

**Meanwhile, Back in the Throne Room
National Crisis Outside, Personal Crisis Inside
Isaiah 38:1 – 22, 2 Kings 20:1 – 21, 2 Chronicles 32:24 – 26**

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As we studied Isaiah 36 and 37, there was something we learned about King Hezekiah, something happened, and he changed between the two events. Between his first encounter with the Rabshakeh and his second, he became a totally different person.

What is it that changed Hezekiah from the guy who tried to buy off Sennacherib back in Isaiah 36 to the Hezekiah of Isaiah 37 who was confident in the Lord and jealous for the Lord's reputation?

We get that event in chapter 38

What we are going to learn is that on top of the national crisis that is going on with a very real existential threat to Judah taking place with the Assyrian Empire, another crisis will take place as well.

This crisis will be of a very personal nature to the King. It will be a very real encounter with his own frailty as a fallen man.

King Hezekiah is a relatively young king, still in his 30's as the encounter with Assyria is playing out.

He has made some excellent decisions regarding the Temple and the re-establishment of the worship of YAHWEH and the elimination of idols throughout Judah, but he lived a compartmentalized life.

This is a temptation we have even today as the enemy is busy having the culture make our faith unimportant and unwanted in the marketplace of ideas.

Christians are a minority in an increasingly hostile culture. We are exiles, not geographically, but morally and spiritually. (Lutzer 2018, 31)

1 Peter 2:11–12

“Dear friends, I warn you as “temporary residents and foreigners” to keep away from worldly desires that wage war against your very souls. Be careful to live properly among your unbelieving neighbors. Then

even if they accuse you of doing wrong, they will see your honorable behavior, and they will give honor to God when he judges the world.” (NLT)

2 Chronicles 31:20–21

“Thus Hezekiah did throughout all Judah, and he did what was good and right and faithful before the LORD his God. And every work that he undertook in the service of the house of God and in accordance with the law and the commandments, seeking his God, he did with all his heart, and prospered.” (ESV)

YAHWEH was God at home and at the Temple. Things are good, he is prospering, and Temple worship is now taking place, but there is something we just do not see in the text. The King did not ask YAHWEH for guidance about how to conduct his business as the head of state. In other words, God was not the God of his work too.

The King has already confronted the first national crisis and he tried to buy it off with tons of silver and gold.

The text does not tell us he prayed about it at all.

Now comes the next crisis and he begins to doubt his faith.

Isaiah 37:1–7

“And when King Hezekiah heard it, he tore his clothes, covered himself with sackcloth and entered the house of the LORD. Then he sent Eliakim who was over the household with Shebna the scribe and the elders of the priests, covered with sackcloth, to Isaiah the prophet, the son of Amoz. They said to him, “Thus says Hezekiah, ‘This day is a day of distress, rebuke and rejection; for children have come to birth, and there is no strength to deliver. Perhaps **the LORD your God** will hear the words of Rabshakeh, whom his master the king of Assyria has sent to reproach the living God, and will rebuke the words which **the LORD your God** has heard. Therefore, offer a prayer for the remnant that is left.’ ” So the servants of King Hezekiah came to Isaiah. Isaiah said to them, “Thus you shall say to your master, ‘Thus says the LORD, “Do not be afraid because of the words that you have heard, with which the servants of the king of Assyria have blasphemed Me. Behold, I will put a spirit in him so that he will hear a rumor and return to his own land. And I will make him fall by the sword in his own land.” ’ ” (NASB95)

Hezekiah has done things for the Lord but has neglected to have a relationship with the Lord. He is doing all the right things outwardly, but inside, there appears to be a serious disconnect.

He is having his staff discuss with Isaiah to have Isaiah talk to the “Lord his God.” Isaiah has the relationship, Hezekiah does not. He did the right thing by ripping his clothes and going to the Temple in sackcloth. He did all the right things getting the nation pointed back to YAHWEH. But was it all for show. That also appears to be the problem the nation still has. Is there a relationship like the one David had?

Remember, Isaiah spoke about this earlier regarding the people in Isaiah 22. King Hezekiah engaged in several engineering projects to protect Jerusalem from Assyria, things which he did not discuss with Isaiah or with the Lord. They were the wise thing to do, but he was trying to save Jerusalem in his power and strength, not the Lords.

We learned that the attitude of the people in Jerusalem, even though efforts had been undertaken to bring about revival, had not caused a deep heart felt revival among all the people because they reflect the wrong attitude once Assyria arrived on the scene.

Isaiah 22:12–13

“Therefore in that day the Lord GOD of hosts called you to weeping, to wailing, To shaving the head and to wearing sackcloth. Instead, there is gaiety and gladness, Killing of cattle and slaughtering of sheep, Eating of meat and drinking of wine: “Let us eat and drink, for tomorrow we may die.”” (NASB95)

That is a problem of the culture.

Why did the people continue to gravitate away from YAHWEH? The same reason we do so today, the flesh.

Study history and you will discover that idolatry justified and encouraged sexual permissiveness of every sort. Shrines were built on every high hill, and God said, "Under every green tree you bowed down like a whore" (Jer. 2:20). Prostitution, homosexuality, and every form of perversion was practiced, and the people loved it. Orgies were common, and the false gods stood by in silent approval. (Lutzer 2018, 34)

All you must do is scan the culture and see what behavior is applauded and rewarded.

When put into a corner by Assyria, Hezekiah made the decision. He did so without seeking the Lord. He tried and pay off the King of Assyria by sending several tons of gold and silver. Sennacherib heartily accepted and then reneged on the deal wanting more. Now, thanks to the Rabshakeh showing up on his doorstep with a few thousand Assyrian troops, King Hezekiah is motivated to seek the Lord. A very public crisis has helped to get his attention and move him towards YAHWEH.

But when it rains, it pours. While this is going on, another crisis arises, this one of a more personal nature.

Isaiah 38:1

"In those days Hezekiah became mortally ill. And Isaiah the prophet the son of Amoz came to him and said to him, "Thus says the LORD, 'Set your house in order, for you shall die and not live.' "" (NASB95)

The King is ill, and Isaiah comes to see him. At this point, Isaiah still may be dealing with some personal feelings he has about the four different times he warned the King about making a deal with Egypt and being ignored. His most recent memory is being asked about those pesky Assyrians outside the wall and their blasphemy by members of Hezekiah's staff, not Hezekiah personally. The Lord has Isaiah deliver a message for Him to the King.

This is a message for all of us, not just the King because unless Jesus takes us out of here, we will all face this. We all need to have our houses in order because we do not know when our time to go home is here. Hezekiah though knows it is very soon, Isaiah comes in, delivers the message and then leaves.

What a great bedside manner. What encouragement.

Remind me not to have a prophet come and see me when I am ill.

Hezekiah goes from being ill, to being totally undone. He has just been told by a prophet battling 1000 he will die from the illness.

What happens when we find ourselves in the middle of multiple situations, some of our own doing, that now the final straw lets us know that only God can get us out of this.

Do we react in anger? Do we become negotiators with God? Or do we recognize who he is and simply surrender to Him and seek Him restoring a broken relationship. By the way, we are the ones who broke the relationship, not God.

Romans 8:38–39

"For I am sure that neither death nor life, nor angels nor rulers, nor things present nor things to come, nor powers, nor height nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord." (ESV)

The Lord is always there, we, like King Hezekiah, are the ones who tend to try and do things our own way. He is faithful in trying to get our attention and return back to Him, and for King Hezekiah it took a series of escalating events culminating with the sudden realization that only God can solve them. John made the same observation about trying to live without Jesus when we say we belong to Him.

1 John 1:6–9

“So we are lying if we say we have fellowship with God but go on living in spiritual darkness; we are not practicing the truth. But if we are living in the light, as God is in the light, then we have fellowship with each other, and the blood of Jesus, his Son, cleanses us from all sin. If we claim we have no sin, we are only fooling ourselves and not living in the truth. But if we confess our sins to him, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all wickedness.” (NLT)

For us, the moment we do so, the relationship block is removed. This is where King Hezekiah has now arrived.

Isaiah’s appearance is also an indication that God has not forsaken the king. A man who is about to die must be ready in every respect. Hezekiah was in a right relation with God. But a man about to die must also have his affairs in order. (Young 1969, 508)

This is not good news for the King. As Isaiah turns and leaves, it is now up to Hezekiah. Will he opt for relationship and appeal for mercy from the God of the universe? Or will he sulk and reject?

Isaiah 38:2–3

“Then Hezekiah turned his face to the wall and prayed to the LORD, and said, “Remember now, O LORD, I beseech You, how I have walked before You in truth and with a whole heart, and have done what is good in Your sight.” And Hezekiah wept bitterly.” (NASB95)

The King wants no one to see his face. He is the King after all and in the room is his physician, aides, family and possibly a guard or two as well. Isaiah has already turned and left the room. As best as he possibly can, the King wants this time to be between him and the Lord. He is completely undone. He is at the end of his rope. He turns to the wall, bursts into tears and prays.

What does he not pray about?

He does not rant and rave at God. He does not accuse God of being unfair. He does not demand anything of the Lord as payment for services rendered.

What does he pray about?

He asks for the Lord to remember how he has been faithful to Him in all of things that he did. He asks the Lord to examine his heart and his motivations. He is very aware of his failings and divided life.

God’s mercy is not contingent upon anything we do, it is based on His grace and His grace alone. We have done nothing to deserve it.

Did Hezekiah live a perfect life? Far from it. He knows that as a result of already having been involved in round one with the Rabshakeh after he tried to buy off Assyria. The repentance reflected in his actions and his wearing of sackcloth all point to his heart and what the true motivation for him was. In his prayer, he simply asks the Lord to look at the motivation for what he did. He was faithful.

He is not asking for God to spare him because of what he has done. He was asking God to deliver him because of his love for YAHWEH and his desire to do even more for him. All those plans and ideas are now subject to dying along with him.

Isaiah 38:4–6

“Then the word of the LORD came to Isaiah, saying, “Go and say to Hezekiah, ‘Thus says the LORD, the God of your father David, “I have heard your prayer, I have seen your tears; behold, I will add fifteen years to your life. I will deliver you and this city from the hand of the king of Assyria; and I will defend this city.” ’” (NASB95)

How long did it take for God to react to the prayer of King Hezekiah? We get that from 2 Kings 20.

2 Kings 20:4–6

“And before Isaiah had gone out of the middle court, the word of the LORD came to him: “Turn back, and say to Hezekiah the leader of my people, Thus says the LORD, the God of David your father: I have heard your prayer; I have seen your tears. Behold, I will heal you. On the third day you shall go up to the house of the LORD, and I will add fifteen years to your life. I will deliver you and this city out of the hand of the king of Assyria, and I will defend this city for my own sake and for my servant David’s sake.”” (ESV)

God’s answer was provided to Isaiah at most likely the exact moment the King ceased talking to the Lord and began to cry over all he wanted to do for the Lord that he will not be doing. In other words, immediate.

Does God delay His answer to our prayers? No, even though at times we think He has. He always answers, yes, no, or not now.

God doesn’t answer some prayers in three minutes and others in three weeks. The Lord answers everything immediately! The supply is already there. It’s already been done. The provision was made before you ever had the need. It’s not God moving differently for different people. Rather, it’s people who receive differently. God has already done His part, but there are things that hinder what He’s done in the spiritual realm from coming into the physical world. (Wommack 2006, 87-88)

Daniel provides a great example of this for us.

Daniel 9:20–23

“While I was still speaking and praying, confessing my sin and the sin of my people Israel and presenting my request before the LORD my God concerning his holy mountain—yes, while I was still praying, the man Gabriel, whom I had seen previously in a vision, was approaching me in my state of extreme weariness, around the time of the evening offering. He spoke with me, instructing me as follows: “Daniel, I have now come to impart understanding to you. At the beginning of your requests a message went out, and I have come to convey it to you, for you are of great value in God’s sight. Therefore consider the message and understand the vision:” (NET)

Daniel 10:12–14

“Then he said to me, “Don’t be afraid, Daniel, for from the very first day you applied your mind to understand and to humble yourself before your God, your words were heard. I have come in response to your words. However, **the prince of the kingdom of Persia was opposing me for twenty-one days.** But Michael, one of the leading princes, came to help me, because I was left there with the kings of Persia. Now I have come to help you understand what will happen to your people in the latter days, for the vision pertains to future days.”” (NET)

Luke 18:1–8

“Then Jesus told them a parable to show them they should always pray and not lose heart. He said, “In a certain city there was a judge who neither feared God nor respected people. There was also a widow in that city who kept coming to him and saying, ‘Give me justice against my adversary.’ For a while he refused, but later on he said to himself, ‘Though I neither fear God nor have regard for people, yet because this widow keeps on bothering me, I will give her justice, or in the end she will wear me out by her unending pleas.’ ” And the Lord said, “Listen to what the unrighteous judge says! Won’t God give justice to his chosen ones, who cry out to him day and night? Will he delay long to help them? I tell you,

he will give them justice speedily. Nevertheless, when the Son of Man comes, will he find faith on earth?" (NET)

There is an enemy who wants to prevent the answer from the Lord coming to us because he wants us to lose heart and give up. Don't.

Check your heart, exercise 1 John 1:9, make sure that the block is not on your side and trust the answer is coming but may be delayed because of spiritual warfare going on.

Matthew 7:7–11

"Ask and it will be given to you; seek and you will find; knock and the door will be opened for you. For everyone who asks receives, and the one who seeks finds, and to the one who knocks, the door will be opened. Is there anyone among you who, if his son asks for bread, will give him a stone? Or if he asks for a fish, will give him a snake? If you then, although you are evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will your Father in heaven give good gifts to those who ask him!" (NET)

The answer from YAHWEH to King Hezekiah's prayer was delivered in real time within a minute or so of his finishing the prayer. In comes Isaiah with the response. The answer.

God, through Isaiah and in line with His covenant with David, told Hezekiah He had heard his prayer and seen his tears, and gave him the promise of "fifteen [more] years" of life. God's grace was truly beyond Hezekiah's expectation. (Horton 2000, 290)

Not only that, but YAHWEH also promised to "deliver you and this city from the hand of the king of Assyria; and I will defend this city." (Isaiah 38:6b, NASB95). Hezekiah's recovery of health would also validate the pending prophecy of the destruction of Assyria in the King's eyes.

Now we know the part of the story resulting in the change in Hezekiah from the first time Assyria shows up on his doorstep to the second. He has received a guarantee, for the fifth time now, but this time he hears it, that YAHWEH Himself will defend Jerusalem.

Yes, prayer is important. What if Hezekiah had not prayed?

In 2 Kings 20:5 Hezekiah is additionally told he will be going to the Temple in just three days. Hezekiah has received way beyond what he asked for or expected. He will be healed, he will live for another 15 years, and YAHWEH will personally deal with Assyria.

Will the King remember this and not make any more mistakes, hardly. But the grace of God has just been poured out on Hezekiah and Judah unexpectedly.

2 Kings 20:7

"And Isaiah said, "Bring a cake of figs. And let them take and lay it on the boil, that he may recover."" (ESV)

Isaiah takes over for the physician and provides instructions from the Lord how to deal with issue so the King will recover.

Hezekiah though, in the account in 2 Kings 20, asks for a sign showing that he will indeed be healed and go up to the Temple in three days. This contrasts with his dad Ahaz who was told to ask for a sign and refused to do so in Isaiah 7 as part of his rejection of YAHWEH. Hezekiah has no intent of rejecting anything YAHWEH has for him.

2 Kings 20:8–11

"And Hezekiah said to Isaiah, "What shall be the sign that the LORD will heal me, and that I shall go up to the house of the LORD on the third day?" And Isaiah said, "This shall be the sign to you from the LORD,

that the LORD will do the thing that he has promised: shall the shadow go forward ten steps, or go back ten steps?" And Hezekiah answered, "It is an easy thing for the shadow to lengthen ten steps. Rather let the shadow go back ten steps." And Isaiah the prophet called to the LORD, and he brought the shadow back ten steps, by which it had gone down on the steps of Ahaz." (ESV)

Isaiah 38:7–8

"This shall be the sign to you from the LORD, that the LORD will do this thing that He has spoken: "Behold, I will cause the shadow on the stairway, which has gone down with the sun on the stairway of Ahaz, to go back ten steps." So the sun's shadow went back ten steps on the stairway on which it had gone down." (NASB95)

Where Ahaz refused to ask for a sign, Hezekiah asks for one and one that was noticed by everyone around the planet. "Even in the matter of the envoys of the rulers of Babylon, who sent to him to inquire of **the wonder that had happened in the land**, God left him alone only to test him, that He might know all that was in his heart." (2 Chronicles 32:31, NASB95)

God offered Ahaz a sign that could be anything "in the deepest depths or in the highest heights" (7:11), an offer Ahaz rejected out of unbelief. God now provides a sign for Hezekiah to strengthen his capacity to believe. God does not call for blind faith. As in this case, he prepares individuals for great tests of faith by giving them a basis for trusting him prior to the major event. He provides Hezekiah with a miraculous sign that corresponds well with the promise to "turn back the clock" on the previously announced time of his death. God's power over life and death then prepares Hezekiah to trust in God's power over Sennacherib and the Assyrian army. (Briley 2000-, 98)

So as King Hezekiah watched the steps, he sees the shadow go backwards. This changes everything. Everything he had believed before and understood about YAHWEH has just been validated and much much more. He now knows he will live 15 more years. What a promise. What a temptation.

Three days later, the King indeed does go to the Temple, and he has a new song of praise that he has composed.

Isaiah 38:9–20

"A writing of Hezekiah king of Judah after his illness and recovery: I said, "In the middle of my life I am to enter the gates of Sheol; I am to be deprived of the rest of my years." I said, "I will not see the LORD, The LORD in the land of the living; I will look on man no more among the inhabitants of the world. Like a shepherd's tent my dwelling is pulled up and removed from me; As a weaver I rolled up my life. He cuts me off from the loom; From day until night You make an end of me. I composed my soul until morning. Like a lion—so He breaks all my bones, From day until night You make an end of me. Like a swallow, like a crane, so I twitter; I moan like a dove; My eyes look wistfully to the heights; O Lord, I am oppressed, be my security. What shall I say? For He has spoken to me, and He Himself has done it; I will wander about all my years because of the bitterness of my soul. O Lord, by these things men live, And in all these is the life of my spirit; O restore me to health and let me live! Lo, for my own welfare I had great bitterness; It is You who has kept my soul from the pit of nothingness, For You have cast all my sins behind Your back. For Sheol cannot thank You, Death cannot praise You; Those who go down to the pit cannot hope for Your faithfulness. It is the living who give thanks to You, as I do today; A father tells his sons about Your faithfulness. The LORD will surely save me; So we will play my songs on stringed instruments All the days of our life at the house of the LORD." (NASB95)

King Hezekiah did not have the benefit of the light we have today from God's word. David had a clear understanding, but he also had a closer relationship with YAHWEH. "He replied, "While the child was still alive, I fasted and wept because I thought, 'Perhaps the LORD will show pity and the child will live. But now he is dead. Why should I fast? Am I able to bring him back? I will go to him, but he cannot return to me!' "" (2 Samuel 12:22–23, NET)

For an old testament believer “the grave (Sheol) was an uncertain place. They knew the LORD was there (Psalm 139:8), but they didn’t know exactly how. So for these Old Testament saints, going to the world beyond was exchanging this world’s certainty for the uncertainty of the world beyond.” (Guzik 2000, Is 38:9-14)

This is clearly reflected in Hezekiah’s song. For us, because of Jesus, we have an entirely different view. But since this is a part of Hezekiah’s view, what was it all about?

Hebrew Universe

The word Sheol shows up 66 times in the Old Testament in 65 verses.

While the Old Testament consistently refers to the body as going to the grave, it always refers to the soul or spirit of man as going to Sheol. (Morey 1984, 71-72)

Scripturally we see there are four levels to Sheol which is also called Hades in the NT.

- Paradise
- Abaddon / Pit
- Tartarus
- Abyss

Sheol

1. In the Old Testament period, Sheol was a place that both the righteous and the unrighteous expected to go upon death (Ps. 89:48). The righteous ones, the saints of the Old Testament, expected to go down to Sheol in Genesis 37:35; 42:38; 44:29, 31; Job 14:13; Psalm 16:10; and Jonah 2:2. The unrighteous also expected to go down to Sheol in Numbers 16:30, 33; Job 24:19; Psalm 9:17; 49:14; and Ezekiel 32:21.
2. It was a place more dreadful for the unbeliever than for the believer. Although both believers and unbelievers went down to Sheol in the Old Testament, it was far more dreadful for the unbelievers than it was for the believers (Job 24:19; Ps. 9:17; 49:14).
3. There are different levels or compartments in Sheol. The fact that there are references to the lowest Sheol teaches the fact that there are different levels in Sheol or there are different compartments in Sheol (Deut. 32:22; Ps. 86:13).
4. The direction of Sheol was always downward. When people talked about Sheol, it was a place that was downward (Gen. 37:35; 42:38; 44:29, 31; Num. 16:30, 33; 1 Sam. 2:6; 1 Kg. 2:6, 9; Job 7:9; 11:8; 17:16; 21:13; Ps. 30:3; Prov. 5:5; 7:27; 15:24; Is. 5:14; 14:9; Ezek. 32:21; Amos 9:2).
5. Sheol was a place of consciousness. Those who went down to Sheol were in a state of consciousness (Is. 14:9–10; Jon. 2:2).
6. Sheol was not removed from God’s jurisdiction (Job 26:6; Ps. 139:8; Deut. 32:22). (Fruchtenbaum 1983, 6)

It seems that Sheol has different sections. There is the contrast between “the lowest part” and “the highest part” of Sheol (Deut. 32:22). This figurative language implies that there are divisions or distinctions within Sheol. Perhaps the Old Testament’s emphatic distinction between the righteous and the wicked in this life indicates that this distinction continues on in the afterlife. Thus the wicked are said to be in “the lowest part,” while the righteous are in “the higher part” of Sheol. While this is not clearly stated in the Old Testament, there seems to be some kind of distinction within Sheol. (Morey 1984, 78)

Luke 16:22–26

“The poor man died and was carried by the angels to Abraham’s side. The rich man also died and was buried, and in Hades, being in torment, he lifted up his eyes and saw Abraham far off and Lazarus at his side. And he called out, ‘Father Abraham, have mercy on me, and send Lazarus to dip the end of his finger in water and cool my tongue, for I am in anguish in this flame.’ But Abraham said, ‘Child, remember that you in your lifetime received your good things, and Lazarus in like manner bad things; but now he is comforted here, and you are in anguish. And besides all this, between us and you a great chasm has been fixed, in order that those who would pass from here to you may not be able, and none may cross from there to us.’” (ESV)

Notice in this passage the word used is “the Greek word Hades. This word forms a linguistic bridge which takes us from the Old Testament view of death to the New Testament position.” (Morey 1984, 81)

Hades

The term Hades, unless you are reading the Septuagint, is a New Testament term. From the NT references on Hades we learn that :

1. Hades is the same as Sheol. Hades is the Greek term for the Old Testament Sheol, so everything that is true of Sheol is automatically true of Hades. This is evident from the fact that while Psalm 16:10 used the term Sheol, when that verse is quoted in the New Testament (Acts 2:27, 31), it is called Hades. So Sheol and Hades are one and the same, Sheol being the Hebrew term and Hades being the Greek term.
2. It was a place for both the righteous and the unrighteous. In Luke 16:19–31 the unrighteous rich man is in Hades. But the Righteous One, Jesus, was also in Hades, according to Acts 2:27, 31.
3. Hades had two main compartments (Lk. 16:19–31). The section for the unbeliever was Hades Proper, and the section for the believer was known as Abraham’s Bosom.
4. Although both believers and unbelievers went down to Hades, it was especially severe for the unbelievers (Mat. 11:23; Lk. 10:15; 16:19–31).
5. The direction of Hades was always downward, never upward (Mat. 11:23; Lk. 10:15).
6. It was a place of consciousness, not a place of unconsciousness (Lk. 16:19–31).
7. Hades is a temporary state, not the eternal state (Rev. 20:11–15). (Fruchtenbaum, The Footsteps of the Messiah: A Study of the Sequence of Prophetic Events 2003, 739)

Essentially, the terms Sheol and Hades both explain the same concept, a place where the spirits of those who have died go. There were two sides, possibly more, to this holding place. It is not the final destination for anyone.

When Jesus rose from the dead, this all changed.

Ephesians 4:8–10

“Therefore it says, “When he ascended on high he led a host of captives, and he gave gifts to men.” (In saying, “He ascended,” what does it mean but that he had also descended into the lower regions, the earth? He who descended is the one who also ascended far above all the heavens, that he might fill all things.)” (ESV)

Colossians 2:15

“He disarmed the rulers and authorities and put them to open shame, by triumphing over them in him.” (ESV)

Jesus, after He died on the cross descended to Sheol, Paradise is the side He went to. Using the Greek terms, He descended to Hades, specifically to Abraham's Bosom. We also learn He also descended further to a place called Tartarus. Unfortunately, this has been translated as hell.

2 Peter 2:4

"For if God did not spare the angels who sinned, but threw them into hell and locked them up in chains in utter darkness, to be kept until the judgment," (NET)

1 Peter 3:18–20

"For the Messiah also suffered for sins once for all, an innocent person for the guilty, so that he could bring you to God. He was put to death in a mortal body but was brought to life by the Spirit, in which he went and made a proclamation to those imprisoned spirits who disobeyed long ago in the days of Noah, when God waited patiently while the ark was being built. In it a few, that is, eight persons, were saved by water." (ISV)

Abaddon

The side of Sheol or Hades which is the residence of those who are unbelievers is also referred to as Abaddon.

In the OT 'ābaddōn occurs six times in Wisdom literature mostly meaning 'place of destruction'. (Hutter 1999, 1)

To prevent confusion, we will use that term, Abaddon. Another term is also used in the scriptures. The Pit.

Stop and consider that since prior to the flood, when someone who is unrighteous dies, their spirit goes to Abaddon. **It is not Hell**, but those who are there have that as their ultimate destination.

What do we know about those in Abaddon? They are in an unusual state of being. Yes, they are spirits but we see that they are referred to as רֵפָיִם (Rephaim)

Proverbs 9:18. "But he is unaware that shades meet their death by her, and he is encountering a perch of Hades." (Lexham Press 2020, Pro 9:18)

The "shades" or inhabitants of the underworld. The Rephaim (Rapiuma), who are the focus of texts 20–22, are also mentioned in the Hebrew Bible, where they appear both as the dead and a race of giants. (Smith and Parker 1997, 251)

The word Rephaim is the Hebrew word for "shades" or "ghosts." Thus the Valley of Rephaim is the Valley of Death. (Radmacher, Allen and House 1997, Is 17:5)

The underworld realm of the dead, Sheol, is described by Ezekiel as the place where the uncircumcised warrior-king enemies of Israel find themselves (Ezek 32:21, 24–30, 32; Isa 14:9). This is the place of the Rephaim dead, quasi-supernatural beings we'll encounter later. (Heiser 2015, 77)

Abaddon is a place where there is no one who is righteous. They exist as shades of their former self's until they are resurrected for the Great White Throne Judgement. Yet they are conscious as we saw in the story Jesus told about Lazarus and the rich man. They are also in torment.

All of them have a destination, it is Gehenna, the Lake of Fire, Hell.

Again, the other term for Abaddon is the Pit.

Psalm 55:23

“But you, O God, will bring them down to the deep Pit. Violent and deceitful people will not live even half a normal lifespan. But as for me, I trust in you.” (NET)

Pit. We see it has the same characteristics as Abaddon, it is the place where those who are not believers go when they die.

But let's go back and take a look at the prison Jesus went to in 1 Peter 3:18-20, Tartarus. Specifically referenced in 2 Peter 2:4 and translated as Hell yet the Greek is Tartarus.

Tartarus

Out of this one verse(2 Peter 2:4,) five deductions can be made.

1. It is called the pits of darkness, so it is given a negative connotation.
2. It is a place for fallen angels.
3. It is connected with fallen angels in connection with Noah. Whereas the Abyss is in connection with fallen angels in general, Tartarus is connected with fallen angels somehow related to the time of Noah.
4. The angels mentioned in this verse are obviously the same angels mentioned by Jude 6–7. Because of the connection between 2 Peter 2:4 and Jude 6–7, these angels are the same as the sons of God of Genesis six who intermarried with human women to try to corrupt the seed of the woman.
5. Tartarus is that portion of Sheol or Hades which is a permanent place of confinement for those fallen angels who sinned in Genesis six. While the Abyss is a temporary place of confinement for fallen angels, a place where fallen angels or demons come and go for periods of time, Tartarus is different; it is a permanent place of confinement. From this confinement, these angels will never be released, but will eventually go from Tartarus to the Lake of Fire. These angels will never be free again. The reason these fallen angels are kept in a special place, Tartarus, instead of the Abyss, is because of the special nature of their sin. (Fruchtenbaum, The Footsteps of the Messiah: A Study of the Sequence of Prophetic Events 2003, 742)

Jude 6–7

“You also know that the angels who did not keep within their proper domain but abandoned their own place of residence, he has kept in eternal chains in utter darkness, locked up for the judgment of the great Day. So also Sodom and Gomorrah and the neighboring towns, since they indulged in sexual immorality and pursued unnatural desire in a way similar to these angels, are now displayed as an example by suffering the punishment of eternal fire.” (NET)

Scripturally then we see four levels to Sheol / Hades

1. Paradise
2. Abaddon / Pit
3. Tartarus
4. Abyss

Abyss

We saw demons and fallen angels coming up out of the Abyss in Revelation 9 as the 5th Trumpet Judgement. This word shows up nine times in the Bible, seven of those in the book of Revelation Revelation 9:1,2,11; 11:7; 17:8; 20:1; 20:3

The other two places it appears

Luke 8:31 “They were imploring Him not to command them to go away into the abyss.” (NASB95)

Romans 10:7 “or ‘WHO WILL DESCEND INTO THE ABYSS?’ (that is, to bring Christ up from the dead).” (NASB95)

The big thing we pick up about the Abyss, that as a separate and distinct part of Sheol, it has only one prison population model, fallen angels and demons. It is never associated with humans.

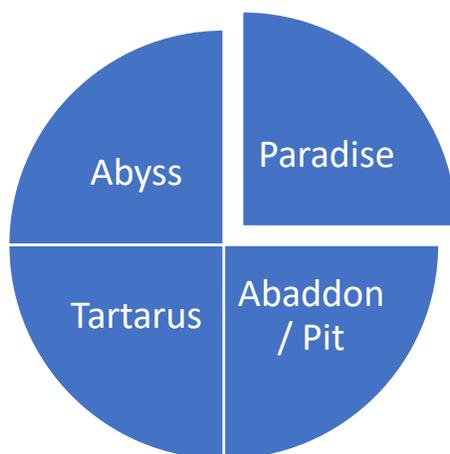
...the Abyss is that section of Sheol or Hades which is a temporary place of confinement for fallen angels. When demons are cast out of people, they sometimes spend a temporary period of time in the Abyss and then they are released. So it is always a temporary place of confinement. Satan will be confined in the Abyss, but even for him it is temporary, for one thousand years' duration. (Fruchtenbaum, The Footsteps of the Messiah: A Study of the Sequence of Prophetic Events 2003, 741)

Let's recap what we know

Sheol / Hades is a location believed by the Jews to be in the nether regions of the earth. As they received revelation about it, they realized it consisted of at least four departments with specific audiences

1. Paradise – Believers prior to the resurrection
2. Abaddon / Pit – Unbelievers
3. Tartarus – Watchers behind Genesis 6 and the Nephilim
4. Abyss – Demons and fallen divine beings

Sheol / Hades



All of those who have not been removed as a result of the resurrection of Jesus Christ, remain and have a final destination. Ghenna.

The awful mental image of everlasting torment in the fires of Gehenna was conjured up in the minds of the early disciples by the Master himself. Out of its twelve occurrences in the New Testament, Gehenna is found no less than eleven times on the lips of the Lord Jesus himself. (Morey 1984, 89)

English equivalent of the Greek word (geena) derived from the Hebrew place-name (gehinnom) meaning “valley of Hinnom” and came to be used in NT times as a word for hell. (Gehenna 2003, 631)

The Valley was a place of child sacrifice to the gods Molech and Baal, practiced even by the Judaic kings Ahaz and Manasseh (2 Chron 28:3; 33:6). (Davis 2014, 277)

Matthew 5:20–22

“For I say to you, that if your righteousness may not abound above that of the scribes and Pharisees, ye may not enter to the reign of the heavens. Ye heard that it was said to the ancients: Thou shalt not kill, and whoever may kill shall be in danger of the judgment; but I—I say to you, that every one who is angry at his brother without cause, shall be in danger of the judgment, and whoever may say to his brother, Empty fellow! shall be in danger of the sanhedrim, and whoever may say, Rebel! shall be in danger of the gehenna of the fire.” (YLT)

The Lake of Fire is described in Revelation as the final destination of the beast and the false prophet (19:20), the devil (20:10), death and hades (20:14), and anyone whose name was not found written in the book of life (20:15; 21:8). Some scholars take as authoritative the Targum to Isaiah 65:5–6, which “explicitly identifies ‘the second death’ with the constant fire of Gehenna.” The fact that God did not design this fire for human beings is important to note. God takes no pleasure in the death of the wicked (Ezek 18:23); rather, this fire was prepared for the devil and his angels (Matt 25:41).

There is, however, no exegetical reason to suggest a hope beyond the fiery lake or a purifying element of the judgment. In light of this investigation, it must be concluded that the Scriptures affirm the existence of judgment for those who reject the free gift of salvation through Jesus Christ (holistically across all commonly accepted designations of hell). (Davis 2014, 279-280)

Isaiah 38:21–22

“Now Isaiah had said, “Let them take a cake of figs and apply it to the boil, that he may recover.” Then Hezekiah had said, “What is the sign that I shall go up to the house of the LORD?”” (NASB95)

We covered this earlier in more detail as we looked at the text from 2 Kings 20

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