

GOD'S JUDGMENT OF BABYLON: A PICTURE OF GOD'S JUDGMENT UPON EVIL GOVERNMENTS

ISAIAH 14:01–23

Introduction

All evil governments and every wicked person who has ever lived will face the coming judgment of God. No matter who a person is, a leader in government or an ordinary citizen, each will stand before God to give an account for what he or she has done. If a government or person has practiced wickedness, that government or individual will be condemned by the LORD. If either one fails to honour and obey the righteous laws of the LORD, punishment will be determined accordingly. God expects nations to promote the honour of the LORD, the only living and true God, and to care for the welfare of its citizens. When dealing with individuals, the LORD expects each person to love and worship Him with all his heart and to love his neighbour as himself. Any nation or person who fails to honour and bear testimony to the love of God will bear the punishment of God's judgment.

In the present Scripture God's judgment falls upon Babylon, for Babylon had denied the only living and true God, the LORD Himself (Jehovah, Yahweh). An inflated, puffed-up pride that exalted itself above all other peoples and nations was the great sin of Babylon. It was the sin from which all the other wicked behaviour of Babylon evolved. Babylon's self-exalting pride aroused its citizens to become world conquerors in an attempt to build a worldwide empire. Other nations were subjected through acts of horrible cruelty and brutality. And the people were held in subjection through the most terrorizing means possible, all for the purpose of erasing national identities. Babylon adopted the policy of deporting the populations of conquered nations to other countries. Through this policy it was hoped that a person would become attached to a foreign culture, thereby losing all identity and attachment to his homeland. Uprisings and revolts were quickly and brutally crushed so as to leave the message that rebellion would not be tolerated.

From the beginning of human history, ever since the Tower of Babel (Gen 11:9), Babylon has represented civilization, the world system that man builds in defiance of God. The wicked, oppressive pride of governments and nations is symbolized in the name Babylon. Babylon is a type of the worst of human government. Babylon represents the power of darkness that seeks to enslave and oppress people. Any world power that rises up in defiance of God is following in the footsteps of Babylon. The great city of Babylon was characterized by its arrogance and hostility toward God and its brutal oppression of other people. Even when the end time comes and Babylon is once again rebuilt, it will stand as a symbol of rebellion and enmity against the LORD. Babylon will be the capital of an apostate or traitorous civilization that treats the LORD with contempt (see notes,

Rev 14:8; 17:1-18:24). Consequently the destruction of Babylon in this passage is a picture of God's final judgment that is coming upon the civilizations of this world. God's final judgment will be against the political, economic and religious centres of a godless society. This is, *God's Judgment of Babylon: A Picture of God's Judgment upon Evil Governments*, 14:1-23.

- I. God's purpose for destroying Babylon: to deliver His people from captivity (14:1-2).
- II. God's punishment of Babylon's king: a picture of Satan's fall, Lk. 10:15, 18; Rev 12:9; Eze 28:11-19 (14:3-23).

I. *Isaiah 14:01–02 Destruction of Babylon and Deliverance of Israel*

God's purpose for destroying Babylon was to deliver His people from captivity. Time and again Isaiah had warned the Jews that they would be led into captivity by Babylon (5:13; 6:11-12; 11:11 [Shinar refers to Babylon]; 39:6). The prophet Jeremiah had also warned the people for over 40 years (Jer 20:4-6; 21:7-10). But the people had refused to listen to the warnings of the prophets. As a result, Babylon overran Judah and laid siege to the capital Jerusalem. In 586 B.C., the Babylonians utterly destroyed Jerusalem and took the surviving Jews into captivity. Babylon scattered the Jews throughout the empire in an attempt to destroy their identity with their homeland. But 70 years later, almost immediately after the Persian conquest of Babylon, the Persian king Cyrus allowed any Jew who wished to do so to return to his homeland (see notes, Eze 1:1-2:70. Also see Jer 25:1-14.) In the present passage, Isaiah is predicting that God's people would be set free from their captivity. Once again, the LORD would have mercy upon them. He would choose them to be His people and to give them rest (a home, security, peace, prosperity) in the promised land (v. 1). Centuries earlier the LORD had chosen Israel to be His *holy people* (Deu 7:6-11). Now, He would return them to the promised land for this very same purpose: to be His *holy people*, a people who would obey His commandments and be a strong testimony to the unbelievers of the world. Note that some foreigners would join the Jews in returning to the promised land, indicating that they had become true believers in the only living and true God.

The nations who would set God's people free refer to all the independent nations within the Persian Empire (v. 2). Perhaps it is also a reference to the end time when all nations will help transport the returning Jewish captives to Israel (2:3; 14:2; 43:6; 60:9). Note that Israel will possess the nations in that day. Nations will voluntarily serve Israel (v. 2). Most likely this is a picture of the Messiah's coming kingdom (2:1-5; 14:2; 25:9-10; 49:23; 60:12).

Thought 1. Israel's deliverance from captivity is a clear picture of our deliverance from sin and death. God liberates us from the bondages of this wicked and depraved earth. However, no person is sinless, and no person can keep from sinning. We were born with a sinful human nature, a depraved nature that lusts after forbidden fruit. Furthermore, not only can we not keep from sinning, but we cannot prevent death. We all die.

No matter how much we may try, we cannot escape sin or death. We are held captive, sentenced to spend our lives in the prison of sin and doomed to die. But there is wonderful news: the LORD will have mercy upon us. He will set us free from the enslavements of this corrupt world. No longer do we have to remain in captivity. The LORD has taken the doors of imprisonment and swung them wide open for us to escape. We can now be set free from sin and death. Victory over both can be ours through the Lord Jesus Christ. He took all our sins upon Himself and paid the penalty that was due us, even the penalty of death. Through Christ we can be set free, become acceptable to God and live eternally with Him. Listen to what God's Holy Word says:

John 8:32 *"Then you will know the truth, and the truth will set you free."*

Rom 6:16-18 *Don't you know that when you offer yourselves to someone to obey him as slaves, you are slaves to the one whom you obey — whether you are slaves to sin, which leads to death, or to obedience, which leads to righteousness? But thanks be to God that, though you used to be slaves to sin, you wholeheartedly obeyed the form of teaching to which you were entrusted. You have been set free from sin and have become slaves to righteousness.*

Rom 6:22-23 *But now that you have been set free from sin and have become slaves to God, the benefit you reap leads to holiness, and the result is eternal life. For the wages of sin is death, but the gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord.*

Rom 8:1-2 *Therefore, there is now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus, because through Christ Jesus the law of the Spirit of life set me free from the law of sin and death.*

1 Cor 15:3-4 *For what I received I passed on to you as of first importance: that Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures, that he was buried, that he was raised on the third day according to the Scriptures.*

Gal 1:4 *Who gave himself for our sins to rescue us from the present evil age, according to the will of our God and Father.*

1 Pet 2:24 *"He himself bore our sins" in his body on the cross, so that we might die to sins and live for righteousness; "by his wounds you have been healed."*

1 John 2:2 *He is the atoning sacrifice for our sins, and not only for ours but also for the sins of the whole world.*

Rev 1:5 *To him who loves us and has freed us from our sins by his blood.*

II. Isaiah 14:03–23 Judgment and Punishment of the King of Babylon

God would judge and punish the king of Babylon. Throughout this passage the king of Babylon seems to be separated from the rest of mankind, destined for a very distinct judgment, one that seems far worse than that suffered by anyone else. His judgment is severe because his sins appear to have arisen from the depths of hell itself. Babylon's

king was a powerful ruler who was so gripped by pride that he exalted himself above the very *stars* of God (v. 13). He sought to be accepted as an equal to the most high God Himself. In addition to his terrible sins of pride and arrogance, he was the most cruel, wicked tyrant imaginable. Due to his appalling evil, he was doomed to suffer the terrifying judgment of God.

The excellent Lutheran commentator H.C. Leupold points out that this passage actually has three possible interpretations: first, it could refer to a specific king of Babylon, an actual historical figure. Or, second, it could be describing the imperial power of Babylon. Or, third, the king could be a symbol of the hostile forces who rebel against God and persecute His people. Mr. Leupold says that he leans to the last of these interpretations, which is also the position taken in the excellent commentary *Jamieson, Fausset, and Brown*. Warren W. Wiersbe says this:

The picture in Isaiah 14:1-23 is that of a mighty monarch whose pride brought him to destruction. This is what happened to Belshazzar when Darius the Mede captured Babylon in 539 B.C. (Dan 5). Isaiah described the king's arrival in Sheol, the world of the dead, where the king's wealth, glory and power vanished. The dead kings already in Sheol stood in tribute to him (Isa 14:9), but it was all a mockery. Death is the great leveller; there are no kings in the world of the dead. "Lucifer" (v. 12) is Latin for "morning star" and suggests that this king's glory did not last very long. The morning star shines but is soon swallowed up by the light of the sun.

The prophet saw in this event something far deeper than the defeat of an empire. In the fall of the king of Babylon, he saw the defeat of Satan, the "prince of this world," who seeks to energize and motivate the leaders of nations (Jn. 12:31; Eph 2:1-3). Daniel 10:20 indicates that Satan has assigned "princes" (fallen angels) to the various nations so that he can influence leaders to act contrary to the will of God.

*This highest of God's angels tried to usurp the throne of God and capture for himself the worship that belongs only to God (Mat 4:8-10). The name "Lucifer" ('morning star') indicates that Satan tries to imitate Jesus Christ who is the "the bright and morning star" (Rev 22:16). "I will be like the Most High" reveals his basic strategy, for he is an imitator (Isa 14:14; 2 Cor 11:13-15). Like the king of Babylon, Satan will one day be humiliated and defeated. He will be cast out of heaven (Rev. 12) and finally cast into hell (20:10). Whether God is dealing with kings or angels, Proverbs 16:18 is still true: "Pride goes before destruction, and a haughty spirit before a fall" (NKJV). (Warren W. Wiersbe. *Be Comforted*, pp. 45-46).*

Since the king of Babylon seems to be the ultimate personification or representation of pride, many commentators feel that he is a clear type of Satan. The first to hold this view were Tertullian (about 160-230 A.D.) and Gregory the Great (about 540-604 B.C.). (John

F. Walvoord and Roy B. Zuck, Editors. *The Bible Knowledge Commentary*, p. 1061). Yet no matter what position a person may hold, this passage would certainly apply to anyone who exalts himself in prideful rebellion against God and lives such a cruel, wicked life. This sort of person will be doomed to hell, perhaps not to the lowest depth of hell as the king of Babylon was; but nevertheless, he will be doomed to hell. In addition to this passage, there are several others that point to the sin and fall of Satan:

Luke 10:18 *"I saw Satan fall like lightning from heaven."*

1 John 3:8 *He who does what is sinful is of the devil, because the devil has been sinning from the beginning. The reason the Son of God appeared was to destroy the devil's work.*

Rev 12:7-9 *Then war broke out in heaven. Michael and his angels fought against the dragon, and the dragon and his angels fought back. But he was not strong enough, and they lost their place in heaven. The great dragon was hurled down — that ancient serpent called the devil, or Satan, who leads the whole world astray. He was hurled to the earth, and his angels with him.*

Isa 14:12-15 *How you have fallen from heaven, O morning star, son of the dawn! You have been cast down to the earth, you who once laid low the nations! You said in your heart, "I will ascend to heaven; I will raise my throne above the stars of God; I will sit enthroned on the mount of assembly, on the utmost heights of the sacred mountain. I will ascend above the tops of the clouds; I will make myself like the Most High." But you are brought down to the grave, to the depths of the pit.*

Ezek 28:11-19 *The word of the Lord came to me: "Son of man, take up a lament concerning the king of Tyre and say to him: 'This is what the Sovereign Lord says: "You were the model of perfection, full of wisdom and perfect in beauty. You were in Eden, the garden of God; every precious stone adorned you: ruby, topaz and emerald, chrysolite, onyx and jasper, sapphire, turquoise and beryl. Your settings and mountings were made of gold; on the day you were created they were prepared. You were anointed as a guardian cherub, for so I ordained you. You were on the holy mount of God; you walked among the fiery stones. You were blameless in your ways from the day you were created till wickedness was found in you. Through your widespread trade you were filled with violence, and you sinned. So I drove you in disgrace from the mount of God, and I expelled you, O guardian cherub, from among the fiery stones. Your heart became proud on account of your beauty, and you corrupted your wisdom because of your splendour. So I threw you to the earth; I made a spectacle of you before kings. By your many sins and dishonest trade you have desecrated your sanctuaries. So I made a fire come out from you, and it consumed you, and I reduced you to ashes on the ground in the sight of all who were watching. All the nations who knew you are appalled at you; you have come to a horrible end and will be no more.'"*

In looking at these Scriptures together, there seems to be some indication that Satan fell from his exalted position due to sin, especially the sin of prideful rebellion. He fell just as mankind has fallen. And, since mankind is doomed to hell because of its sin, naturally Satan would have been doomed to hell because of his sin. Again, what is being said here could be said about many people who have lived down through history. But the king of Babylon was evidently the very embodiment of pride and wickedness. Thus, if he was the embodiment of sin, there is only one who would be ranked a greater sinner than he: Satan himself. It seems only natural to see a picture of Satan's sin and fall in these verses. Note this fact while reading the Scripture and outline:

1. After the fall of Babylon, the people of God would be set free. Once liberated, they would taunt the king of Babylon due to the depths to which he had fallen. Remember all the suffering and turmoil and cruel bondage to which the king had subjected them. But now Babylon's king was to be cast from his exalted throne, utterly defeated. And through his defeat God's people would be set free. If there had ever been a day when their cruel enemy could be taunted, it was the day of their freedom and his doom.
2. It was God Himself — His awesome power — who ended the oppressor's brutality and rule (vv. 4-11). Filled with malice and a vicious rage, the king had oppressed the nations of the world. But now his cruelty had come to a stunning halt.
 - a. God snapped the rod and rule of this wicked king (vv. 5-6). The LORD executed judgment against him...
 - because of his aggressive conquest of nations
 - because of his governing people in brutality, striking them down with endless blowsInstead of ruling the nations in compassion and justice, the king had placed the people under his thumb, ruling them with an iron fist. But now the LORD had broken his power and cast the king off of his exalted throne. This wicked leader would rule no more.
 - b. By defeating the wicked king, the LORD gave rest and peace to the whole world (vv. 7-8). The people broke into singing. Even the trees (all of nature) rejoiced over the tyrant's fall (see Rom 8:19-23). Some expositors hold that the trees represent the oppressed people who broke out in singing.
 - c. God doomed this wicked king to hell (Sheol) (vv. 9-11; see *Grave, Sheol*, Isa 14:9). Keep in mind that Sheol can mean either the grave or the place of torment. Obviously the latter is the meaning here. As soon as the king of Babylon died on earth, he is pictured entering hell. His arrival aroused the spirits of the departed, apparently causing a great deal of commotion. Note that everyone still had their own personal, individual identity and that they recognized one another. No sooner had the king of Babylon arrived in hell than its inhabitants began to taunt him and scoff at his fall and doom (v. 10). Although the king had been the most powerful leader on earth, in the end he was as weak and as doomed as they were. He was stripped of all power and position even as they were. His glory and wealth, his power and the music he loved

— all had been lost by this condemned ruler. Now maggots and worms were covering his body as it lay decaying on earth. And his wicked soul was doomed to spend eternity in hell. (See *Grave, Sheol*, Isa 14:9.)

3. Lucifer's fall from heaven now takes place (vv. 12-23). In the Hebrew, *Lucifer* literally means *day star* or *morning star*. Ezekiel says that Lucifer was the highest being ever created by God (Eze 28:12-15).
 - a. This morning star was cast from his exalted position from the heights of heaven itself (v. 12). As will be seen in just a moment, Lucifer sought to climb to the height of heaven. Therefore, from that height he was cast down to the earth. Note who he is: he is the one who has weakened, subjected and dominated the nations. Thus he was doomed to suffer the greatest conceivable overthrow: that of falling from the heights of heaven to the depths of hell. (H.C. Leupold. *Exposition of Isaiah*, Vol. 1, p. 259).
 - b. What was the sin that caused such a terrible fall, especially for one who had held such a prominent position and had been exalted so highly? His great sin was pride. In his innermost thoughts, Lucifer had set his heart upon exalting himself as high as the heavens. He was consumed with selfish ambition...
 - to exalt his throne, his position above all the stars of God (v. 13; see Gen 11:3-4)
 - to be the very one worshipped on the sacred mountain
 - to exalt himself above the clouds, to be like the Most High God Himself (v. 14)Note the five "I wills" of Lucifer in these verses. Within his innermost thoughts, he was exalting himself above God. Just as people down through history have exalted themselves, ignoring and even denying the LORD, so this morning star was ignoring the LORD and exalting himself. His personal will and ambition were set against God.
 - c. Lucifer's fate was sealed: he was brought down to the very pit of hell, that is, to its lowest depths (v. 15). His prideful defiance of the LORD challenged the LORD to act. Hence the LORD did to Lucifer just as He will do to all who are prideful and defiant.
 - d. Lucifer's end will be most shameful and humiliating (vv. 16-17). People will gaze at him and mock him, reflecting upon his astronomical fall. They will be wondering...
 - is this the one who had caused nations and kingdoms to tremble?
 - is this the one who had so long devastated the world and its cities and enslaved its people?Because he will have fallen so low from such a high position, all will wonder how this could have happened. How could this be the person who had possessed such immense power and been able to move across the earth so ruthlessly without being stopped?
 - e. This morning star will have a dishonourable burial, for his body will not lie in state like other kings (vv. 18-20). Instead, his body will be cast into a mass grave with slain soldiers, be discarded like a rejected branch or like the bloody clothing of dead soldiers. Once he has departed the earth, people will block out all memory of him...

- because of his destructive and brutal nature
 - because he swept across the earth dominating and oppressing them
- f. Even the king's offspring will never be mentioned again (v. 20). None of his sons will succeed him upon the throne. Rather, they will all be doomed because of the sins of their forefathers and the influence of these sins upon their lives (v. 21). They will never again be allowed to rise up and conquer land or to rebuild and fill the cities of the world.
- g. The king's empire will be utterly destroyed by God Himself (vv. 22-23). Babylon will be overthrown and punished for its terrible evil. Even its name will be cut off, as will any who survive, including their children and descendants (v. 22). Babylon will become a desolate place, a place inhabited only by animals. It will be a swamp land, swept over with the broom of destruction (v. 23).

Thought 1. The Lord Jesus Christ has destroyed the power of the devil. Satan's power has been broken. No longer are we doomed to be held in the grip of his enslavements. All bondages can now be broken through the power of Christ, bondages such as...

- greed and overindulgence
- smoking, drinking and abusing drugs
- profanity and taking the Lord's name in vain
- illicit sex and pornography
- sensual pleasures and fleshly passions
- shoplifting and other forms of stealing
- laziness and indifference

No matter what bondage may hold us in its grip, this bondage can be broken through the power of the Saviour. Christ has broken the power of sin, the power that Satan had over this earth and its people. Listen to what God's Word says:

Jn. 12:30-31 *Jesus said, "This voice was for your benefit, not mine. Now is the time for judgment on this world; now the prince of this world will be driven out."*

John 14:30 *"I will not speak with you much longer, for the prince of this world is coming. He has no hold on me."*

John 16:33 *"I have told you these things, so that in me you may have peace. In this world you will have trouble. But take heart! I have overcome the world."*

Rom 8:37 *No, in all these things we are more than conquerors through him who loved us.*

2 Cor 2:14 *But thanks be to God, who always leads us in triumphal procession in Christ and through us spreads everywhere the fragrance of the knowledge of him.*

2 Cor 10:3-5 *For though we live in the world, we do not wage war as the world does. The weapons we fight with are not the weapons of the world. On the contrary, they have divine power to demolish strongholds. We demolish arguments and every*

pretension that sets itself up against the knowledge of God, and we take captive every thought to make it obedient to Christ.

2 Cor 12:9 *But he said to me, "My grace is sufficient for you, for my power is made perfect in weakness." Therefore I will boast all the more gladly about my weaknesses, so that Christ's power may rest on me.*

Eph 3:16 *I pray that out of his glorious riches he may strengthen you with power through his Spirit in your inner being.*

Eph 3:20 *Now to him who is able to do immeasurably more than all we ask or imagine, according to his power that is at work within us.*

Heb 2:14-15 *Since the children have flesh and blood, he too shared in their humanity so that by his death he might destroy him who holds the power of death — that is, the devil — and free those who all their lives were held in slavery by their fear of death.*

1 Pet 5:8-10 *Be self-controlled and alert. Your enemy the devil prowls around like a roaring lion looking for someone to devour. Resist him, standing firm in the faith, because you know that your brothers throughout the world are undergoing the same kind of sufferings. And the God of all grace, who called you to his eternal glory in Christ, after you have suffered a little while, will himself restore you and make you strong, firm and steadfast.*

1 John 3:8 *He who does what is sinful is of the devil, because the devil has been sinning from the beginning. The reason the Son of God appeared was to destroy the devil's work.*

1 John 5:4-5 *For everyone born of God overcomes the world. This is the victory that has overcome the world, even our faith. Who is it that overcomes the world? Only he who believes that Jesus is the Son of God. ■*

ISAIAH 14:09 GRAVE (SHEOL)

*The realm of the dead below is all astir to meet you at your coming; it rouses the spirits of the departed to greet you — all those who were leaders in the world; it makes them rise from their thrones — all those who were kings over the nations. **Isaiah 14: 09***

The place where the dead go. The Hebrew word sheol is the same as the Greek word *Hades* (see *Paradise, Hell*, Lk. 16:23). Several facts should be noted about *sheol*, the place of the dead.

1. *Sheol* or *hell* does not always refer to the place of the damned, where the wicked of the earth suffer in an eternal fire. This is an inaccurate understanding of *sheol*.
 - a. *Sheol* means grave or pit. This fact is clearly shown by many Scriptures.

Gen 37:35 *All his sons and daughters came to comfort him, but he refused to be comforted. "No," he said, "I will continue to mourn until I join my son in the grave." So his father wept for him.*

1 Kng 2:6, 9 *"Deal with him according to your wisdom, but do not let his gray head go down to the grave in peace....But now, do not consider him innocent. You are a man of wisdom; you will know what to do to him. Bring his gray head down to the grave in blood."*

Psa 49:14 *Like sheep they are destined for the grave, and death will feed on them. The upright will rule over them in the morning; their forms will decay in the grave, far from their princely mansions.*

Prov 1:12 *"Let's swallow them alive, like the grave, and whole, like those who go down to the pit."*

Isa 38:10, 18 *I said, "In the prime of my life must I go through the gates of death and be robbed of the rest of my years?"....For the grave cannot praise you, death cannot sing your praise; those who go down to the pit cannot hope for your faithfulness. (Also see Gen 42:38; 44:29; Job 7:9; 14:13; 17:13; 21:13; 24:19; Psa 6:5; 30:3; 31:17; 49:14, 15; 88:3; 89:48; 141:7; Prov 30:16; Ecc 9:10; Song of S. 8:6).*

- b. The godly Jacob said he was going down into *sheol*, the grave. He was certainly not expecting to go down into hell.

Gen 37:35 *All his sons and daughters came to comfort him, but he refused to be comforted. "No," he said, "I will continue to mourn until I join my son in the grave." So his father wept for him.*

- c. The Levite Heman who wrote Psalm 88 was not expecting to enter hell at death, but the grave. So was the Levite Ethan who wrote Psalm 89.

Psa 88:3 *I am overwhelmed with troubles and my life draws near to death.*

Psa 89:47-48 *Remember how fleeting is my life. For what futility you have created all humanity! Who can live and not see death, or who can escape the power of the grave?*

2. *Sheol* sometimes has the idea of *hell*, the place where the sinful are sent and where they suffer punishment, pain and agony. The following Scriptures will serve as examples:

- a. Korah and his rebels were sent into the pit (*sheol*) alive. Of course, this does not mean they were sent into the grave alive. Rather, they were sent into *hell (sheol)* — the place where they would be punished for their wickedness.

Num 16:31-35 *As soon as he [Moses] finished saying all this, the ground under them split apart and the earth opened its mouth and swallowed them and their households, and all those associated with Korah, together with their possessions.*

They went down alive into the realm of the dead, with everything they owned; the earth closed over them, and they perished and were gone from the community. At their cries, all the Israelites around them fled, shouting, "The earth is going to swallow us too!" And fire came out from the LORD and consumed the 250 men who were offering the incense.

- b. In pronouncing judgment on the Israelites, the LORD said that the *fire* of His anger...“shall burn unto the lowest hell (sheol).” The lowest part of *sheol* must be *hell*, a place where God's anger burns in judgment against those who have lived wicked lives.

Deu 32:22 *For a fire will be kindled by my wrath, one that burns down to the realm of the dead below. It will devour the earth and its harvests and set afire the foundations of the mountains.*

- c. Scripture clearly shows that *sheol* includes *hell*, a place of punishment, pain and anguish.

Num 16:30, 33 *But if the LORD brings about something totally new, and the earth opens its mouth and swallows them, with everything that belongs to them, and they go down alive into the realm of the dead, then you will know that these men have treated the LORD with contempt. They went down alive into the realm of the dead, with everything they owned; the earth closed over them, and they perished and were gone from the community.*

Deu 32:22 *For a fire will be kindled by my wrath, one that burns down to the realm of the dead below. It will devour the earth and its harvests and set afire the foundations of the mountains.*

1 Kng 2:6, 9 *“Deal with him according to your wisdom, but do not let his gray head go down to the grave in peace....But now, do not consider him innocent. You are a man of wisdom; you will know what to do to him. Bring his gray head down to the grave in blood.”*

Job 10:21 *Before I go to the place of no return, to the land of gloom and utter darkness.*

Job 21:13 *They spend their years in prosperity and go down to the grave in peace.*

Psa 9:17-18 *The wicked go down to the realm of the dead, all the nations that forget God. But God will never forget the needy; the hope of the afflicted will never perish.*

Psa 49:14-15 *Like sheep they are destined for the grave, and death will feed on them. The upright will rule over them in the morning; their forms will decay in the grave, far from their princely mansions. But God will redeem my life from the grave; he will surely take me to himself.*

Prov 5:5 *Her feet go down to death; her steps lead straight to the grave.*

Prov 9:18 *But little do they know that the dead are there, that her guests are deep in the realm of the dead.*

Prov 23:14 *Punish them with the rod and save them from death.*

Isa 5:14 *Therefore the grave enlarges its appetite and opens its mouth without limit; into it will descend their nobles and masses with all their brawlers and revellers.*

3. The Hebrew word *sheol* is the same as the Greek word *Hades*. The picture of *hades* or *sheol* revealed by Jesus Christ is that of the other world, which is the unseen world, the spiritual world, the spiritual dimension of being. Jesus says it is a place divided into two huge areas (sections or compartments). The two areas are separated by a great gulf that is impassible (Lk. 16:26). One area is hell, the place of sorrow and torment (Lk. 16:23-24, 28). The other area is the place of Paradise, the place of glory where believers go. In the Old Testament when a person died, he went to *Hades*, the other world. Jesus said both places actually exist. (See notes, Lk. 16:19-31; see *Hell, Torment*, Lk. 16:24; Mt. 27:52-53; Eph 4:8-10; *Jesus Christ, Triumph over Hell*, 1 Pet 3:19-20.)

People have different opinions about hell. But one fact needs to be remembered: what we think cannot annul or do away with the truth. If we deny hell, our denial will not make hell cease to exist. Denial does not void truth, no matter how much we may ignore or deny a fact. The world is round and will always be round, no matter how many people of former generations said it was flat. So it is with hell. Since hell exists, it will always exist, no matter how many people deny it. Our denial of hell does not keep it from being real.

The natural man views *hell* in one of three ways:

- => Some people believe the Christian teaching about hell, that hell is a place of life and punishment. But they do not believe strongly enough to give their hearts and lives to Jesus Christ, nor do they think that God will condemn them to hell, not in the final analysis. They think they will be accepted by God when all things are said and done.
- => Some people believe there is a place where people will be in a semi-conscious state or sleep when they die. They think they will have some sense of euphoria or sorrow or neither.
- => Other people believe in nothing beyond the grave. They think life ceases at death, that the grave is the end.

The spiritual man believes in life after death. He believes in eternal life, that is, that life continues on just as Christ taught and the Bible says. Thus, the spiritual man believes that *sheol* or *hell* is real just as the Scripture teaches (see note, Lk. 16:23). □