

# THE IDEA OF GOOD & BAD AREAS IN THE UNDERWORLD

A BIBLICAL ELABORATION ON THE OLD TESTAMENT CONCEPT OF SHEOL

In Greek Usage: Paradise = the good part of Hades, Tatarus = the bad part of Hades

## 1) Early Hebrew Old Testament

In the early Old Testament, Sheol (the place of the dead) was described as a generic underworld where all the dead go. No real distinction was shown between the state of the good and the bad.

*There the wicked cease from troubling, and there the weary are at rest. There the prisoners are at ease together; they do not hear the voice of the taskmaster. The small and the great are there, and the slaves are free from their masters. (Job 3:17-19)*

## 2) Late Hebrew Old Testament

In later Old Testament writings, Sheol was still understood as the place where all dead people go, but it was metaphorically described as having better and worse sections, respectively reserved for the righteous (God's people) and the uncircumcised (the pagans/unbelievers).

*They shall fall among those who are killed by the sword. Egypt has been handed over to the sword; carry away both it and its hordes. The mighty chiefs shall speak of them, with their helpers, out of the midst of Sheol: "They have come down, they lie still, the uncircumcised, killed by the sword." Assyria is there, and all its company, their graves all around it, all of them killed, fallen by the sword. Their graves are set in the uttermost parts of the Pit. (Ezekiel 32:20-23)*

## 3) Christian New Testament

The New Testament uses the Greek word "Hades" to translate the Hebrew word "Sheol" but retains the basic biblical Hebrew understanding of underworld.

The place of the righteous/faithful dead in Hades is called "Paradise" (*paradisio* = a Greek word borrowed from the Persian language, meaning "garden"). The bad part of Hades is referred to in the New Testament as "Tartarus" (*tartaro* = a Greek word meaning: place of captivity, prison).

*Then he said, "Jesus, remember me when you come into your kingdom." He replied, "Truly I tell you, today you will be with me in Paradise." (Luke 23:42-43)*

*For if God did not spare the angels when they sinned, but cast them into hell [Tartarus] and committed them to chains of deepest darkness to be kept until the judgment .... (2 Peter 2:4)*

Note: The Greek word "paradise" appears only three times in the New Testament, the word "tartarus" only once. It is not a replacement of the Biblical description of Sheol, but a minor semantic accommodation to the language of Greek-speaking Christians.