

Hope Complains

Key Verse: “As for me, I will call upon God; and the LORD shall save me.”
—Psalm 55:16

Selected Scripture:
Job 24:1,9-12,19-25

IN ORDER TO UNDERSTAND

what is meant by the words spoken to us by David in our Key Verse, we go back to verse 15, which says, “Let death seize upon them, and let them go down quick into hell.” At this juncture, we must examine closely the use of the word “hell.” Hell, as it appears in this verse and in the entirety of the Old Testament, is a translation of the Hebrew word *sheol*, and simply means the condition of death, or the grave.

Both good and bad people go to *sheol*—the condition of death. Jesus went there. David said prophetically of him, “Thou wilt not leave my soul [being] in hell.” (Ps. 16:10) To this Isaiah adds, also speaking prophetically of Jesus, “He hath poured out his soul unto death.” (Isa. 53:12) In the New Testament, Peter, when speaking of Jesus’ resurrection from the dead, quoted Psalm 16:10, saying, “Thou wilt not leave my soul in hell, neither wilt thou suffer thine Holy One to see corruption.” (Acts 2:27) The Greek word here translated “hell” is *hades*. Since this passage is a direct quote from the Psalms, we understand that the word *hades* in the New Testament is the exact equivalent of the Hebrew word *sheol* in the Old Testament. Indeed, Jesus died and spent parts of three days in the grave—the Bible hell—and was then resurrected by the mighty power of God.—see Jon. 1:17; 2:1,2; Matt. 12:40

Returning to our lesson in Psalm 55:15,16, we see David observing the doings of the wicked. He prays that they

may soon die, and thus cease to do evil. As we have seen, the word *sheol* contains no thought of fire or torment in death, but simply signifies oblivion, or the cessation of life. With this view, we can understand that David's prayer toward his enemies, the opponents of righteousness, was a proper one and in accordance with God's law.

Had David prayed that his enemies go to a place of eternal torture, it would have shown an improper heart condition on his part. Indeed, it is completely foreign to the character of our loving Heavenly Father to even conceive of such a place. The Apostle Paul seemed to have the same mind set on this subject as David. He said, "I would they were even cut off which trouble you." (Gal. 5:12) In other words, let them go down quickly into death, that their evil thoughts and ways might cease. God himself said concerning those who did great abominations, "I took them away as I saw good."—Ezek. 16:50

The key to understanding all these statements, in which the desire is expressed that the enemies of God die, is found in the fact that mankind's trial and judgment is not in this present life with all of its unfavorable conditions. The time for the world's judgment is the coming Messianic age, when all shall be made to know God's mercy and his truth under favorable conditions. (Jer. 31:34; Ps. 136:1-12) Paul said that God "hath appointed a day, in the which he will judge the world in righteousness by that man [Jesus] whom he hath ordained; whereof he hath given assurance [trust, reliance] unto all men."—Acts 17:31

All mankind have sinned and are subject to death. Hence, all go to oblivion, the grave, *sheol*, *hades*—the Bible hell. Job expressed similar thoughts in these words, "Drought and heat consume the snow waters: so doth the grave [*sheol*] those which have sinned." (Job 24:19) Praise be to God, though, that Christ Jesus "gave himself a ransom for all, to be testified in due time." (I Tim. 2:6) May we be ever thankful to God who, "in the morning," will bring mankind out of oblivion, according to his own precious promise.—Ps. 30:5 ■