

The concept of a pit or abyss probably comes from or has to do with a sensation of instability (falling) in that place, which is usually linked with a person being out of control (passing out).

“**Hades**” is exclusively a NT word, which corresponds to the O.T. “**Seol**”. The Septuagint (the OT translated into Greek before the time of Christ) uses the Greek Hades for the Hebrew Seol. Hades is a distinct word from “*death*.”

The Greeks in their mythology divided Hades into two places, the Elysium, or the place of the good, and the Tartars, the place of punishment for the wicked. We note that this is very close to what Jesus taught in the story of Lazarus and the rich man (**Luke 16:19-31**) only Jesus used the terms “*Abraham’s bosom*” (a place of pleasure) and “*Hades*” (a place of torment).

The Rebellion of Korah – In **Num. 16:30, 33** the Bible comments about the rebels of Korah, “*the Lord make a new thing, and the earth open her mouth, and swallow them up, with all that appertain unto them, and they go down quick into the pit... They went down alive into the pit, and the earth closed upon them, and they perished.*” From this narrative, we understand that Seol is not just death (the end of life), but a continued physical existence where for some there is extreme suffering (**Prov 15:24**). Without a doubt, the Bible presents the place as a **real, physical place of punishment and torture**.

Before the resurrection of Jesus Christ, the saved went to Seol after death (**Gen 37:35; 42:38; 44:29, 31**), to the chamber called Paradise (**Luke 23:43**) or also called Abraham’s bosom (**Luke 16:22**). We know that Jacob was a believer, but we see Jacob understood that he was going to Seol (**Gen 37:25, 42:38; 44:29; 44:31**) when he clearly waited in the salvation of God. David in **Psa. 16:10** affirms his conviction that God would not leave his soul in Hades (Seol). In the book of Job, Job wanted to go to Seol to free him from the torment Satan was afflicting him with in the earth

(**Job 7:9-10; 11:8; 14:12-13; 17:13, 16; 21:13; 24:19; 26:6**).

Up until the resurrection of Jesus, there were 3 chambers in Seol-Hades, which are called first **Paradise** (the place of pleasure for the saved), the other place is called **Seol**, the abyss, the pit, or hell in the N.T. (which is a place of torment), and **Tartars**. We see that Jesus told the thief on the cross that that same day the both of them would be in Paradise (**Luke 23:43**), and we know that after death, Jesus went to Seol-Hell (**Acts 2:24, 27, 31; Psa 16:10; Acts 13:33-39**). Thus we conclude that Paradise was at the point of Christ’s death, a part of Seol-Hades. After the resurrection, there were only the prisons of the demons (**Tartars**) and hell or Gehenna (the pit or abyss) in Hades-Seol, and at this point after Christ’s resurrection the concept of “**Hades**” **became synonymous with the concept of the place of torment**.

From Luke 16 we see hell and the place of pleasure very clearly and distinctly, and both in the same place with a great chasm (grand space or gulf) between the two places impeding or making impossible that anybody passes from one place to the other.

The Pit, Abyss, Hell

The “**pit**” or the “**abyss**” is an OT word that represents the place of torment in Seol, and it is a real place that is scary. Jesus described it with frightening words so as to motivate every man to avoid it at any cost (**Mat. 5:29-30; 10:28; 18:9; 23:33; Mark 9:43-47; Luke 12:5**). This place was created by God as a punishment for Satan and his demons (**Mat 25:41; 2Pet 2:9**), and God has had to enlarge it constantly at the death of every unsaved human (**Isa. 5:14; Hab. 2:5**). But hell is never full, and it is never satisfied (**Prov 27:20; 30:15-16**).

Hell – Hell (Gehenna in Greek) comes from the words “*valley*” (Ge) and “*Hinnom*” (a name), and it is a name of an actual valley in Israel that has

very steep cliffs. In **2Chr. 33:6** the king Manasseh made Israel pass their children through the fire (human sacrifice) in worship of the god Molech. Afterwards they utterly hated this place, and used it for unclean things, such as a trash dump, and as a repository for dead animals, and for the bodies of criminals or strangers. They constantly kept it lit in fire for purification purposes (to kill the smell). The Bible always speaks of Gehenna as down or within the earth (**Job 11:8; Luke 10:15**), and it is even open to eyes of God (**Job 26:6; Psa 139:8, 11; Pro 15:11; Heb 4:13**). The wicked and those that forget God are there (**Psa 9:17**), with the Pharisees (**Mat 23:33**), and the hypocrites (**Mat 24:51**). It is a place of judgment and condemnation (**Mat 23:33; 25:46**).

The Tortures of Hell – are real and intense as we see in **Luke 16:24**. There is intense pain (**Job 26:5**). People in hell **have all their mental capacities and their physical senses**, and their **consciences** are active. It is a prison where one has no liberties but is under the restrictions of that place (**Psa 116:3; 118:5**). There is no rest there (**Rev 14:9-11**). There is **actual fire or flame** there (**Mat 5:22; Luke 16:23**) but the burning bodies are not consumed by this flame. It causes pain, but never ends or is finished or stops. There is **sulfur** which is probably liquid fire of some sort (**Isa 34:8-10; Rev 14:10; 19:20; 20:10; 21:8**). Residents of hell **gnash their teeth** which is a consequence of great pain and anguish (**Mat. 13:42; Luke 16:24**). The residents **cry** (**Mat 13:42**) which is also an expression of pain or anguish. There are worms that eat the body for all eternity (**Mark 9:47-48**). Above all the place is undesired by those who live there (**Mat 5:29-30; 18:8-9; Luke 16**). Moreover there appears to be levels or **degrees of suffering** (**Mat 10:15; 11:22, 24; Luke 10:12, 14; 20:47**).

Tartars

The third chamber of Seol is the place of Tartars, and is only mentioned in the Bible in **2Pet 2:4**

where it says that the demons are now imprisoned waiting for judgment. In **Rev 6:8** God will free them for a period in order that they will torment humanity before the final events of judgment.

The Finality of Death

Man is given a short period of time on the earth (**Job 7:1-3**), and in **Hebrews 9:27**, it says “*And as it is appointed unto men once to die, but after this the judgment.*” **Job 7:9-10** “*he that goeth down to the grave shall come up no more. He shall return no more to his house, neither shall his place know him any more.*” God will only give the opportunity of salvation before people die through accepting Christ, and death is final (**Psa 9:17; Eze 31:16**).

Future Events

These places are real, but they are only temporary places for these people until the judgment of God on them (**Job 21:29-30**), because in Revelation, God says that he will empty hell (Gehenna) before the throne of God in the Great White Throne Judgment so that He may judge the nations (**Rev 20:13**). We understand “*nations*” here to refer to the unsaved. After this judgment, God will throw the unsaved into the lake of fire (**Rev 20:14; 21:8**), and we understand this to be even worse than Seol, or hell is now. This future lake of fire will be a physical torment also and from there, everyone will enter into eternity for evermore, time without end.

Heaven – the Place of Pleasure and God

We remember that life began with God in garden. The Persian word “*paradise*” comes from the oriental kings who made a protected and cultivated garden for their pleasure. Solomon had some fabulous gardens with abundant water, as a symbol of luxury and recreation in those arid lands. **Isa 51:3** and **Eze 36:35** speak of the future garden of Israel. Jesus used the concept of

Paradise in **Luke 23:43** with the repentant thief on the cross as something understood between them, and not needing explanation. **Rev 2:7** says “*To him that overcometh will I give to eat of the tree of life, which is in the midst of the paradise of God.*” So in the end, the saved will be with God in “*paradise*” again. Also those of the OT had a concept of the resurrection of the just and the wicked (**Hos. 13:14; Isa 14:9**), and so Seol was a temporal place until this judgment and resurrection. Jesus also taught the two resurrections, one for the saved (resurrection to eternal life) and one for the unsaved (resurrection to judgment and condemnation) **John 5:28-29**.

Jesus between death and resurrection

In the OT, paradise was a chamber of Seol where Jesus went to visit after his death on the cross (**Eph 4:8-10; Acts 2:24, 27, 31; Psa 68:18; Isa 42:7**) in order to preach to them (**1Peter 3:19**) or rather to explain to them the details of the salvation for which they waited. Also Jesus affirmed that the day that the thief died, he would be with Jesus in Paradise (**Luke 23:43**), but in **John 20:17**, immediately after his resurrection, he says that he has not yet ascended to heaven to God the Father. So after the death of Jesus, he went to Paradise, a chamber of Seol-Hades, and later carried all the saints of that chamber with him from Paradise to heaven. Also when Jesus rose from the dead, many O.T. saints were resurrected with him, and walked the earth **Mat. 27:52-53**.

Later Paul mentions clearly that he “*went up*” into the third heaven, to paradise (**2Cor 12:2-4**). The first heaven is the earth’s atmosphere; the second is where the sun and stars are; and the third heaven is where God and His angels live. After the resurrection of Jesus, the Bible represents Christians dying and going directly to be with God in heaven (**Phil 1:23 “be with Christ” 2 Cor 5:6-8 “be present with the Lord” Acts 7:59**).



The themes of punishment and judgment are mentioned some 234 times in 264 chapters of the NT. It is interesting that we know more about hell through the teaching of Jesus Christ than any other person or source. It occupied a very important place in the mind of Christ, and he warned those who would listen so that they would avoid that place and the punishment that is there.

“Seol” and “Hades”

The Bible describes Seol as the place of “*darkness and shadow of death*” **Job 10:21**. While death separates the person from the world of the living, for the saved this is a reunion with the departed friends (**Gen. 15:15; 25:8; 35:29; 37:35; 49:33; Num. 20:24, 28; 31:2; Deu 32:50; 34:5; 2Sam 12:23**). The O.T. speaks of “*Seol*” as “*the place of the dead*,” and never uses this word for “*the grave*” where the decomposing bodies normally are (see **Num. 16** where the exception is the rebellion of Korah who went straight to Seol with their bodies). “**Seol**” means “*demand*” in Hebrew, and probably comes from the concept that it is the place that demands the presence of every human being without exception (**Hebrews 9:27**). Nobody can escape the power of death. “*Hades*” comes from the combination of the words “*no*” and “*seen*”. Seol and Hades are the same place, and it is a temporary place.

Before the resurrection of Jesus, there were two types of people in Seol, the redeemed and the unsaved. There are three compartments there (**Proverbs 7:27 “the chambers of death”**). These places were the Paradise (for the saved), the pit or hell (for the unsaved), and Tartars (for the demons).