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*the Heaven, Hell & the Soul series*  
**Is There A Hell?**

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*a citizen of the Commonwealth (Ephesians 2:19)*

*"Behold, the eye of YaHoVeH is on those who fear Him, on those who hope in His steadfast love, that He may deliver their nephesh from death..." Psalm 33:18-19*

In the same way **the Church** and **Lucifer** (**click on highlighted words to view content**) have been found not to be scriptural entities through the way they have been traditionally presented, so are "**heaven**" and "**hell**" nothing more than fabrications coming out of the **tradition of men** cobbled together from various scripture verses to support a theological agenda apart from the true meaning of those words - as we shall see.

The phrase "*He descended into hell*" originated with the Roman Catholic Church and is found in **the Apostles' Creed** - which has only been known since the fourth century. This phrase was evidently derived from an unusually-worded portion of **1Peter 3:18-20**. However, the first thing to note in this passage from Peter is

that the Greek word "Hades" (translated as "hell") does not actually appear. "Hades" is the underworld god of Greek mythology and, even though it is mentioned as "hell" in the Creed (and elsewhere in both **OT and NT Greek translations**), it does not appear in the Original Hebrew Writings as such (translated from the Hebrew **she'ol**) and particularly not appearing as a holding place of permanent punishment of those utterly lost forever (**as previously noted**). Words mean things - but the absence of words in scripture does not call for assumptive speculation. So, if the concept of hell is not found in scripture - where did it come from? Our popular imagery of hell can be traced to Roman Catholic writers like the Italian poet Dante Alighieri (1265-1321), author of *Dante's Inferno*; and the English poet John Milton (1608-1674), author of *Paradise Lost*, who also set forth the same concepts in a fashion highly acceptable to the Roman Catholic faith. Yet none of these concepts of hell can be found in the Original Writings - or, for that matter, in the Messianic Writings. We get indignant at the mention of purgatory, knowing that it is not found in scripture. But, our popular concepts of hell come from the same place as does purgatory - a traditional Roman Catholic theology of an **afterlife of immortality** under girded by Greek mythology and philosophy. The King James Version of the bible indiscriminately translates three different words as "hell" - the Hebrew word, **she'ol**, plus the Greek words **hades** and **gehenna**. In the same regard as **we have previously noted** in the handling of the Hebrew word **nephesh** translated "soul", the English word "hell" or "Hades" has also been used in translation for the Hebrew word **she'ol** - but, remember, *Hades is a place of Greek mythology* not found in Hebraic culture. **She'ol** is a word whose root meaning is "unseen", as when one is in the grave they are unseen. In the Original Writings (OT), the King James Version translates **she'ol** as "hell" 31 times, "the grave" 31 times, and "the pit" three times. Yet in the Original Writings **she'ol** was not a place of punishment for faithful Jacob was there (**Genesis 37:35**), righteous Job also longed for it in **Job 14:13** and David spoke of going to **she'ol** in **Psalms 49:15**. Scripture records Yeshua's visit there in **Psalms 16:10** and **Acts 2:24-31**. In all these cases, the scriptural description is "unseen" because they were dead - not in some ethereal holding place. Various arguments about **she'ol** being a temporary intermediate-state compartment in the underworld are simply not found in the words given to us in scripture but are a reflection of the influence of the Greek mythological "Hades" upon the translators. And, it is only with the Messianic Writings that additional "revelation" begins to appear under the guise of "Christian theology" which defines events that follow death for the non-believer and for the believer.

Thayer, in his Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament, describes *gehenna* "...as the name of an actual valley on the southeast of Jerusalem" (where it remains today). More accurately, it is the Valley of *Hinnom* described in [Joshua 15:8](#) - so called because of the cries of the little children who were thrown alive into the fiery arms of Moloch, an idol having the form of a bull containing an altar of fiery coals that was never put out or "quenched" ([1Kings 11:7](#), [Acts 7:43](#)). The Hebrews so abhorred the place after these horrible sacrifices had been abolished by King Josiah ([2Kings 23:10](#)) that they continued to cast into it not only all manner of refuse, but even the dead bodies of animals and of unburied criminals who had been executed. And since fires were always needed to consume the dead bodies that the air might not become tainted by the putrefaction, it came to pass that the place was called "*Gehenna - the valley of fire*". Gehenna has often been mistakenly linked with the "lake of fire" described in [Revelation 20:14-15](#) where, after the resurrection, those whose nature have not been conformed to the Nature of Spirit are extinguished - not held in some indeterminate punishment. By assuming the Hebrew word *she'ol* to be on the same order in meaning as "Hades", bible commentators have taken this passage in Peter to mean that those who died before and in the flood were present as spirits in some sort of subterranean holding-tank (and, by extension, any who died later) to be given a second opportunity to receive "the Christ". However, this idea of hell being a place of eternal punishment only became most prominent in *Dante's Inferno*, written in 1314, depicting an *allegorical* journey through hell - but, this book is *a work of fiction* written to support the Catholic theology. ***This traditional theology is not found anywhere in scripture.*** Commentators who suppose that Yeshua went to these entrapped souls after his death to offer them a second chance to embrace the Nature of Spirit ignore the rest of scripture that does not remotely suggest anyone gets a second chance after their death to hear and respond to the Words of YaHoVeH. For example, [Hebrews 9:27-28](#) says, "*And just as it is appointed for men to die once, and after that comes judgment, so Yeshua, having been offered once to bear the sins of many, will appear a second time, not to deal with sin but to save (deliver from death) those who are eagerly waiting for him*". This one scripture effectively puts to rest the doctrine that claims "all will ultimately be saved" - for only those who were looking for His coming by fashioning their lives according to the Words of YaHoVeH while they were alive will be delivered from the pangs of death ([John 14:23-24](#)). Other bible scholars have argued that the "spirits in prison" referred to by Peter are fallen angels (as mentioned in [Jude 6-7](#)) removed from the world scene at the time of the flood and "...have been kept by him in eternal chains in the nether gloom until the judgment of the great day". The difficulty with this argument is that nowhere in scripture is redemption offered to angels. For example, in the incident at Gadera with the demon possessed man, the demons begged Yeshua to give them more *occupancy* in the present, not to grant them mercy ([Matthew 8:28-34](#)). Still others argue that Yeshua preached only to the spirits of the righteous dead who lived before his time, and when he did so, he emptied a realm of Hades, called Purgatory, leading those who were waiting there into some kind of Paradise. But, as noted, Purgatory is not found in scripture, only in *Dante's Inferno* - which is *a work of fiction*. For the faithful, the scripture is clear, "*to be absent from the body is to be at home with YaHoVeH*" - who abides in eternity ([2Corinthians 5:6-8](#), [Isaiah 57:15](#)).



**"Yeshua said to him, "Truly, I say to you, today you will be with me in paradise." Luke 23:43**

There is just so much about this small verse that becomes consequential in the way we approach scripture and, ultimately, our lives. Commonly, this verse is often taken as major proof of the *immortality of the soul*; that is, the belief that the spirit or soul of the faithful dead has conscious existence in heaven before the resurrection. But, as recently pointed out by my new friend, Lisa - not all are convinced Yeshua really told the penitent criminal they would be together in Paradise that very day. The whole problem hangs on a single comma, most likely absent from Luke's original manuscript. With the comma placed before "today" (translated from the Hebrew *semeron*), as most translations have it, the adverb would refer to the following verb ("to be") and the text would have the traditional meaning: "*Truly I tell you, today you will be with me in Paradise.*" But if placed after "today," then the adverb would modify the preceding verb ("to tell"), and Yeshua's words would have an entirely different connotation: "*Truly I tell you today, you will be with me in Paradise.*" To properly understand what this verse is conveying requires us to do some digging around in history. It should be borne in mind that no punctuation is found in the Greek text as first written. There were even no divisions either between letters or words in those texts until *the ninth century*. Neither were there any modern marks of punctuation

until the same period and then only in the Latin version. The comma, for example, was only introduced as late as the ninth century; before that, short pauses were sometimes indicated by means of a point on the line ( . ), while full stops were indicated by a high point ( ' ). Though no NT autograph has survived, it is most likely that, originally, Luke 23:43 had no punctuation of any kind; as Papyrus Bodmer XIV-XV (or simply P75) seems to demonstrate. Translated at the beginning of the third century, P75 is our oldest copy of Luke and it has no point either before or after *semeron* in our passage. Punctuation marks, therefore, are not an integral part of the canonical text. In fact, they reveal only how the text was read and understood by those who copied it. So, when Luke 23:43 was punctuated, the comma was placed before *semeron* not for grammatical reasons, but for the theological conviction of the time that the final reward of the faithful who die comes immediately after death.

The matter of the proper interpretation of Luke 23:43 is dealt with under [Appendix 173](#) of "The Companion Bible," Part V (published by the Oxford University Press). The editor of this edition of the Bible is the well-known scholar, E.W. Bullinger in which he states: *"The interpretation of this verse depends entirely on punctuation, which rests wholly on human authority, the Greek manuscripts having no punctuation of any kind until the ninth century, and then it is only a dot (in the middle of the line) separating each word. 'The verb 'to say,' when followed by hoti (translated as "that"). introduces the ipsissima verba of what is said; and answers to our quotation marks. So here (in Luke 23:43), in the absence of hoti ("that"), there may be a doubt as to the actual words included in the dependent clause. But the doubt is resolved (1) by the common Hebrew idiom, 'I say unto you this day,' which is constantly used for very solemn emphasis... as well as (2) by the usage observable in other passages where the verb is connected with the Greek sameron - ("today")."*

This word, "paradise", is also very problematic. It is translated from the Greek word [paradeisos](#). It is a word whose origin is not found in either Greek or Hebrew but in the languages of eastern Asia. It is a word primarily used of the plantations, kept gardens and places for animals which surrounded the palaces of Persian kings. It is a word the Greek translators inserted thinking it more appropriately described a Greek view of what "heaven" must be - not comprehending that heaven is not a place but [a state of being](#). *There is no word for paradise in the Hebrew language* - there is only [gan 'aden](#). (Hebrew for Eden Garden), the [state of being](#) the Father cultivated with a particular man to be a delight to Him. It was here YaHoVeH formed the [Hebrew Adam](#) out of the dust of *gan 'aden* to abide in His Presence through [the manifestation](#) of the Image of the Nature of his Father, YaHoVeH. As a Hebrew understanding this perspective of His Father, Yeshua was telling the man on the cross next to him that with the sacrifice of His obedient Blood; the Garden, the place of delight to the Father where we choose to abide in the Present Presence of eternity had been restored ([Hebrews 3:12-15](#), see [the Kinsman Redeemer](#) series). The [gospel](#) of YaHoVeH's promise of the restoration of His Kingdom lost to His family of Israel in the Garden has gone out to every generation - the same gospel Yeshua preached to the House of Israel ([Luke 4:43](#)). The Father has shown Himself to be an Eternal Spirit ([Luke 4:24](#)). His Very Name, YaHoVeH, means [the Present Presence](#).

So, then, if our traditional concepts of heaven, hell and an immortal soul are not in accordance with scripture - just what is the promise we are given to hope for? What does it mean to be risen from [the dead](#)? What is the [hope of glory](#) found in Yeshua? A promise is not realized until it is fulfilled. It is we who try to overlay a man-made concept of time upon someone who abides in a place where time is non-existent. The Hebrews of the Messianic Writings understood that when a person dies - they just die ([Mark 9:9-10](#)). When Yeshua was in that tomb - He was [dead](#). He did not go anywhere - He was in the grave. The reason Yeshua was the *"firstborn among many brethren"*, was to example before us what waiting on YaHoVeH's promise was about ([Romans 8:29](#)).

**"Do not marvel at this, for an hour is coming when all who are in the tombs, [who sleep in the dust of the earth](#), will hear YaHoVeH's Voice and come out; some to the resurrection of life, and some to the resurrection of judgment. " John 5:28-29 (quoting Daniel 12:2)**

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**???Questions???**

Please feel free to email me at [harold@hethathasanear.com](mailto:harold@hethathasanear.com). While not claiming to have all the answers, it would be an honor to partake with you of what Spirit is uncovering.

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