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Shaqah™

*“Beware lest any man spoil you through philosophy and vain deceit, after the tradition of men, after the rudiments of the world, and not after Christ.”
Colossians 2:8*

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Step Into the Springs!

In this issue of *Shaqah* we will begin what should be a three part series called, “What About Death And Hell?” This series is based on a question, submitted to Living Springs, asking about the subject of death and specifically about hell. This Q&A is actually older than the one just recently concluded in *Shaqah*, called “A Matter Of Life And Death.” However, while the answer to the question this new series is based on was sent to the person who submitted the question, this Q&A has never been published in *Shaqah* or on our website. To be honest, this is simply because things sometimes get lost in the shuffle. However, God works all things for our good when we are called according to His purpose, (Rom. 8:28) and I believe that is what has happened here.

The truth of the matter is, if this Q&A had not been set aside during a

very busy time for this ministry, it would have been published several years ago. This, I do not believe was God's will. I believe this because it now appears clear it was/is God's will for this Q&A to be published at this point in time. This is not just because now may generally be the better time for everyone to read it, but also because there is specific benefit in this Q&A following the “A Matter Of Life And Death” series, which is based on a very related question.

To some, this may seem odd because there is much information covered in both these articles that is similar, if not the same. However, I have found in ministry that often similarity, if not downright repetitiveness, is not something to be rejected but embraced. I remember in my early days of preaching, when I was alongside a couple of other young ministers about my same age who were also just starting

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out. In those days, we could have multiple services in a day and/or multiple sermons preached in the same service. Often all three of us would be slated to preach on the same day or one right after the other in the same service. Now, we all have those particular things we struggle with, and I remember one of the ministers in that group had difficulty with the repetitiveness issue. It seemed it just did not matter how often he preached in these situations; if he did not preach first, he would find himself questioning the sermon God had laid upon his heart, because the minister who preach before him seemed to always preach what this young man felt he had been prepared to say.

This greatly disturbed the young man and he would doubt he had truly heard The Lord, and/or felt he had done something incorrect, and The Lord had given his sermon to someone else! However, if we calm ourselves and listen to the voice of God, what we all find in these situations is that God is working through us, and on many occasions even in spite of us. Because our thoughts are not God's thoughts, our mind is often not desirous to do what God asks or wants us to do. (Isa. 55:8) It many times just doesn't seem right to us. However, God often counters our fear or wrong thought patterns with something that gives us a clear choice.

In the case of my fellow minister, he would never have prepared his heart

to preach what was right in these situations if God had made it clear he had been made a part of a series of sermons on the same subject; but as a man who had been prepared by God to simply preach what he had been prepared to preach, he sat in the pew with little choice. He could get up and preach what God had given him, or stumble through a sermon trying to preach something that had not been prepared by God in his heart. When he tried the second option it never went well, and that fact ultimately is what got him past the fear of being looked at negatively for preaching on the same subject as the preacher before him!

We simply never know what God has in store or why He works the way He does at times. With that, I have to admit I certainly would never have put this Q&A directly following or proceeding "A Matter Of Life And Death," on purpose. They seem too similar, and my first instinct would have been just like that young preacher, and I would not have presented them back to back. However, God had other plans, and He made those plans clear. Who knows, even the sharing of this short sermon on the matter may have a vital affect on someone's life, and it would never have been written if this situation had not arose. God only knows for sure. Thus, no matter what anyone may think, to God be the glory, and I hope you enjoy this issue of *Shaqah!*

What About Death And Hell?

Part I

From Living Springs' Questions and Answers

"I have been studying the Bible recently regarding death. A lot of questions arose due to me losing my son last year. One particular one is the idea of "heaven" and "hell". What is Hades, Sheol...etc. and I don't believe that my son is in heaven - I believe he is asleep. What does the Bible say about hell? Is it different from the lake of fire? Was it meant for Satan and his angels? What have you learned in studying God's word?"

To answer your question, we could cover an immense amount of ground, but I believe this question breaks down into two principal discussions. At the core of what you're asking is the issue of where people go after they die, both before and after Judgment Day. The second issue is about terminology, and that discussion can be very complex.

The problems with language and terminology are always an issue for those of us who speak English. So, one of the first things which helps us understand our Bible is the understanding that English is a very weak language. To tell the truth, almost all the major languages spoken in our world today are weak, especially when compared to the more ancient languages which the words of the Bible were originally penned. There is a depth of thought in many older languages which most modern languages simply do not contain. This becomes

especially problematic when we attempt to write things down. If I'm standing in front of you, talking to you, you can see my facial expressions, you can hear the changes in the tone and cadence of my voice. There is an ambiance to the words. You can often tell if someone is sad, upset, happy, or even downright elated; but when you write it down on paper, all you can do is put an exclamation point at the end of a sentence to indicate some form of emotional expression. The point is, the words themselves do not express the deeper emotion or meaning like older languages could.

Another problem with English is not only do we lack words, we have too many in some cases. Different words can mean the same thing without widely accepted opinion as to which is more severe in meaning. This is where we get odd little sayings like, "I may be dumb but I'm not stupid!" Where does dumb end and stupid begin, or is it the other way around? Much of this problem is created by the fact it could be said, English is not really a language at all, but instead, nothing more than a collection of borrowed words, many of which are mispronounced. To many people this may not seem to be a big problem, and if you do not wish to have very meaningful and in-depth conversations with other humans, it may not be. However, it certainly is a problem if you are trying to

understand something as in-depth as the Bible. Not only does English lack the words to describe many things, but because it is, in many ways, a collection of borrowed words, it has no understandable rules for developing new words which others who speak the language would automatically understand even if they had never heard the word before! This means the translators of the Bible's text were limited in many ways; and because English is only getting worse, more recent attempts to "translate" the Bible into even more modern English have given us Bibles which are all but useless.

This is why it's good to stick with the King James. Can there be no argument which says certain scriptures in the King James could be translated differently? No. Is it that there could be no Bible translation made which would use more modern English phrasing without being brought down to an everyday watercooler level of English speech? No, but unfortunately far too many people do not understand the problems I have explained above, and they are seeking a Bible which will spoon feed them information by being put in ever simpler English. That trend has caused a downhill slide, not an improvement on the English translation of the Bible. The reason to stick with the King James is because it's a solid English translation which is virtually uncorrupted by doctrinal theory as most recent "translations" have been. Its very high level of English captures much of what has been totally lost in more recent versions, and because the Bible is something very sacred and special, there is certainly nothing wrong with its words being immediately and recognizably different from our everyday speech. In spite

of its "thee" and "thou" structure, we should realize there is also great value in its commonality. For good reason, the King James is still a very well known and widely read version, and that is good for us because the weaker the terminology the harder it is to talk about a question like the one you have asked!

There are many words and terms connected to the issue you are asking about. Some come from the language the Scripture was originally written in, and some come from languages the text was translated into. Because English is such a borrowing language, the English translation simply keeps some original words in some cases, while translating the same word into more of an English word or phrase in other places. This is also confused by the fact different translations choose to do different things. This leaves us with quite a few words and terms which different people will argue are "Biblical." In your question, you have pointed to some and there are a few more we will want to look at. You have asked about or at least mentioned heaven, death, Hades, Sheol, hell and Lake of Fire. With these, there is also paradise, outer darkness, and grave. Another term which comes into this issue is "grave sleeping." This term is not in the Bible, but it's the proper name - so to speak - for the statement you made concerning your son, and is really at the core of the question you are asking.

All this is why I said your question breaks down into two major parts. The questions you have asked about different words are examples of terminology problems. What we must understand is while different words may have different

Following the Biblical Stream:

By Philip E. Busby

As we go into verse 9 of Genesis chapter 11, we begin the more direct discussion about the people at the tower leaving to go out across the world. As we have touched on in many places through this series, there are those who believe God wanted people to go out into divine land divisions which God had already laid out for them. However, this is what we have been discussing in our last couple of segments. People left the tower and city because they found they could not communicate with ease as they had before. There was - for a lack of a better term - a very natural course to all this, and that brings us to an interesting point. People did go out in family divisions.

After covering verse 9 here, we will jump back and take a look at those verses we skipped over in chapter 10, because those verses tell how people went out along family lines. However, the shorthand is that we see people leaving the tower and city in three major groups. Those groups are distinctly divided by the family lines which got off the ark. Ham's family went one general direction, Shem's went another and Japheth's another. Now some would again argue that this is because God gave specific languages to specific groups, but I do not believe this was the case. As we talked about leading up to this verse, the people did not change into different languages overnight or in a moment. The language divide took place as it takes place in our world today. From the confounding forward, diversity, which already existed in humanity, was expressed

through language, and that began to cause trouble for those who wanted to conform all mankind. Under these new circumstances, those who truly did agree with each other or had reason to want to stay together would do so and continue in a common language development, while those who did not have as much of a reason to stay together did not put forth the effort to maintain what we will call linguistic commonalty.

As we talked about before, what God wanted was not for people to stop getting along, but to appreciate their diversity and use it to be fruitful as He had commanded humans from the very beginning to be, and again when Noah got off the ark. (Gen. 1:27-28, 9:1) When we study the Bible, we really should try to interpret what we read on the basis of what we find to be true about God and not simply attribute human choices to somehow be God's will enacted. Sure, God understood the outcome of the confounding would mostly be that families would group together. However, that was better than all humans clumping together and corrupting themselves with false religions and bad governing ideas with no other thoughts in their heads. It is the fact we see people leaving the tower in family groups which causes later people to look at the story and say there must have been divine divisions, but that is a false assumption on the basis of interpreting man's choices as God's desires. What God did in this situation is prove man's stated philosophies as false. Man supposedly was building the tower

because they all agreed it was a great thing, and supposedly they all wanted to ensure they were not scattered across the earth. However, if that had been the truth, confounding man's languages would not have separated them!

In our world today we clearly see a significant amount of people, belonging to various linguistic groups, learning to speak what is, at the very least, a common language. This is most often done for one purpose and one purpose alone: the ability to do business with each other. If at the tower people would have been building because they were all truly in agreement and not because the whole thing was an attempt to destroy man's diversity, people would have put forth the effort to learn each other's language. This would have been true, even if the language change had been sudden. Think about it. If it's possible for people today to learn another language, even one that they have never heard before in their life, which may even come from a far part of the globe and/or be a language few people speak or have spoken in a long time, just how easy should it have been for the people at the tower to learn each other's language? We should also consider what we see today in that there are certain people who learn new languages very quickly. Remember at the tower they had all the people of the world at their disposal. Identifying these kinds of people at the tower would have been no effort at all. In fact, they would, by nature, have been the standouts in the crowd, as they had little trouble communicating across people at a time when most people were beginning to have great trouble!

The truth of the matter is that as diversity

was now in the process of showing up in language, it became common knowledge that the plan of everyone being steered into one way of life was not going to work out so easily. At least it was not going to work on an overall scale in the way it had been working, and this is a key point! If people had not truly been adversarial about diversity long before the confounding, after the confounding there would have easily been a regrouping of people and cross communication taking place between all the people. The city would not have been abandoned by most everyone. Instead, it would have become what people like to claim they want: a place which celebrated great developments and discovery as those of different groups and types came up with valuable work; and those things with value to others would have spread to those who needed or wanted it. Instead, what happened was people pulled up stakes and left for very far, separated reaches of the globe. Thus, one has to ask, what exactly did cause that to happen?

Now, we have already talked a bit about the root answer, but as you look at how it specifically unfolds it is easy to see that this was the beginning of people saying to their sons and daughters such things as, because someone was not of their group and/or "kind," that person was not welcome into their family. This is an interesting subject because we do not see this taking place before the flood, as the people who served God found ways to easily marry into families of those who did not, as well as the other way around. That intermingling corrupted the entire earth with sin to the point God had to destroy the world. In the post-flood world there was no indication intermarriage between the families was a problem, but this

was not really because people did not have diversity but because a plan was put in place to squelch diversity right out of the gate. Once the ease of carrying out that plan was cut off by the confounding, people quickly turned on the diversity they disliked and the separation began.

We even see this truth in the name they gave to that place where God confounded their language. Verse 9 tells us people began to leave that place in the Mesopotamian Valley, and the name of that place became what we still know it as today: "Babel." The word "Babel" is a very well known word to us, and it has what we would say is a very understandable meaning. We see the meaning as appropriate because God confounded man's language, which caused there to be a lot of words spoken that were not understandable to others. We would say this is meaningless babel, and the like. However, this has to do with the subject we have talked about in earlier segments. Words mean one thing but often come to be applied to something and become something more general or specific than they once were. One might see why a word was originally used to denote something; but after it is applied commonly to a thing, it comes to mean what it is specifically applied to, more than what it originally meant in general. It's like the word "video." This is a Latin word that literally means "to see." From that, we understand why we use the word to describe moving pictures recorded on magnetic tape. However, a word that means "to see" could be applied to many things. It could be used to describe still pictures. It could be used to describe the watching of any number of live

events or specific places with viewing value whether educational, beauty, etc. Moving pictures that were originally captured on film could also be called video for the same reason, but we have specified the word to speak of a more recent form of media used to capture moving pictures and sound. Now as time moves on, the word is coming back to a more none specific word as it is increasingly being used to talk about not just pictures stored on magnetic tape, but digital media of all forms.

This is a taste of what we are seeing in the word "Babel." Because of the knowledge of the story, we think we understand the word clearly. Thus, as the old idiom goes, we have put the cart before the horse, in a way. We have even incorporated the word into our vocabulary to denote sounds uttered that in general we do not understand. For example, when a baby is trying to learn to talk but has yet to form understandable words, we say they are babbling. When we know a person speaks our language but they are not making sense to us, we often say they are babbling. This all relates to what happened at the tower - right? Well, yes and no. It does because there is a relationship to the idea people more and more misunderstood each other, but that is not really the root of the word. The word "babel" in its simplest interpretation actually means "confusion." However, more understanding comes from looking at why it means that. The prime root the word comes from means "to overflow." So the question becomes, why does a word that means "to overflow" have a derivative that means "confusion"? The answer goes back to how specific

words of past languages are much stronger than we have today. This prime root was not likely the only word which meant “to overflow.” Thus, it has a specific implication. That implication is “to mix.” At first glance, this might seem to have no relationship except to think about the idea of mixing, such as putting things together in a receptacle, and we can spill or overflow such mixtures. In fact, that's the beginning key to understanding.

Intentional mixing would be done by putting elements together, and in common life we might think of mixing ingredients for food. Mixing something such as cake batter would be a good example. We might also mix elements to make a construction material, such as putting sand, rock, and cement together to form concrete. Now think about what happens if the mixture we are putting together overflows. What do you get? In truth, it depends on where you are. We usually have specific food preparation areas because splattering or spilling is common when cooking. However, we do not have this luxury all the time, and not all surfaces are truly sterile even in a food preparation area. When mixing something such as concrete, it is often done outside close to wherever we are going to use it. Thus, as it relates to our root word, we want to think about what happens when we spill or overflow such a mixture as cake batter or concrete. The spilled portion falls on the ground or other surface outside the prepared mixing receptacle; and whether we like it or not, the result is often an unusable or what we would call “wasted” portion of material. Why? Because the cement mixes with materials such as dirt that we do not want in our concrete or that may even destabilize the

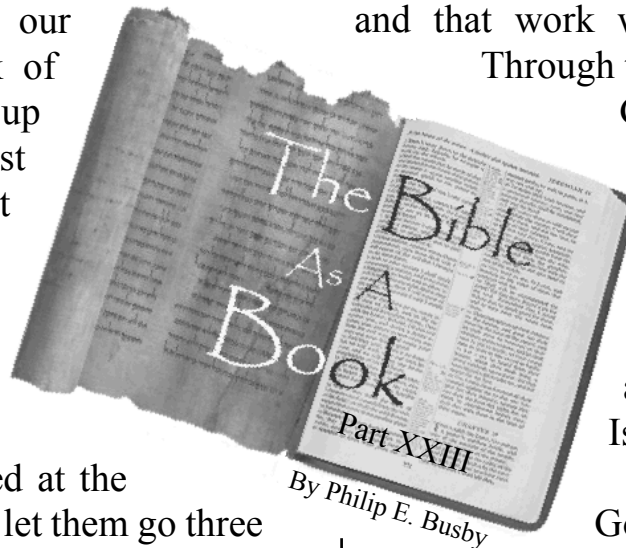
final product. No matter where we spill cake batter or the like, it is not really a good idea to put food we spill back in our intentional mixture because it can mix with any and all dirt, debris, and germs which are on the surface it falls on. This is why it is especially bad if that surface is the floor!

This is the prime root of the word “babel.” It's a negative form of mixing. It has to do with overflowing or spilling of material that causes mixing of things we did not desire. When we understand this, we can move to the derivative of the prime word that the place of the tower and city was named, and understand its more specific connotation of this idea. This word is specific to the fact it's not just that things we do not want in our mixture have come in contact with it, it is the specific idea that we can't be sure we can separate what we don't want from what we do! If I'm gathering a collection of rocks and shells on the seashore and I spill some of them out into the sand, it will not be too hard to pick up the rocks and shells, separating them from the sand once again. However, if I drop cake batter on the floor, there is really no way for me to separate the dirt and germs that were on the floor from the batter I dropped. There is no way for me to know just how bad the consequences of having these elements in my mixture. Thus, what I spilled truly becomes waste! I did not intend to put these elements together, nor did I specifically mix them together after they came in contact. The problem is the elements have become “confused” with each other!

People called the name of that place “Babel,” not so much because the speech

As we continue our overview of the book of Exodus, we pick up where we ended our last segment talking about the opening words of Exodus chapter 6. There God is explaining to Moses that he and Israel should not be dismayed at the fact, asking Pharaoh to let them go three days journey into the wilderness to worship God had not yielded positive results. They should not be concerned about the fact something that seemed just the opposite had happened in that Pharaoh had increased their work load. It wasn't that God was failing to deliver his people, but that the stage was being set to completely deliver them from the hands of Pharaoh, as well as show both Israel and the world just Who God really is!

In these opening words of chapter 6, we see the use of the name "Jehovah," which in its simplest explanation is a one word way of saying, "I AM." God was going to show Israel He is truly everything they need no matter how bad the situation might seem. However, as Moses returns to them to explain God's plan for their future, Israel is not encouraged. Their spirits were all but broken due to not only the hard labor they had been serving under, but the more current increase in the impossibility of accomplishing what Pharaoh wanted. As sad as this was, it was workable because God, showing forth His power, was not about whether Israel or anyone else thought it was possible. God was going to do the work He was going to do,



and that work was going to free Israel. Through this they would know Who God was/is in a way their current attitude showed did not. Also, God's actions were, very quickly, going to begin diminishing Pharaoh's ability to continually afflict Israel.

God talks to Moses and tells him to go back to Pharaoh and deliver the consequences of Pharaoh's initial refusal to let Israel go! The first thing Moses is to say to Pharaoh is, again, the instruction Pharaoh is to let Israel go; but Moses does not see how this is helpful, because Moses feels he can't even get the children of Israel to listen to him. If they won't listen, how was he going to get Pharaoh to listen, especially when Moses felt his ability to speak and persuade were so lacking in the first place? God does not coddle Moses and Aaron. Instead, God increases the pressure on them by making a direct command and very personal responsibility on Moses and Aaron that they bring Israel out of Egypt. The issue was not up for debate on the basis of how hard they thought it would be to do, it was to be their only goal in life until it happened!

This commandment to Moses and Aaron is followed by a quick rundown of the heads of the families of Israel who went in with Moses to Pharaoh, and spoke to him about releasing them as a people. The fact all these went with Moses, left no doubt in Pharaoh's mind that this was not a couple of rebellious leaders in Israel who wanted to see their

people freed. It was a national desire. In spite of the fact Pharaoh's response was negative to their request, their desire was genuine in the beginning. At the first talk Moses and Aaron had with these leaders in Israel, they truly believed their release was going to happen, because God had heard their cry. Now, they regretted all that, as they feared they had only exposed themselves to Pharaoh, and were in too deep to turn back now!

God would reiterate to Moses and Aaron that He is God. They were to speak what He told them, not what they thought. However, this didn't stop Moses from countering again with the idea, he was not good enough at speaking and persuading to do the job. God explains to Moses the work was already underway. Pharaoh sees this situation as Moses being a great rival. Pharaoh, who thought of himself as a god, saw Moses as a rival god, and Aaron as Moses' prophet. This was a dynamic clearly understood in the mind of Pharaoh; and while God never told Moses he was a god of any kind, the fact Pharaoh looked at it this way was a good thing. Moses needed to stop thinking about how good or bad he was at speaking, because Pharaoh was already right where God wanted him. In spite of Moses' thoughts, things were going just as they should. Every time God did something to Pharaoh, Pharaoh would need to call upon Moses and Aaron to turn things around. This would infuriate Pharaoh; and after the current problem passed, it would cause Pharaoh to become indignant to the point Pharaoh would turn back on whatever agreement he made to end the current crisis. This would open the door for God to execute judgment on Pharaoh, and the cycle would begin again. In the

end of it all, everyone would know who was truly God, and who was just a man.

Moses and Aaron would go forward at the ages of sixty and sixty-three respectively. Now Pharaoh had already made his move to show Moses he had the control over Israel, whom Moses claimed to represent. Pharaoh had ordered Israel to accomplish an impossible task, and Pharaoh was waiting to see what Moses was going to do about it, if anything at all. When God sends Moses and Aaron back in, Pharaoh does just what they were told he would do. Pharaoh asked them to show some miracle to prove they were someone he should pay attention to. For this, Aaron was to perform the miracle God had given Moses at the burning bush. Of course, a challenge of godlike power was exactly what Pharaoh wanted, and so as Aaron cast down his rod and it became a serpent, Pharaoh wanted to make the point he was not impressed. He simply has his sorcerers come in and everyone of them shows they can do the same thing. However, they don't get their rods back, because the serpent Aaron's rod became, swallowed the serpents their rods had become. This fact did not cause Pharaoh to fear or consider he may be up against a higher power than himself. Instead, Pharaoh gets angry and takes this as an insult, becoming more determined not to let the people go. All this was just as God had said Pharaoh would do.

God told Moses, the next morning Pharaoh would be going to the river, and they should be there to meet him. Moses would explain to Pharaoh that because he refused to let Israel go, God would be forced to show him He was truly God. Moses was to use the rod that had turned into a serpent, to

smite the water of the river. When this was done the river's water turned to blood and the life in the river died. As Moses shows Pharaoh this next miracle to prove God is great and Pharaoh should not resist him, Pharaoh finds, just as with the rod to serpent, his servants can also turn water into blood. The fact Moses had turned an entire river into blood, once again, did not affect Pharaoh in understanding God was, at the very least, greater than him. For this cause, Moses had been further instructed by God to use Aaron to turn all the water supplies of Egypt into blood. Aaron would stretch out his hand and curse all the natural water sources in the land, and even the water people had stored in vessels became blood. Pharaoh's sorcerers could do nothing to turn the blood back into water. Thus, the Egyptians were unable to use their normal water sources; and for an entire seven days, they dug into the ground looking for new water sources.

After the seven days of blood, God sent Moses and Aaron back to Pharaoh to give him another chance. This chance came with the warning that if he did not yield, frogs would fill the land. After all the death due to the water turning to blood, now the river would bring forth an unbelievable amount of frogs. These frogs would get into everything, be everywhere day and night, and if Pharaoh thought himself immune he was wrong. He, his servants, and the people in general would all suffer. Pharaoh did not take this opportunity to let Israel go and Aaron was, once again, instructed to stretch forth his hand, with the rod, over the water sources of Egypt. With this, the frogs began to come! Of course, Pharaoh's sorcerers

were able to show they could do this as well; but, once again, they were able to do nothing to reverse the plague!

Pharaoh was not immediately inclined to do what Moses was asking, but after suffering the fact frogs truly covered the land with no end in sight, Pharaoh called for Moses and Aaron. Pharaoh was desirous to make a deal. Pharaoh told Moses he would let Israel go to do the sacrificing they had asked, if Moses would get rid of the frogs. Moses was quite glad at hearing this and asks Pharaoh when he wants them gone. While one would think Pharaoh would want them gone immediately, Pharaoh showed how much his pride was still strong. Pharaoh asks that the frogs be gone the next day. He understood that the word would spread about him calling Moses and Aaron in, and if the frog problem immediately began to be solved, it would be just too obvious Moses was responsible, and Pharaoh had acquiesced to Moses to get it done. If the frogs went the next day, there was the possibility the people would believe the problem had simply ran its course. Moses would go out from Pharaoh and ask God to rid the Egyptians of the frogs, and God would do as Moses asked. However, the frogs did not go back into the river or disappear. The frogs simply died out, right where they were. This left a horrible mess for the Egyptians to clean up, and all they could do was heap the dead frogs into piles here and there, leaving the carcasses to rot. This caused the land of Egypt to stink in a way you would likely have to experience for yourself to truly appreciate!

In spite of this, the moment Pharaoh saw

there was reason to believe things were coming back under control, he once again allowed his pride and anger to overcome his better judgment. Pharaoh turned back on his agreement and once again decided he would not let Israel go. This is the heart of Pharaoh God wanted to reveal. In doing this, Pharaoh basically set negotiations back to the start. God had presented to Pharaoh a very reasonable request, which Pharaoh could politically afford to grant. However, at this point it was not just that Pharaoh had refused, he now had turned back on his word about going ahead and granting the request. This was truly clearing a righteous path toward a greater goal, and that goal was Israel being completely released from Egypt's control. To begin this next step, God instructed Moses to command Aaron to stretch out the rod again, and this time over the dust of the land. The dust would turn to lice. Not just the dust on the ground but the dust already on people and animals!

In an interesting turn of events, Pharaoh's sorcerers, no matter how hard they tried, were unable to duplicate this one in any form. God had intentionally given miracles and plagues that at the beginning the sorcerers would be able to duplicate. They couldn't do them at the same level, but they were able to show them as belonging to a standard set of curses a sorcerer might use on someone. God started with things the average person might fear a sorcerer could do, and this spelled out a clear warning to Pharaoh that he should listen, especially since his sorcerers could not defend him from these plagues. Pharaoh decided to look at it the opposite way, and believe Moses was simply a sorcerer able to do these magic tricks at a greater level than his sorcerers

could. No doubt, when he asked Moses to lift the plague of the frogs, Pharaoh easily deluded even himself into thinking it was just a likely coincidence that Moses' "power" to maintain the frogs, or the like, had simply ran out. However, when it came to the lice, God had taken a step meant to clearly show Pharaoh he was moving into greater troubles. Not only could his sorcerers do nothing to defend, as in the previous cases, but they could not prove this to be one of the many tricks they were somewhat capable of. This leads even them to begin to fear, and they informed Pharaoh they now believed Moses was not just a magician as they were. Pharaoh was being touched by God!

Pharaoh decided he would rather stand his ground than admit defeat in allowing Israel to go. It was as if he thought of it as his revenge against God! Pharaoh's inaction would cause God to send Moses back with a new warning. The land of Egypt would suffer from swarms of flies. Now, this would not have been limited to the household fly many think of today, but flying insects of many kinds, including those that bit, eat cloth, and even the beetle, which the Egyptians worshiped. To be clear on the fact this was not some random environmental event, God would add to this the specific note that the Israelites in Goshen would be unaffected by this plague. This was likely true of the previous plagues, but it would have been less obvious that Israel was supernaturally exempt as apposed to the idea they simply were not in range of the plagues' effects. However, with insects - especially flying ones - there is a great range! If the flies were to be heavy in Egypt there would at least be swarms to some degree in neigh-

boring areas, but God did not allow this. The flies would be upon the land of Egypt, but neighboring Goshen would see none. This should have signified to Pharaoh, not only was he dealing with God, but the God of Israel!

As the land was overcome and ruined by these flying insects, Pharaoh again calls for Moses and Aaron. This time Pharaoh attempts to strike a compromise based on the original request. Instead of allowing Israel to go three days journey into the wilderness, Pharaoh proposes they be allowed to take the time to sacrifice there in the land. Moses responded to this by pointing out the practices of Israel were considered an abomination to the Egyptians. It made no sense for Israel to worship their God in a place where it would greatly offend the population around them. If the people of the land truly believed in their own gods and religious ceremony, they would fear Israel was offending those gods and be compelled to kill the children of Israel. Moses informs Pharaoh the minimal acceptable proposal is the original one where Israel is able to go out into the wilderness to worship God the way God commanded them to do. Pharaoh, needing the plagues to be lifted off his land, agrees he will let them go, as long as they don't go too far. Moses would go out from Pharaoh and ask The Lord to take away the flies, but not before he warns Pharaoh not to turn back on his word again. A second chance is a true blessing!

The next day the flies left, and unlike the frogs, they truly left. So extensive was their exit that there remained not even what would seem to be a normal level of flying insects in the land. Again, the moment had

passed and all seemed as it should be in Egypt. Pharaoh began to think about how mighty he thought he was, and how much he could possibly resist God. He again went back on his word and would not allow Israel to go. Moses would be sent to Pharaoh again, and this time the plague would not just be a misery or great discomfort for a time. This time, God would begin to directly hit Egypt in a way that would strike at what all rulers cherish greatly: the nation's wealth and resources. For Egypt, a good part of its wealth lay in their domestic animal stock. They represented a large part of Egypt's great achievements, and they were very valuable to Egypt's development and maintenance as an "advanced" nation. Now God was going to send a fairly undefined destructive force among the domestic animals of the Egyptians that would kill a great deal of them! Because this plague would be an undefined sickness, there was nothing the Egyptians could do to prepare for it. They no doubt had what was for their day an extensive knowledge of how to take care of common diseases, outbreaks, and sicknesses among their animals, but none of that information was going to do them any good in this situation. Once again, Israel would be completely immune from this plague, and none of their animals would be affected. This plague would also not be brought on by Aaron or Moses waving over or striking something with their rod. As much as that had served to show Pharaoh previous plagues were no coincidence, this plague would simply come at the time they said it was scheduled to come. This should have left no doubt in Pharaoh's mind, he was dealing directly with God and no magic trick!

There's another aspect to this plague not

being brought on right away or just after Moses left Pharaoh. While Pharaoh was good at seeing plagues come to an end and feeling good about resisting again, God allowed Pharaoh some time to think upon this one before it came! This plague was given with the same notice the removal of most of the previous plagues had been given. This death among the animals would begin the next day. Pharaoh would have the remainder of that day and that night, to call for Moses and/or simply give the command that Israel could pack up and take their journey. If he did, the plague would never come, but he did not. The next day domestic animals began to die all across Egypt, but among Israel's stock, not a one! This plague should have sent Pharaoh begging to be rid of Israel, but instead, he sent to see if it were true the deaths were not occurring among Israel's animals. When he found out it was true he again became more angry instead of fearful, and he did not give the order.

The plagues would now begin to pile on top of each other. No matter how much Pharaoh may have believed he could simply weather this storm without asking for it to pass, the sit and be quiet strategy did not work! Moses and Aaron were sent again, not so directly to talk to Pharaoh but to perform an act in his sight. This act would be what was in ancient times and in some practices today, a common sign among pagans that a curse of sickness or the like was coming upon a place. Moses was to take ashes from a common everyday source - in this case a furnace, maybe even one of the furnaces Israel used to make Pharaoh's bricks - and throw them up into the air. In many cultures

the idea of putting ashes on ones head was/is a way of symbolizing mourning. This is because it symbolizes the same thing people used to say when they felt grieved by something. That statement was that the thing grieving them was going to bring them to their grave. Today, we are more fond of saying something like, that's why I have so many gray hairs; but the concept of life's vitality being drained away, is the same. Thus, when someone was grieving they would place ashes on their head, but for a group mourning, ashes were thrown in the air to cover more of everything. Because a curse is meant to bring something people would be grieved by, it became tradition for curses, especially concerning bad health, to also be symbolized by this practice.

Again, this is God speaking a language Pharaoh would clearly understand. It confirmed to Pharaoh the coming boils and severe skin lesions, which is what the next plague consisted of, was no coincidence or a result of the undefined sickness which was devastating Egypt's domestic animals. This second detail was important, because the boils would come on both man and beast. When this next plague came, Pharaoh would be in very personal misery, and he would call for his sorcerers to come and heal him. Not only should he have known, as with the other plagues, they could do nothing to turn things around; the sorcerers themselves were so sick with this plague they could not even come at Pharaoh's command! All this made Pharaoh angry, and he was determined not to give in. Thus, God tells Moses to go early in the morning and lay out the truth for Pharaoh so there can be no doubt he under-

stands what is going on. Moses was to tell Pharaoh it is a direct commandment from the God of Israel that he let Israel go in order to serve God. Moses was to warn Pharaoh there was no waiting out this storm. God was going to continue to bring plague after plague until He had completely destroyed Egypt if Pharaoh continued to resist. God even goes the extra step of explaining to Pharaoh the completeness of his folly, in that it was for the purpose of giving God this opportunity to show forth His greatness and reaffirm His name upon the earth that Pharaoh was allowed to rise to power! Everything God did caused Pharaoh to be more indignant toward letting Israel go, but that was playing into God's hands as it gave Him a righteous reason to destroy the nation that would have been the re-arisal of what started at the Tower of Babel.

Pharaoh still did not give the order to let Israel go, and the next plague God would bring, again struck at the heart of Egypt's wealth, for it would not only destroy animals but crops in the field as well. This plague was also designed to separate those who now believed from those who still did not, at least among the Egyptians. It would show God is merciful to those who will, at the very least, listen to His voice. Egypt was warned that the following day God would send a great hail like man had never experienced before. Those who believed this warning would get what was left of their livestock and servants into shelter, but those who did not believe would remain in the fields. Once the hail started it would be too late to change one's mind, and all things left in the fields would die! When the time came, Moses was instructed to stretch forth his hand, with the rod, to heaven, and the

hail began. It came with thunder, and it came with fire. It started things on fire and pummeled all the vegetation, including the trees, throughout the land. Only the land where Israel resided, saw none of this.

This event unnerved Pharaoh in a way the past plagues had not. He called Moses and Aaron, and admitted his people were a sinful people. He acknowledged God was righteous. He asked Moses to intreat The Lord for the storm to cease, and in exchange he would let Israel go. Moses told Pharaoh, upon leaving the city he would call upon The Lord and the storm would cease. However, Moses told Pharaoh it was not being done because there was any belief Pharaoh would hold true to his word. Pharaoh had not yet learned to truly fear God. Pharaoh's great arrogance and the arrogance of those around him would continue to cause them to be defiant. However, that simply gave God the opportunity to show the people of the world, it is foolish to put one's hope in a man, men, or human government. Only God is God! In the end, Israel would not only be freed from Egypt but they would have this story to tell their children for generations to come. Throughout the world it would stand as a testament to God's power, and commitment to the example of a righteous nation, which He called Israel to be!

Now, at this point, if Egypt had any hope there would be a recovery from what had happened thus far, the next plague would bring an end to that hope. Pharaoh was told that locust would come upon the land, and anything which had survived of the vegetation, or that had started to regrow, would be wiped out. Like the infestations before them, the locust would also be a misery to

everyday life, as they would fill the houses of all the Egyptians. After Moses left, Pharaoh's servants decided enough was enough. They ask if Pharaoh was aware of how devastated Egypt had already become. They pled with Pharaoh to do what Moses asked so all this could come to an end! For the first time, Pharaoh calls for Moses and Aaron before a plague begins. However, Pharaoh believes it is still in his power to set stipulations. He tells Moses the people can go, but asks who and what Moses intends to take. Moses explains all the people of Israel will go, along with their animals. Pharaoh informs Moses only the men would be allowed to go, and with that he had Moses and Aaron thrown out!

Of course, this gains Pharaoh nothing, and God instructs Moses to call for the locust in like manner as most of the rest of the plagues. Upon doing so, a strong wind begins to blow, which lasts until the next morning. It brings the locust, which covers the land, and they truly eat every last piece of vegetation left in Egypt. Pharaoh, seeing his stipulated command saved him nothing, calls for Moses again asking for forgiveness of his sin and that the locust be taken away. Moses intreats The Lord, and a strong wind begins that sweeps every last locust out of the land and into the sea. Pharaoh, likely feeling by this point he had crossed a threshold and there was little left that could be done to hurt Egypt, holds his ground and still does not send Israel away. Thus, without warning to Pharaoh, Moses is instructed to bring on yet another plague.

As it was true there was nothing of any

great value left to the Egyptians of all their land and animals, this plague would show God's great power by taking away something we all take for granted! The next plague would be darkness. I don't think anyone can imagine what it would be like to truly live in darkness; not as if it was night all the time - for at night, there is still the moon and/or stars; nor like being concealed in a chamber with no light source and where no light is able to get in - for in that case there is an understanding that light exists on the outside if you can just get out; but darkness because there simply is no light source available of any kind: A darkness you can feel! For three days this is how the Egyptians lived, and it caused them all to stay right where they were when it came. Israel was still able to utilize light sources in their dwellings, but the Egyptians had nothing!

If there was any word about how devastated Egypt had become of late, out in the greater world - and I believe there can be little doubt there was - it likely had severe repercussions on people coming to Egypt to do business or just to travel through. In either case, this darkness brought any and all business and/or travel in and to Egypt to a sudden halt! This would have been such an unbelievable event; word would have spread fairly quickly at this point that Egypt was a cursed place and one you did not want to travel to anymore. Egypt's economic devastation was almost complete!

Let's stay in God's Word!

FBS continued from pg. 8

was confused or confusing as we may assume today, but diversity in general brought about the name. When that diversity was shown forth through the language people spoke, it brought confusion to the idea of using a common project to create conformity. It destroyed the very purpose of forced commonality in thought, the project was intended to maintain. If we add to this understanding the negative context of waste, we understand people were not necessarily rejecting the idea of a city and tower at all. The point of calling the place this was that their efforts in this place had been set at naught. An element they did not want had been thrown into the mix; and thus, their time spent on this particular project - and certainly any further time spent - was and would be a waste!

This was true especially for those leaders who were looked at as gods among men. In general, leaving this place was more desirable than staying. A central meeting place for all people was not what these leaders wanted. They believed they were building man into something greater than humanity's diversity could make us as individuals. This place was not just currently failing to serve that purpose, but the process of trying to deal with linguistic diversity was going to turn it into a place that had to respect diversity in thought. This was very much the opposite of what these leaders wanted, and they saw it as the loss of their power. This pride is truly why they left. We see this truth in the fact Nimrod was of the family of Ham; but out of the three groups, Ham's family was not the one who held onto this beginning area, in the least! Nimrod totally abandoned his "kingdom," because he

wanted to begin again in a new place where there was no trace of his failure, or that God had shown he was wrong!

Getting back to the specific point of why the people left in family groups, there are many things to consider. Again, God did not object to this effect no matter the why it came about, because the foundational institution God put in place was/is the family unit. The foundational understanding in life that recognizing human commonality does not have to force us to give up our diversity as individuals, comes from the family unit. The beginning understanding that people are diverse yet can respect each other's opinions, and work together in love, is something children should learn from being raised in a family. Respecting elders and understanding they may have things of value to say, even when it may not seem that way to the younger at their present state, is part of what the Bible teaches us. Younger people often live far more in what is happening in the present, and adults should learn to listen to their children in order to use what they have learned in life to help guide their children through the specifics of the present world. All this is why the fifth commandment tells us to honor our father and mother. This is a direct commandment, not to do everything our parents or elders want us to do for the rest of our lives, but a commandment to say no matter how bad we think mother and father have been to us personally or in any general way, one man and one woman in a lifelong committed relationship is the foundation of a family unit the way God created it to be. While any number of people may believe there are many variations on this idea which are all equal or at least good, the truth is, God

established a master plan for bringing and raising children in this world. Sin often keeps this from happening the way it should, and many people may not be raised in this environment. However, that does not change, and never will change, the fact the pinnacle model we should base our laws and personal choices on is that God ordained a structure for beginning human interaction and development. As each new generation begins anew - so to speak - they should seek to honor this truth!

Primarily separating along family lines was an acceptable outcome, because it was far more in line with God's plan for human existence than what humans were doing at the tower! God is always working to bring us back - even a step at a time - to His perfect will and plan. However, God did not force people to go out along family lines. God simply put in place something that would show forth man's true intentions and allow individuals to make more of their own decisions. The fact people primarily did go out in family groups is best summed up by the old saying, you can pick your friends but you're stuck with your relatives. This is not completely true; but because God designed us to respect the family unit, blood does, at the very least, feel to us to be thicker than water. What we fail to recognize is the deeper truth that we all are - whether we like it or not - part of the same family. We all came from Adam and Eve!

This point is part of what was recognized before the flood. People intermarried between those who served God and those who did not because they were all related anyway - right? What did it matter? However,

that is where we go wrong. We continually make our choices based on the desires of the flesh. Before the flood, the men who served God saw that women of those who did not were, in fact, physically attractive. Thus, it seemed good to them to take as a spouse any of these they desired, in spite of how that affected their ability to raise future generations in the ways of righteousness or even maintain a righteous lifestyle themselves. (Gen. 6:1-2) They may have been clear on the fact man is actually all of one family, but they were not clear on what is thicker than blood. What is thicker than blood is that we will all stand before God as individuals; and on Judgment Day, God will not make His choices on the basis of family lines, in any way. God will choose according to our individual actions and choices. When people chose, at the time of the confounding, to pack up and leave, it was not because God was forcing them out. They did it because that is what they chose, and the separation did not happen based on righteousness. It did not happen on the basis of good versus evil. It took place because the tower could no longer serve to conform everyone into one model of thinking, so they would separate into groups where they had a chance to make conformity a reality among their specific group.

The truth of the matter is people do not really respect the way God created us to live, and the idea of being all of one family is of no concern to a sinful heart when it does not serve a desired purpose as it did before the flood. Another fleshly truth is the further down the family tree we are from others, the less impact their relationship to us has on our feelings. At the time of the

tower we can't say for certain how many people lived on the earth, but we know there was not time for there to be anything close to what we think of today in terms of population. They knew they were family. However, separation lines would be taken advantage of, and these would stem from where most people alive at that time looked at as the beginning of the world as they knew it - that was when Noah and his family stepped off the ark. This was one family, but the three sons of Noah had three wives before the flood that had come with them on the ark. This made for three distinctly separated family groups in a way it took great time to develop when it all started with just Adam and Eve.

There can be no doubt that at the time of the confounding there was still great knowledge of what family line each family unit stemmed from. While there may have been genetic reasons in the mind of each person that did, in fact, brake the languages more down family lines, I still believe it is important not to think God gave specific languages to specific families. As people started to feel less connected to one another through the tower project and the concept they had originally bought into, the natural fallback as to who you were connected to was family. Now, of course, there was need for children to stay in communication with their parents, but there is further natural instinct which could be utilized beyond that. In any circumstance, the natural effect of family connection is most often driven by the older generations. Even today we see the truth that the older someone gets, the higher the likelihood they will develop stronger urges to see their children, grandchildren, etc. stay connected. This is why older generations

are usually more interested in setting up and going to family reunions and family gatherings than younger generations. The psychology is actually simple: As a child you may desire to hold on to your parents, but as you develop and get closer and closer to adulthood, you feel more like an individual. Also the youth of one's body often makes people feel more indestructible, and the pride of life is strong. (I Jn. 2:15-17)

As an older child or young adult it seems you are just you, and you make choices about how to live your life. However, if you get married and/or have children, you find your choices become based - or at least should be based - on the needs of your spouse and children. While it's never true that you own them, they are yours - so to speak. Thus, when your children get older and have children, it seems they are an extension of what you started. Now, adulthood, in and of itself, brings commonality to people of different generations; but it's only natural as a person gets older, to look down the line of people in their family, seeing connectivity to themselves in ways they did not when they were younger. Also, the older a person gets the more they begin to see their physical capacity diminish, and as this happens they become more aware of their own mortality. This heightens the feeling that one's children, and so forth, are the way a piece of who you were and the memory you even existed will live on!

When considering the fact people followed the family lines of Noah's three sons, we should also remember, at the time of the confounding people lived longer than we do today. Before the flood, God had told Noah man's days would be cut down to a hundred

and twenty years maximum. (Gen. 6:3) This number stood for how long people on that side of the flood had left before the flood, as well as how long man's life span would be from then on. However, this - much like the confounding - was not a sudden change. What we see is that it was a bit like closing the head gate on a water system. The water begins to drop at the point closest to the gate, but at points down the stream there is no change seen for quite awhile. When it does change it is gradual, even to the point of being fairly unnoticeable until the result is more final. God changed something in the genetic makeup of man which would no longer allow him to live for hundreds of years, but the full effect of the one hundred twenty year cap would not be seen until generations later. Thus, all the people alive and born even just after the flood were easily living long enough to still be alive and active at the time of the confounding well over one hundred years later. This made it even more true that families, as defined by much earlier generations than we might think of today, were likely to maintain a common language and head in the same general direction with each other, at least in the beginnings of it all.

All this shows us a truth we talked about when it came to man using our God-given, common language. The devil and evil-hearted men do not desire to be one hundred and eighty degrees off from the truth. They attempt to use the truth and distort it just enough to gain the advantage they want! The most telling sign this was still in the hearts of men is that the families at the tower did not just go out in different general directions from each other, but they went out in ways which separated them completely. Again, it

was God's intent that people would go out and take advantage of the fact the world could be explored, and diversity utilized. The diversity people recognized in leaving the tower was not, in many ways, the diversity God wants us to recognize at all. In truth, it is more akin to the wrong judgments we deal with today. Instead of seeing individuals for who they choose to be - be that good or bad - we see family lines, color of skin, even where someone was born, which shows up on very local as well as national levels. We must understand that the confounding of the languages did scatter the people; but without affecting man's free will, God would have to continue to deal with the unrighteousness man had in his heart.

Thus, people did not just randomly go out from the Mesopotamian Valley. They did not explore out into the world as groups of individuals with common interest. People went out in family groups because the man-made governing structure began to point to diversity, not in individuals, but between the families. This shows us again the quandary we are in. We want conformity; and while many leaders say they want it in order to build what they feel is a greater world, the reason so many individuals go along with it is that we fear diversity is the enemy of our own uniqueness. All this is why we must be careful not to interpret man's sinful actions as God's will. God is working for our good, but we must still choose, as an individual, to be righteous!

Until next time, Shalom!

What About Death And Hell? continued from pg. 4

meanings, those meanings can change with time and usage. So, when you want to give a title to something like a place, you are often stuck with the words people already understand to some degree, and those words may change in their common meaning as time passes. This is the case when talking about places such as heaven and hell. If I call them something totally out of reference, you would have no idea what I was talking about. However, if I say "heaven" or "hell," you have little more than a concept of what I'm talking about. For a good example of this, we'll look at the word heaven. This word in English is very generic! When speaking English, any number of religions will talk about "heaven," but are we all talking about the same place? No! Whether we can with title, define our heaven from another is all dependent on the availability of recognized words. For example, a Christian may talk about heaven and a Muslim may simply refer to heaven when talking about their belief in a place of final rest, but a Buddhist may use the word Nirvana. If I'm a Christian and I want to tell a Buddhist about the true heaven and I'm using his language, I may have no choice but to use the word Nirvana as a conceptual starting place. However, I will need to do a lot of explaining about the difference between his belief and the truth!

This is the issue with the word Hades. Hades is a Greek word, and at the time of Christ it may have been a more generic term or simply the most available word in Greek for the concept of hell. Either way, today, Hades is simply an old word without common use in English. If the word loses its

generic feel, it becomes a piece of history, and many people may simply look at Hades as strictly a Greek mythology word. If we do this - and I believe we have - then Hades is not a good word to use because Greek mythology Hades is not the same thing as the true definition of the Biblical hell. In Greek mythology, Hades is the name of a false place and a false god, but we can not afford to let this trip us up. We must understand that just because a word like Hades and Sheol are used in the Bible's text, it does not mean the writers were attempting to talk about the same place the pagans, which may have primarily used these words, were talking about. They were simply using an understandable word to talk about a concept, and through the whole of their teaching, hoped to define for people what the truth actually was and is!

We have to separate these items in our mind and understand the Bible is trying to teach us the truth, not just be a part of the false philosophies of men. This is why we cannot understand what the Bible is saying by simply pulling a verse out of context. We must study the Word as a whole. In the Bible, we may see different words for places like heaven and hell, but what we are attempting to do is find the truth in spite of the weakness of our language.

Now, before we leave a discussion specifically about terms and words, I need to stop and more specifically cover the two words you asked about, Hades and Sheol. As I mentioned, Hades is a Greek word and the only reason it appears in some translations of the Bible is the New Testament (especially the copies which survived to later generations) was mostly

written in Greek. The Hebrew Scriptures, which Christians like to call the Old Testament, were also translated from Hebrew into Greek before the time of the New Testament. A translation called the Septuagint, though rejected by many Jews in Israel, was very popular among early Christians who did not speak or read Hebrew. All this Greek brought the word Hades into common use in Christianity. However, in English the word is more appropriately translated as hell or the grave, for reasons which I hope will be apparent to you later in this discussion. The word Sheol is a Hebrew word used in the original writing of the Old Testament. It is a more appropriate word because it belongs to God's chosen people. Which means, in spite of false beliefs which may get applied to it, unlike Hades, Sheol is intended to stand for the truth. This is a small example of why God formed a chosen people. Their language, their culture, and everything about them was meant to shine forth the truth.

It's not likely that the words Hades or Sheol were ever as generic a word as our English "hell," because they originally stood on opposite sides of the fence. Hades, being a Greek word, stands for the Greek ideas of the afterlife. Sheol, being a Hebrew word, stands for the Hebrew ideas of the afterlife. Are these ideas the same? Well, among men they are far more the same than they should be! Hades was not originally a word to designate a place for the afterlife but the name of a Greek god. However, Hades also became known as the place where this god ruled, and this place was believed to be

somewhere inside the earth; thus, it's often referred to as the "underworld." This is the place Greek mythology believed all the dead go, and the fact the Greeks held this theology is primarily why it's so pervasive in our Christian culture. Sheol is a word meant to denote, not so much a place where people go after death, but the simple concept that people leave this life. This may seem like I'm picking at a technicality, but there is a big difference, and the difference is found in man's arrogance. You see, mythological Hades represents something men believe they understand. They say it is a place. They say it is in the earth, and there is a god which rules it. Man simply developed a story and it became what he taught as fact. In our modern world we have a good example of this arrogance in the teaching of evolution!

In contrast, Sheol was meant to tell us there are things we do not completely understand. If the word had maintained its true spirit, people would have understood what Jesus was saying much better. Jesus told us that if we were going to understand the truth, we would have to become as little children. (Mark 10:13-16) This was to say we were going to have to let go of the things we thought we knew and listen to the voice of God. God will teach us but only if we humble ourselves and allow Him the freedom to even correct what we think we already understand. Jesus said The Holy Spirit would continue the work of teaching us because there were many things Jesus wanted to tell even His disciples, but they could not bear them at that time. (John 16:12-14) When we do not understand

something, we should not look to the theologies of men for an explanation; we should look to God. A failure to do this happened when it came to the word Sheol.

In taking on the beliefs of the pagans around them, which God specifically and for good reason told them not to, Hebrew speaking people came to see Sheol as much the same place as the Greeks saw Hades. Sheol is also often looked at as an underworld. As this corruption crept in, many came to believe Sheol was simply a place where all the dead went, just as Hades. However, this idea did not line up with an obvious truth which the Bible had already revealed to them; and as humans often do, instead of throwing out the false belief, they tried to meld the two. God was trying to explain to them that after death He would judge every soul. For those who trusted in Him, there would be life; but for those who did not trust in Him, there would be destruction. This is what Abraham understood, and it is why he told his son Isaac that, "God will provide himself a lamb..." Genesis 22:8 Abraham understood God would have to provide a way out of the destruction death brought. He did not understand everything, but Abraham trusted God would not allow death to eternally separate God from those who loved Him. (Rom. 4:3) Many of Abraham's descendants did not trust God with this simplicity and turned to the theologies of men. Because the theologies of men said all the dead went to this underworld and their understanding already told them God would provide a better place for the righteous, the theology eventually developed where Sheol came to be looked at as divided into two places or sections. One section was for the good and

the other for the bad. All this thinking is the result of pagan corruption which has translated all the way down to us today.

What do I mean by pagan corruption? Well, it all goes back to the Tower of Babel. (Gen. 11:1-9) After the flood of Noah's day, man attempted to push God out of the hearts of men by building a religion which would trap all mankind into believing a certain way. This religion attempted to explain everything so man would question nothing, and simply believe whatever lie the religion told him. The prominent physical feature of this religion was the construction of a tower. This tower's purpose was to create a place where men could touch the sky. Its more practical idea was to stand as a monument to human achievement and to serve as a place where false priests could go and read the stars to tell man his future. People who teach the Bible often get caught up on the tower as the reason for God being angry, but evidence stands today which tells us otherwise. God did not confound man's language because man was building a tower! After the Tower of Babel, people went out literally to every corner of the globe and built various forms of this tower over and over. Even the tall steeples on Christian churches has a relationship to the same basic ideas; but God is not some angry being whose eyes turn red every time man does something which is displeasing to Him! God is a caring God, and when He is angry, it is a righteous anger.

Jesus did not go into the marketplace and overturn the merchant's tables there even though the merchants were not always honest with their customers. However, Jesus did drive out the money changers from the

Temple of God. Even then, He did not do it because of dishonesty but because the Temple of God is simply no place to be buying and selling! (Matt. 21:12-13) By doing commerce in the temple, they were robbing from people the purpose of the temple. The temple was a place for people to pray and commune with God. If they needed to bring a sacrifice, the people needed to buy that sacrifice elsewhere or bring it from home. Bringing the offering through the streets is as much a part of the process as offering it at the temple!

So, Jesus was angry that people seeking to serve God were being sidetracked by these merchants. God gave us a free will, which means we can do what we want. God will not force us to serve Him, but He will not allow other men to take from this earth the ability to find Him! This is the issue God was dealing with at the Tower of Babel. Man wanted to create a religion which would take all men away from finding God by teaching them a common religion. If this had been allowed, concepts about places such as heaven and hell would be solidified by that false religion which was developing under the circumstances of man being all one language. As powerful as it has been in some countries around the world to try and outlaw the seeking of the truth, it doesn't hold a candle to people having a belief which causes them to never even think about seeking in the first place! Understanding heaven and hell in the midst of various philosophies may seem like a hard thing to do, but the fact you have a desire to keep searching until you hear the answer from God, makes the process a good

thing! (Heb. 11:6)

There may be many concepts about heaven and hell, but in spite of the confounding of man's languages, most of the base concepts started at the Tower of Babel still prevail. This is why you can talk about the very refined theology of the Greek Hades and see virtually the same base concept among the Canaanites which originally corrupted the Israelites. Now, as we move into a discussion of the truth, it helps to understand that man started out with the right understanding. Man had the opportunity to learn from God from the very beginning. Jesus told us to become as children, and when it came to knowledge that is exactly how God created us - in innocence. Because man did not want to listen to God, he went off and relied on his own understanding in his attempt to explain his existence. This thinking is what brought us to the Tower of Babel and still guides many people today. Understanding this will help us see through the lack of uncorrupted terminology and discover the truth!

In our next segment, we will start our look at what the truth really is by going through what the Bible specifically tells us about death. Until then, I pray you will learn to continually trust in The Lord with all your heart; and lean not unto your own understanding!

***Questions submitted to the Institute,
answered by Philip E. Busby.***