Elephantine papyri, where it means "grave". The A.V. translates it 31 times as "grave", 31 times as "hell", and three times as "pit".

When examined in context, **שְׁאוֹל** appears to have three basic meanings: (a) the grave, the state of physical death; (b) the place or state or realm to which wicked persons pass at physical death; (c) a great depth, as contrasted with a great height.

Most of the uses appear to fall into the first category of meaning -- the grave, the state of physical death. Three instances of this usage include:

Genesis 42:38 -- "But Jacob said, 'My son shall not go down with you; for his brother is dead, and he alone is left. If harm shall befall him on the journey you are taking, then you will bring my gray hair down to **שְׁאוֹל** in sorrow.' "

Psalms 49:13-15 -- "This is the way of those who are foolish,
And of those after them who approve their words. Selah.
As sheep they are appointed for **שְׁאוֹל** ;
Death shall be their shepherd;
And the upright shall rule over them in the morning;
And their form shall be for **שְׁאוֹל** to consume,
So that they have no habitation.
But God will redeem my soul from the power of **שְׁאוֹל** ;
For He will receive me. Selah."

Hosea 13:14 -- "I will ransom them from the power of **שְׁאוֹל** ;
I will redeem them from death.
O Death, where are your thorns?
O **שְׁאוֹל** where is your sting?
Compassion will be hidden from My sight."

A few uses fall into the second category of meaning -- the place or state or realm to which wicked persons pass at physical death:

Psalms 9:17 -- "The wicked will turn to **שְׁאוֹל** ,
Even all the nations who forget God."

Albert Barnes, commenting on this verse in his *Notes of the Old Testament* says:

"It is clear (a) that this cannot be understood here as referring to the grave in its ordinary sense, for the righteous will be as certainly consigned to the grave, or will as certainly die, as the wicked; (b) that it cannot refer to the invisible world, the abodes of the dead, in the ordinary sense of the term -- for it is as true that the righteous will enter that world as that sinners will. There must be some sense, in which the word is used here, different from that of the grave, or differently merely from death as such. This sense can