

# ***The Apostles' Creed***



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- *Intro to the Creed Itself*
- *God the Father*
- *God the Son*
  - *Christ's Birth*
  - *Christ's Crucifixion and Death*
  - *Christ's Death and Resurrection (part 2)*



# Christ's Death and Resurrection

- “We believe in... Jesus Christ... Who descended into the grave and the third day rose again from the dead...”
  - Okay, we are *not* going to go into the whole “Did Jesus go to Hell?” question again for two reasons:
    - 1) We've *covered* that already... *twice*...
    - 2) That's *not* what the Creed is even saying here
  - In the original Latin, this section reads,
    - “descendit *ad inferos*, tertia die resurrexit a mortuis,”
    - “descended into the *underworld*, and the third day rose again from the dead...”
  - And if they had meant “Hell” here, they would have used a different word...
    - But maybe *that's* what trips so many of us up...





# Christ's Death and Resurrection



Funky little teaching moment...

- Part of the problem is that today, we tend not to understand the word “Hell” and its Biblical context
  - The Bible uses words like “Hell” and “Hades” and “Tartarus” and “the grave” and “Sheol” and we just too often tend to mash them all up together and think of them all as “Hell”



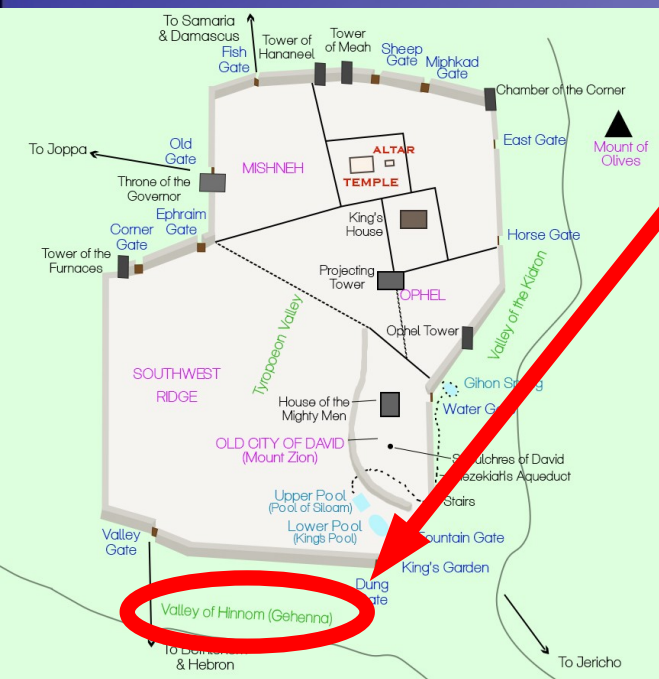
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  - But if you look at the actual usage, when the Bible speaks about what we commonly think of “Hell” it uses names like “Gehenna” or the “Lake of Fire” or that sort of thing

(do you remember what “Gehenna” refers to?)  
(that's the Valley of Hinnom—or “ben Hinnom”—where Jerusalem burned their carcasses, garbage, etc... and all of that filth and unclean stuff in the valley *never stopped* burning)  
(a place where 2 Chronicles 28:1-3 and Jeremiah 32:35 tell us that fallen Jewish leaders sacrificed children in sacrificial fires to Baal and to Molech)  
(now think of verses like Mark 9:43-48, etc., and realize that the word that Jesus kept repeating as “Hell” was “Gehenna”)  
(how would His original listeners have responded to that?)





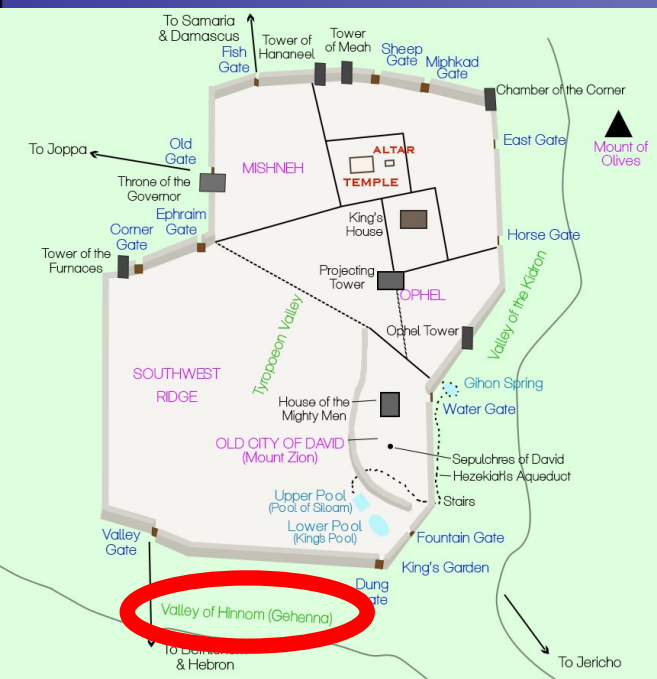
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(do you remember what “Gehenna” refers to?)  
(now check out the Latin translations of the Bible, where “Gehenna” is consistently translated as “Gehenna” throughout the New Testament  
(try reading James 3:6, but using the original Greek’s “Gehenna” for “Hell” there—how does that nuance your understanding of the verse?)



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(do you remember what “Gehenna” refers to?)  
(now check out the Latin translations of the Bible, where “Gehenna” is consistently translated as “Gehenna” throughout the New Testament and the “Lake of Fire” is translated as “Stagnum Ignis” but “Hades” or “Sheol” or “the grave” are all translated as “Inferos/Infernos”—literally the “beneath place” or the “underworld” where *all* of the dead people go after death)

(*that's* the word that the Apostles' Creed uses, *not* “Gehenna”—it's the Latin equivalent of “Sheol”)





# Christ's Death and Resurrection



Crazy deep dive into background...

- Sheol is both a simple and an ambiguous concept
  - Any good rabbi will tell you that Sheol (“שְׁאוֹל”) is basically just synonymous with “the grave”
    - It's “the underworld” in a way that doesn't imply a value judgement to it other than “you're dead when you go there”—and you'd rather not be dead
      - In Hebrew thought, everyone just automatically goes there when they die  
(for instance, Psalm 89:47-48 says  
“Remember how fleeting is my life. For what futility you have created all men!  
What man can live and not see death, or save himself from the power of Sheol?”)





# Christ's Death and Resurrection

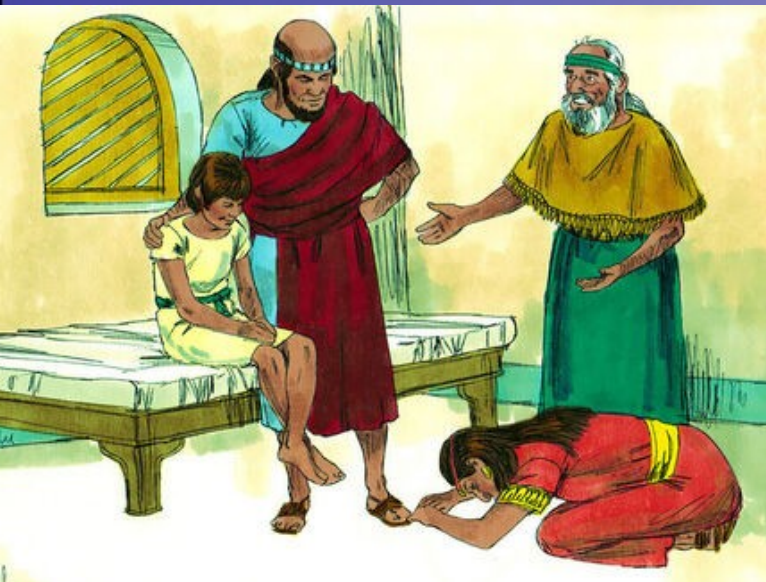


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      - In Hebrew thought, everyone just automatically goes there when they die—though some are hoping for something better, even if they have no idea how that might work

(for instance, Psalm 49:12-15 says,

“Man, despite his riches, does not endure; he is like the beasts that perish. This is the fate of those who trust in themselves, and of their followers, who approve their sayings. Like sheep they are destined for Sheol, and death will feed on them. The upright will rule over them in the morning; their forms will decay in Sheol, far from their princely mansions. But God will redeem my life from Sheol; he will surely take me to himself.”)

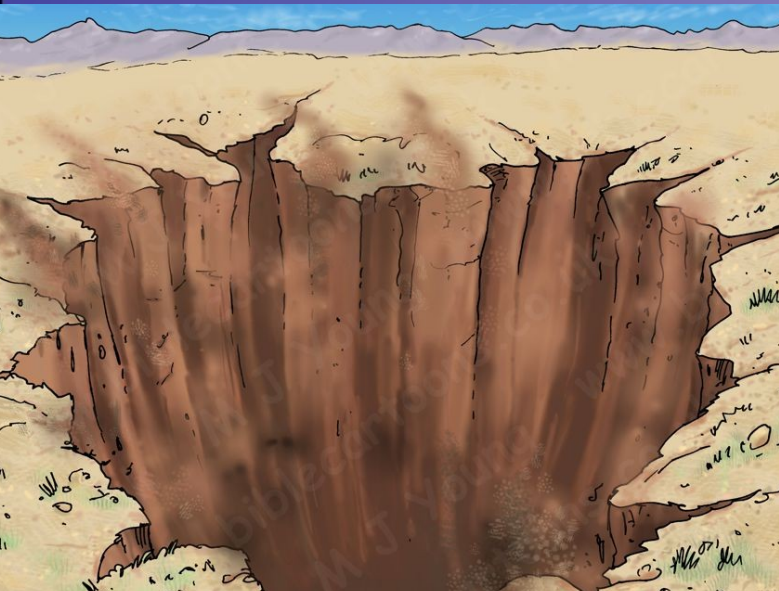


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    - Well, technically, not everyone going to Sheol is necessarily *dead* already
      - For instance, when the Korahites were found to be in rebellion against God, Numbers 16:31-33 says, “The ground under them split apart and the earth opened its mouth and swallowed them, with their households and all Korah's men and all their possessions. They went down alive into Sheol, with everything they owned; the earth closed over them, and they perished and were gone from the community.”





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    - Sometimes, Sheol is personified—even linked with a personification of destruction (“Abaddon” or “אַבְדֹּן”)
      - For instance, try reading the following verses, substituting “Sheol” and “Abaddon” for “the grave” and “destruction” (as it was written in the original Hebrew versions of these verses)—
        - Proverbs 15:11
        - Proverbs 27:20
        - Psalm 88:11
        - And then note that “Abaddon” is given in Revelation 9:11 as the name of the angel who is given charge over “the Pit” or “the Abyss” that's connected with mass death



# Christ's Death and Resurrection



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    - Well, technically, not everyone going to Sheol is necessarily *dead* already
    - Sometimes, Sheol is personified—even linked with a personification of destruction (“Abaddon” or “אַבְדֹּון”)
    - So from all of that, how would you summarize the Biblical idea of Sheol?





# Christ's Death and Resurrection



## Crazy deep dive into background...

- Sheol is both a simple and an ambiguous concept
  - Any good rabbi will tell you that Sheol (“שְׁאוֹל”) is basically just synonymous with “the grave”
  - But any good rabbi will *also* tell you that the scariest part of Sheol is the *uncertainty* of it all—that we *don't* know how it all works
    - The Essenes and Pharisees would hope for at least the *possibility* of some sort of resurrection
    - But the Sadducees were certain that there was *no* resurrection—there is *no hope* for those in Sheol
    - But even for those who hoped for at least *something*, there was literally no conception of what sort of mechanism God might make use of to resurrect people and bring them up out of the Pit
    - How crucial to understanding the impact of the genuine death and the genuine Resurrection is it for us to at least have a glimmer of the Jewish “fatalistic” mindset about the nature of Sheol?  
(i.e.; that it's not Hell, but that it's a dark, “meh” place that's probably not escapable for any of us for all eternity)

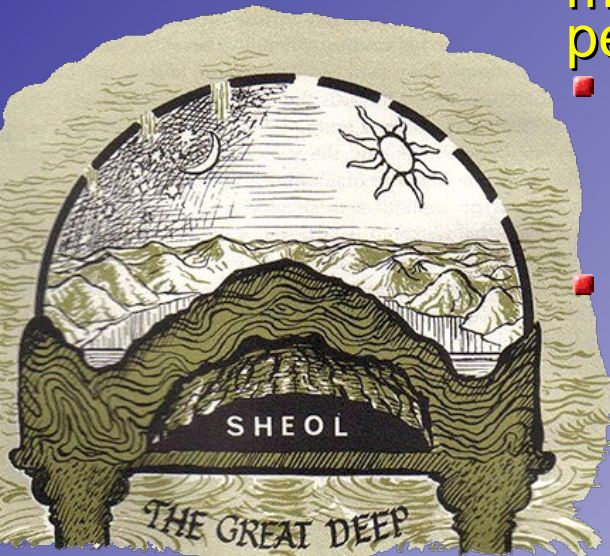


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    - The Essenes and Pharisees would hope for at least the *possibility* of some sort of resurrection
    - But the Sadducees were certain that there was *no* resurrection—there is *no hope* for those in Sheol
    - But even for those who hoped for at least *something*, there was literally no conception of what sort of mechanism God might make use of to resurrect people and bring them up out of the Pit
      - How crucial to understanding the impact of the genuine death and the genuine Resurrection is it for us to at least have a glimmer of the Jewish “fatalistic” mindset about the nature of Sheol?
- Consider that to most Jews—even for those who might hope in some sort of resurrection—“this life” is functionally the only thing we can put hope in—so how would you read Paul's argument in 1 Corinthians 15:13-20?





# Christ's Death and Resurrection



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(do you remember what “Gehenna” refers to?)  
(now check out the Latin translations of the Bible, where “Gehenna” is consistently translated as “Gehenna” throughout the New Testament and the “Lake of Fire” is translated as “Stagnum Ignis” and “Hades” or “Sheol” or “the grave” are all translated as “Inferos/Infernos”—literally the “beneath place” or the “underworld” where all of the dead people go after death)  
(and now realize that most English translations just translate most of those different words and ideas as “Hell” and leave it at that)  
(how might that distort our understanding?)



# Christ's Death and Resurrection



Crazy deep dive into background...

- It even distorts our understanding of the *other* mythologies that speak about this sort of thing
  - We get our English word “Hell” from the Old Norse figure named “Hel” who ruled in “Hel”
    - But Hel wasn't evil or the goddess of death or the like —she was just the queen of Hel (or “Helheim”), where *all* dead people end up going (again, much like the Hebrew concept of Sheol, or “the grave,” Hel was a relatively simple concept that didn't apply a value judgement to it other than “you're dead when you go there”)



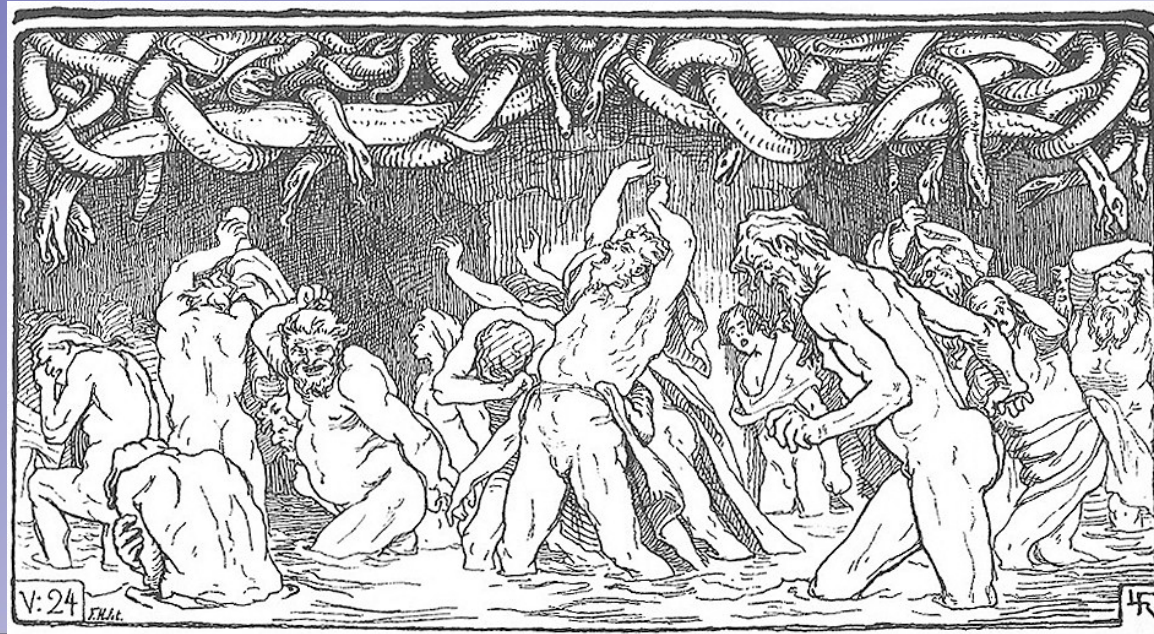


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    - It's only the area of Helheim known as “Náströnd” where the *naughty* dead would be tormented (constantly gnawed upon by the dragon Níðhöggr for all eternity)





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    - It's only the area of Helheim known as “Náströnd” where the *naughty* dead would be tormented, while the particularly *awesome* warriors would be carried up to “Asgarðr” to an area called “Valhöll” (or “Valhalla”—literally “the hall of the dead”)





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  - Or think of “Hades” who ruled in “Hades”
    - Hades wasn't usually seen by the Greeks or Romans as a particularly evil god either—he was just the god of Hades, where *all* dead people end up going
      - It's only the areas of Hades like “Tartarus” where the *naughty* dead would be tormented (like Sisyphus, who eternally rolls a huge boulder up a hill, only to have it roll right back down again) (or Tantalus, who is eternally “tantalized” by standing in a pool of fresh water, with fresh fruit within reach... but when he reaches for the fruit, the branch pulls away... and when he bends to take a drink, the water drains away) (it wasn't the god Hades who punished people—it was *the place itself* that did)



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        - (like Sisyphus, who eternally rolls a huge boulder up a hill, only to have it roll right back down again)
        - (or Tantalus, who is eternally “tantalized” by standing in a pool of fresh water, with fresh fruit within reach...)
        - (interestingly, *this* is the word that Peter used in 2 Peter 2:4—and, by extension, implied in 1 Peter 3:19—to describe where fallen angels have been languishing)
- Why did he use a clearly *pagan* term?





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(or “Elysium”—literally “the fields of joy”)  
 (“where life is easiest for men. No snow is there, nor heavy storm, nor ever rain, but ever does ocean send up blasts of the shrill-blowing West Wind that they may give cooling to men”—from Homer's *Odyssey*)





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  - Or think of “Hades” who ruled in “Hades”
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      - It's only the areas of Hades like “Tartarus” where the *naughty* dead would be tormented, while the particularly *awesome* people would be carried up to the Elysian Fields and the vast majority of people just wander through the Asphodel Fields (a name that's a play on words—it could mean “flowers” or it could mean “ashes” or it could mean “where ashes bloom like flowers” or “where flowers are made of ash” or whatever) (long story short, it's kind of a “meh” place that just evokes thinking of “the grave”—again, much like Sheol)





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    - Hades wasn't usually seen by the Greeks or Romans as a particularly evil god either—he was just the god of Hades, where *all* dead people end up going
  - Now think about our **decidedly un-Biblical perception of Satan as the ruler of Hell, who punishes sinners**
    - Satan is not—nor ever was—a ruler in Hell, but rather just another future inmate like lost sinners
      - Read Matthew 25:41
      - Read Jude 1:6
      - Read 2 Peter 2:4
      - Read Revelation 20:10
        - Read Revelation 20:13-14  
(ultimately even Sheol—the grave—and death itself will be emptied, then thrown in there with them)

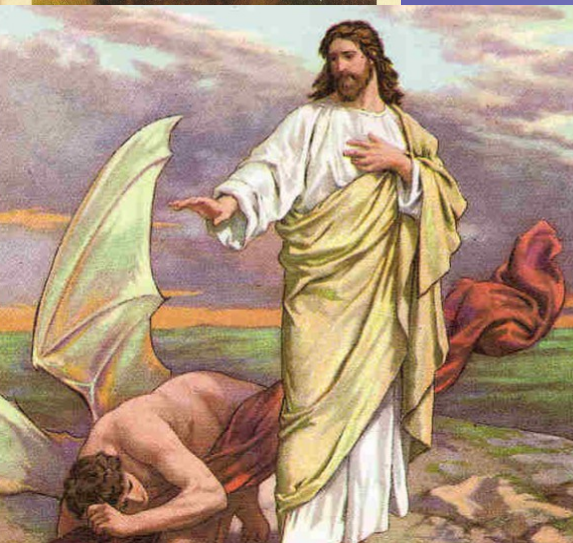
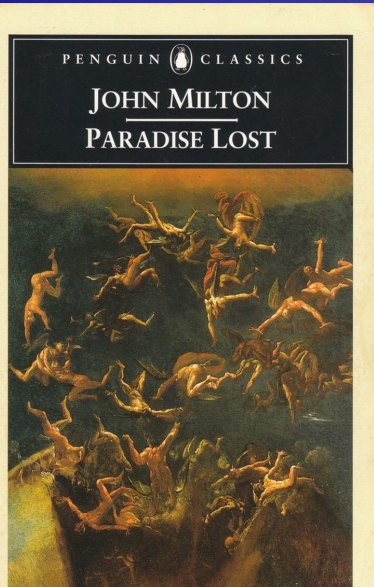


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      - Read Jude 1:6
      - Read 2 Peter 2:4
      - Read Revelation 20:10
      - **Read Revelation 12:9**
        - Milton was wrong—Satan wasn't cast down to rule in Hell when he fell, but cast down to prowl here on Earth (see 1 Peter 5:8)



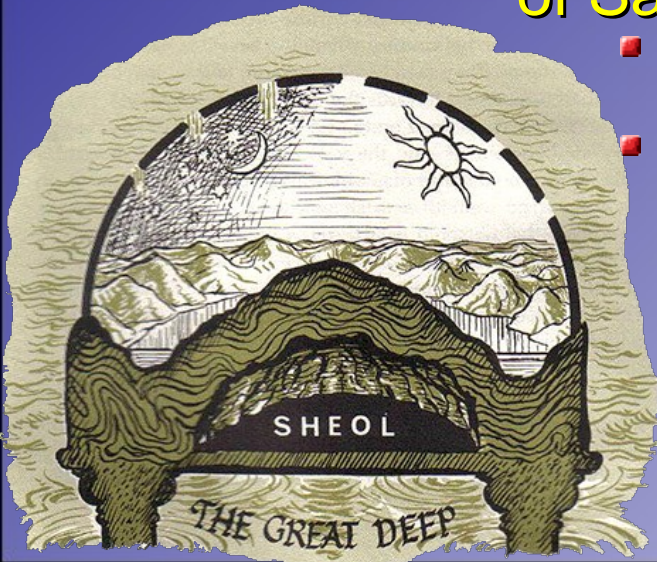


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    - Satan is not—nor ever was—a ruler in Hell, but rather just another future inmate like lost sinners
    - Again, all of this is to say that it's not *Satan* who punishes people in Hell—it's *the place itself* that is the punishment
      - Hell is not a “realm” ruled by some dark god—it's an utter *disconnect* from the *true* God
      - Read Psalm 139:7-8
        - So are Sheol and Hell the same thing?
          - The Creed is talking about Sheol

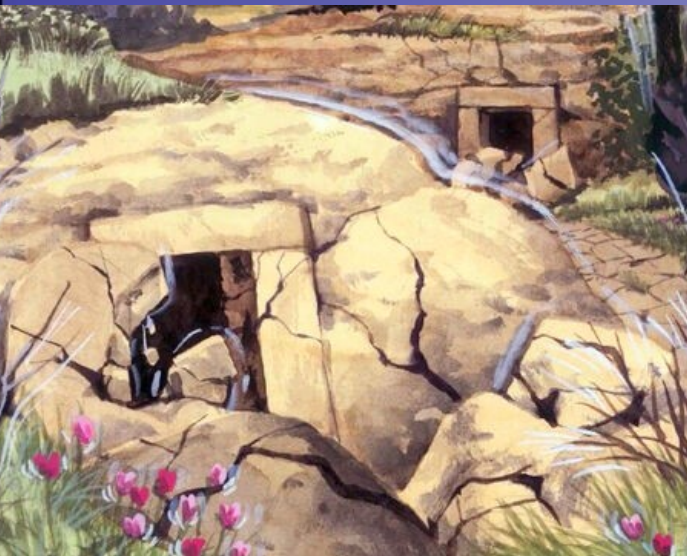


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  - The Bible uses words like “Hell” and “Hades” and “Tartarus” and “the grave” and “Sheol” and we just too often tend to mash them all up together and think of them all as “Hell”
    - But if you look at the actual usage, when the Bible speaks about what we commonly think of “Hell” it uses names like “Gehenna” or the “Lake of Fire”
    - And *that's* what Jesus means when He uses the term “Hades”—not speaking of a “Hell” like “Gehenna” but rather speaking of “the grave” like “Sheol”
      - How might that affect our understanding?
        - Read what Jesus says in Revelation 1:18
        - Read what John saw in Revelation 6:7-8
        - Read what Jesus says in Matthew 16:18
        - Read what Peter says Acts 2:25-27, 31
        - How is our understanding of these verses nuanced if they're actually talking about the grave instead of about an eternal Hell?





# Christ's Death and Resurrection

- “We believe in... Jesus Christ... Who descended into the grave and the third day rose again from the dead...”
  - This portion of the Creed is trying to be very clear, and yet we still run off in our own crazy directions with it because we smush it all together, but still want it all to make sense
    - But all the Creed is trying to say is that Jesus truly, physically died and was as dead as Jacob Marley...  
... but then He suddenly *stopped* being dead
    - And His resurrection makes all the difference for the rest of us
      - Read John 14:3
      - Read Hebrews 6:19-20
      - Read Hebrews 7:23-25
      - Read Romans 6:8-11
      - Read Revelation 1:18
    - Why is Christ's genuine descent into the grave and His genuine ascent in Resurrection so crucial?
      - How should that affect how we as Christians live out our faith?

