

## **THE WICKED DEAD: ARE THEY NOW BEING PUNISHED?**

BY ELDER J. N. ANDREWS.

THIS is a question of awful solemnity, and should not be treated as a matter of speculation and idle curiosity. By far the larger part of mankind live in *neglect* of the great duties of religion, if not in open *contempt* of its most solemn commands. Such has ever been the fact with our fallen race. This vast throng of sinful men, for long ages have been pouring through the gates of death, and its dark portals hide them from our further view. What is the condition of this innumerable multitude of impenitent dead? Where are they, and what now is their real state?

To this question two answers are returned: 1. They are now suffering the torments of the damned. This is the answer of all the self-styled orthodox creeds. 2. They are now sleeping in the dust of the earth, awaiting the resurrection to damnation. This answer is believed by Seventh-day Adventists to be the harmonious teaching of the Scriptures on this subject. Which of these two answers is the true and proper one?

1. There is no statement in the Bible relating to the wicked dead in general, where they are in any way represented as in a state or place of torment. Nor is there any instance in the Bible where men are threatened that they shall, if wicked, enter an abode of misery at death. Even the warning of Jesus in Matt.x,28, which is thought to contain the strongest proof of the soul's immortality that can be found in all the Bible, says not one word concerning the suffering of the soul in hades, the place of the dead, but relates wholly to what shall be inflicted upon "both soul and body in gehenna," the place of punishment for the resurrected wicked.

2. There being no general statement in the Bible representing the wicked dead as now in torment, and no instance in which the living wicked are threatened with consignment to the furnace of fire till after the judgment, we now search out the particular cases which may be thought to teach such fact. There are just two of these cases which may be cited as proving that some of the wicked dead are now in torment, and from these if at all, the torment of the wicked dead in general must be deduced. These cases are the Sodomites, "set forth for an example, suffering the vengeance of eternal fire" [Jude 7]; and the rich man lifting up his eyes in torment. Luke xvi,22,23. These are the only cases that can be cited from the Scriptures in proof that the wicked dead are now undergoing the punishment of their sins.

3. The case of the Sodomites then claims our attention. The text reads thus: "Even as Sodom and Gomorrah, and the cities about them in like manner, giving themselves over to fornication and going after strange flesh, are set forth for an example, suffering the vengeance of eternal fire," Jude 7. Does the apostle mean to say that the Sodomites are now in the flames of eternal fire? The clause "suffering the vengeance of eternal fire," is modified by the words "set forth for an example," which immediately precede it. In fact the real meaning of the apostle in what he says of the sufferings of the Sodomites can only be determined by giving this phrase, "set forth for an example," its proper bearing. To be "set forth for an example" to wicked men "suffering the vengeance of eternal fire," one of two things must be true: 1. They must now be in a state of suffering in plain view of

the inhabitants of the earth; or 2. They must be somewhere in the Scriptures set forth in the very act of suffering the vengeance of fire from heaven. If the first of these views be correct, then the Sodomites are indeed now in torment. But that view is not correct; for the very place where Sodom was burned is now covered by the Dead Sea.

That the second view is correct, is manifest from Gen.xix,24-28. "Then the Lord rained upon Sodom and upon Gomorrah brimstone and fire from the Lord out of heaven; and he overthrew those cities, and all the plain, and all the inhabitants of the cities, and that which grew upon the ground. But his wife looked back from behind him, and she became a pillar of salt. And Abraham gat up early in the morning to the place where he stood before the Lord. And he looked toward Sodom and Gomorrah, and toward all the land of the plain, and beheld, and lo, the smoke of the country went up as the smoke of a furnace."

Here the Sodomites are set forth for an example in the very act of suffering the vengeance of eternal fire. Are they to this day in that fire? Peter bears testimony, and it is the more valuable in this case, because the chapter containing it is almost an exact parallel to the epistle of Jude. Thus he says: "Turning the cities of Sodom and Gomorrah INTO ASHES condemned them with an overthrow, making them an ensample unto those that after should live ungodly." 2Pet.ii,6. Peter thus shows that the fire did its proper office upon the men of Sodom, and that they were not in his day alive in its flames. Their case is an example of what God will do to all the wicked after the resurrection to damnation, when fire shall descend out of heaven upon them and the whole earth become a lake of fire. Rev.xx; 2Pet.iii; Mal.iv.

The testimony of Jeremiah which represents the punishment of Sodom as comparatively brief, must complete this evidence: "For the punishment of the iniquity of the daughter of my people is greater than the punishment of the sin of Sodom, that was overthrown as in a moment, and no hands stayed on her." Lam.iv,6.

4. The language of Jude concerning the Sodomites has therefore no relation to their condition in death, and cannot be made to furnish evidence that the wicked dead are now in a state of torment. There remains therefore, the case of a single individual—the rich man—out of which to deduce the doctrine that the wicked dead are now in the lake of fire. This is certainly a fact worthy of note.

5. The account of the rich man stands at the conclusion of a discourse made up of parables. Thus Luke xx, presents us with the parable of the lost sheep, the ten pieces of silver and the prodigal son. The sixteenth chapter is made up of two parables, the unjust steward, and the rich man and Lazarus. It is true that the account of the rich man and Lazarus is not called a parable by the sacred penman; but the fact is the same with respect to the two cases which precede this; and the three are introduced in the same manner: "A certain man had two sons;" "There was a certain rich man which had a steward;" "There was a certain rich man which was clothed in purple and fine linen."

6. It is generally admitted that a parable cannot be made the foundation of any doctrine, or be used to disprove doctrines established by plain and literal testimony. But the doctrine of the present punishment of the wicked dead, rests upon a single parable, and that parable the case of a single individual.

7. The proper interpretation of any portion of the Sacred Record will show that it is in divine harmony with the general tenor and plain facts of the whole book.

8. Three of the dead are here introduced, Abraham, Lazarus and the rich man, and all represented as in hades. "In hell (Greek, hades) he lifted up his eyes, being

in torments, and seeth Abraham afar off, and Lazarus in his bosom.” Hades is the place of all the dead, the righteous as well as the wicked. Thus at the resurrection of the just, they shout victory over death and hades from whose power they are then delivered. “O death where is thy sting? O grave (Greek, hades), where is thy victory?” 1Cor.xv,55. The wicked dead are in hades; for at the resurrection to damnation hades delivers them up. Rev.xx,13. The resurrection of Christ did not leave his soul in hades; i.e., he then came forth from the place of the dead.

Hades therefore is the common receptacle of the dead. Those who are in hades are not alive but dead. “DEATH and HADES delivered up the DEAD which were in them.” Even the language of Abraham implies that all the party were then dead. To Dives he says, Thou in thy *lifetime* [now passed] receivedst thy good things, and likewise Lazarus evil things, but now he is comforted, and thou art tormented.” Classing himself with dead Lazarus he adds: “Between us and you there is a great gulf fixed.” The rich man then begs that Lazarus may be sent to his brethren, declaring that if one went unto them *from the dead* they will repent. And Abraham denying his request said that they would not be persuaded “though one rose *from the dead*.” This scene transpires in hades, the place of the dead, and those who act in it are three dead persons.

9. Here is found a clue to the proper interpretation of this parable. “They have Moses and the prophets; let them hear them.” If they hear not Moses and the prophets, neither will they be persuaded though one rose from the dead.” This language directs the living to Moses and the prophets for instruction concerning man’s condition in hades. In their testimony will be found adequate warning to the living wicked, and facts of great importance bearing upon the proper interpretation of this peculiar passage.

10. The Old Testament was written in Hebrew, and the New Testament in Greek. Here an important fact is to be noticed. The Old Testament uses the word sheol to designate that place which in the New Testament is called hades. Thus the sixteenth Psalm, written in Hebrew says, “Thou wilt not leave my soul in sheol.” The New Testament quoting this text and expressing the words in Greek says, “Thou wilt not leave my soul in hades.” Acts.ii,27. The Hebrew term sheol as used in the Old Testament is therefore the same in meaning with the Greek word hades as used in the New. In other words the hades of Christ and the apostles is the sheol of Moses and the prophets.

11. It is well here to observe that the Hebrew word sheol is used in the Old Testament sixty-five times.

It is rendered grave thirty-one times. Gen.xxxvii,35; xlii,38; xlv,29,31; 1Sam.ii,6; 1Kings ii,6,9; Job vii,9; xiv,13; xvii,13; xxi,13; xxiv,19; Ps.vi,5; xxx,3; xxxi,17; xlix,14,15; lxxxvii,3; lxxxix,48; cxli,7; Prov.i,12; xxx,16; Eccl.ix,10; Cant.viii,6; Isa.xiv,11; xxxviii,10,18; Hosea xiii,14; Eze.xxxi,15. It is rendered pit three times as follows: Num.xvi,30,33; Job xvii,16. It is also rendered hell in thirty-one instances as follows: Deut.xxxii,22; 2Sam.xxii,6; Job xi,8; xxvi,6; Ps.ix,17; xvi,10; xviii,5; lv,15; lxxxvi,13; cxvi,3; cxxxix,8; Prov.v,5; vii,27; ix,18; xv,11,24; xxii,14; xxvii,20; Is.v,14; xiv,9,15; xxviii,13,18; lvii,9; Eze.xxxi,16,17; xxxii,21,27; Amos ix,2; Jonah ii,2; Hab.ii,5.

Hades, the New Testament term for the sheol of the Old Testament, is used eleven times, and in ten of these it is rendered hell. Matt.xi,23; xvi,18; Luke x,15; xvi,23; Acts ii,27,31; Rev.i,18; vi,8; xx,13,14. It is once rendered grave. 1Cor. xv,55.

12. Moses and the prophets were indeed divinely inspired on every point concerning which they wrote; but on the point respecting which we seek light, they have the special endorsement of our Lord. We may therefore confide in their teaching concerning hades or sheol, assured that the great facts revealed through them by the Spirit of God, will be found in divine harmony with the teaching of Christ and the apostles.

13. The texts quoted above, relating to hades or sheol, reveal to us many important facts. We learn that sheol is the common receptacle of the dead whether they are righteous or wicked. Thus Jacob expressed his faith in what should be his state in death when he said, "I will go down into sheol unto my son mourning." Gen.xxxvii,35; xlii,38; xlv,29,31. Korah and his company went down into sheol. Num.xvi,30,33. Joab went down into sheol. 1Kings ii,6,9. Job was to be hid in sheol and wait there till the resurrection. Job xiv,13; xvii,13. All the wicked go into sheol. Ps.ix,17; xxxi,17; xlix,14. All mankind go there. Ps.lxxxix,48; Eccl. ix,10.

14. Sheol or hades receives the whole man at death.

Jacob expected to go down with his gray hairs to sheol. Gen.xlii,38. Korah, Dathan and Abiram went into sheol bodily. Num.xvi,30,33. The soul of the Saviour left sheol at his resurrection. Ps.xvi,10; Acts ii,27,31. The Psalmist being restored from dangerous sickness testified that his soul was saved from going into sheol. Thus he says, "O Lord my God I cried unto thee, and thou hast healed me. O Lord thou hast brought up my soul from the grave [Heb. sheol], thou hast kept me alive that I should not go down to the pit." Ps.xxx,2,3; See also lxxxvi,13; Prov.xxiii,14. He also shows that all men must die, and that no one can deliver his soul from sheol. Ps.lxxxix,48.

15. The sorrows of hell, three times mentioned by the Psalmist, are, as shown by the connection, the pangs which precede or lead to death. 2Sam.xxii,5-7; Ps.xviii,4-6; cxvi,1-9. They are in each case experienced by the righteous. The cruelty of sheol is the remorseless power with which it swallows up all mankind. Cant.viii,6; Ps.lxxxix,48.

16. Those who go down to sheol must remain there till their resurrection. At the coming of Christ all the righteous are delivered from sheol. All the living wicked are then "turned into sheol," and for one thousand years sheol holds all wicked men in its dread embrace. Then death and sheol or hades deliver up the wicked dead, and the judgment is executed upon them in the lake of fire. Compare Job vii,9,10; xiv,12-14; xvii,13; xix,25-27; Rev.xx,4-6; 1Cor.xv,51-55; Ps.ix,17; Rev. xx,11-15.

17. Sheol, the invisible place or state of the dead is IN THE EARTH BENEATH. Though it is rendered grave thirty-one times, it is not the word usually so rendered in the Old Testament; for it embraces in its meaning not only the locality of the dead, but also their state or condition. All the passages which speak of the location of sheol or hades, represent it as *beneath*. It is always in the bosom of the earth, sometimes it is in the nethermost parts of the earth. Num.xvi,30,33; Ps.cxli,7; Is.v,14; xiv,9-20; Eze.xxxi,15-18; xxxii,18-32. Referring to the fire now burning in the heart of the earth which shall at the last day swallow up the earth in its fiery gulf, Moses represents the Almighty as saying: "For a fire is kindled in mine anger, and shall burn unto the lowest sheol, and shall consume the earth with her increase, and set on fire the foundation of the mountains." Deut.xxxii,22. Jonah went down into sheol, when, in the belly of the whale, he descended into

the third Heaven, but whether Lazarus himself should be raised from among the dead ones. This shows that the conversation did not relate to the coming back of a disembodied spirit; and in fact that they were not disembodied spirits that here conversed.

The parable of Dives and Lazarus, does not therefore teach the present punishment of the wicked dead. And as there is nothing else on which to rest the doctrine, it must be given up as having no foundation in the Bible. The testimony shows that the wicked dead are asleep in sheol where they await the resurrection to damnation. The following texts show that the resurrection and judgment of the wicked take place before they are punished; a doctrine in the highest degree reasonable and sustained by many plain testimonies.

1. "The Lord knoweth how to deliver the godly out of temptations, and to RE-SERVE the unjust unto the day of judgment to be punished." 2Pet.ii,9. The day of judgment must arrive before the retribution of the ungodly.

2. "The heavens and the earth which are now, by the same word are kept in store, reserved unto fire against the day of judgment and perdition of ungodly men." 2Pet.iii,7. The perdition of ungodly men comes at the judgment.

3. "The wicked is RESERVED unto the day of destruction they shall be brought forth to the day of wrath." Job xxi,30. The next scripture will explain this.

4. "Marvel not at this; for the hour is coming in the which all that are in their graves shall hear his voice, and shall come forth; they that have done good unto the resurrection of life; and they that have done evil unto the resurrection of damnation." John v,28,29.

5. "The wicked dead are raised and judged, then cast into the lake of fire." Rev. xx,11-15.

6. "Vengeance is taken upon all the ungodly together, AFTER the second advent." Jude 14,15.

7. The wicked are cast into the furnace of fire at the end, and not before. Matt. xiii,30,39-43,49,50.

8. The burning day is the time when the wicked meet their fate. Mal.iv; Ps.xxi,9.

9. The wrath of God waits till the day of wrath. Rom.ii,5-9.

10. Tribulation to the ungodly comes after the advent. 2Thess.i.

11. The wicked dead are not punished till after the seventh trumpet. Rev. xi,15,18.

12. The judge says, "Depart from me ye cursed," and then, for the first time, the ungodly enter the furnace of fire.

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dead Abraham as though he were alive, gives us this same key thus: “For all live unto him.” Luke xx,38. Abraham though dead, is spoken of as alive, because in the purpose of God he is to live again.

32. By this parable our Lord illustrates several great truths. 1. The folly and vanity of riches. 2. The worth of true piety, though attended by the deepest poverty. 3. The importance of that great lesson inculcated in the previous parable, to make friends of the mammon of unrighteousness. Luke xvi,9; 1Tim.vi,17-19. The rich man had neglected this, wasting all on himself, though wretched, suffering Lazarus lay at his gate. The folly of this criminal neglect is shown in that part of this parable in which the rich man in his distress, as if remembering the past, is represented as asking of Lazarus the water that could be brought on the tip of his finger, and even this is denied. 4. The certainty of future recompense, and the great contrast that it will make with the present state of things. 5. The sufficiency of the Scriptures to instruct and warn mankind. 6. But to make this text teach that the righteous dead are now recompensed, would be to array a parable against our Lord’s plain statement that the recompense of the righteous is at the resurrection of the just. Luke xiv,14. 7. Or to make the passage teach that the wicked dead are now in the lake of fire, is to make one of the Saviour’s parables conflict in its teaching with his own grand description of the final judgment, in which the wicked enter the everlasting fire at the dreadful mandate, “Depart from me ye cursed.” Matt.xxv,41; Rev.xx,11-15.

33. Lazarus died a beggar. But he rests in hope, an heir to the inheritance promised Abraham. Eternal life and endless felicity are his, and by personification it is said that he is “comforted.” Dives lives in the greatest splendor, and dies an impenitent man. The lake of fire is to be his portion. By personification he is represented as in it already. This is in accordance with the teaching of Paul, when he says of God that he calleth things that be not, as though they were. That is, God speaks of things that exist only in his purpose just as though they had a present existence; because they shall surely exist; even as he called Abraham the father of many nations, when as yet he had no son. Gen.xvii; Rom.iv,16,17. This is the more clearly seen when we consider that to Lazarus in the silence of hades there will not be a moment between his death, in the grounds of the rich man, and his resurrection to eternal life. And not a moment to the rich man between the closing of his eyes in death, and his opening them in the resurrection to damnation.

34. That we have done right in hearing the testimony of “Moses and the prophets” on this subject we have the authority of the parable itself. And we have this further evidence of the truth of this exposition that without doing violence to a single text we have a divine harmony on the subject of the dead in hades, in all that is said by Moses and the prophets, and by Christ and the apostles.

That those who conversed together are not disembodied spirits, but personified dead men, is further proved by the following facts: 1. Not one word is said of the spirit of any person named. 2. This conversation takes place in hades which the sacred writers affirm to be in the depths of the earth. 3. The persons named are men that had lived, the one clothed in purple, the other covered with sores, and both were then dead. But these dead men have bodily organs, as eyes, fingers, tongues, &c. 4. But the truth on this point is sealed by the fact that Lazarus could only return to warn the rich man’s brethren by being *raised from the dead*. “Neither will they be persuaded though one rose from the dead.” *Greek, ean tis ek nekron anaste*. It was not whether the spirit of Lazarus should descend from

the depths of the mighty waters, where none but dead men had ever been. Jonah i; ii. Korah and his company went into sheol alive; that is, the earth swallowed them up while yet alive. Num.xvi.

18. The righteous do not praise God in sheol. Thus David testifies: “In death there is no remembrance of thee; in sheol who shall give thee thanks?” Ps.vi,5. And Hezekiah when delivered from death in answer to prayer expresses the same great truth: “I said in the cutting off of my days, I shall go to the gates of sheol: I am deprived of the residue of my years. . . Behold, for peace I had great bitterness: but thou hast in love to my SOUL delivered it *from the pit of corruption*: for thou hast cast all my sins behind thy back. For sheol cannot praise thee, death cannot celebrate thee; they that go down into the pit cannot hope for thy truth. The living, the living, he shall praise thee, as I do this day; the father to the children shall make known thy truth.” Is.xxxvii,10-19; Ps.cxv,17; cxlvi,1-4.

19. The wicked in sheol are silent in death. Thus David prays: “Let the wicked be ashamed and let them be silent in sheol.” Ps.xxxi,17. See also 1Sam.ii,9; Ps.cxv,17, last clause.

20. Sheol is a place of silence, secrecy, sleep, rest, darkness, corruption and worms. “So man lieth down and riseth not; till the heavens be no more, they shall not awake nor be raised out of their sleep. Oh that thou wouldst hide me in sheol, that thou wouldst keep me secret till thy wrath be past, that thou wouldst appoint me a set time, and remember me. If a man die, shall he live again? All the days of my appointed time will I wait, till my change come. Thou shalt call and I will answer thee: thou wilt have a desire to the work of thine hands.” Job xiv,12-15. “If I wait sheol is mine house: I have made my bed in the darkness. I have said to corruption, Thou art my father: to the worm, Thou art my mother and my sister. And where is now my hope? As for my hope who shall see it? They shall go down to the bars of sheol, when our rest together is in the dust.” Job xvii,13-16; iv,11-19; Ps.lxxxviii,10-12.

21. There is no knowledge in sheol. Thus writes the wise man, the Spirit of inspiration bearing testimony through him: “Whatsoever thy hand findeth to do, do it with thy might: for there is no work, nor device, nor knowledge, nor wisdom in sheol whither thou goest.” Eccl.ix,4-6,10.

22. Such are the great facts concerning sheol or hades, as revealed to us in the books of “Moses and the prophets.” Yet we have the following cases in these same writings, in which the dead in sheol in the nethermost parts of the earth converse together, and are comforted or taunted by each other, or in which they weep bitterly, refusing comfort.

The case of the king of Babylon is a noted instance of this. When he is overthrown and goes down to sheol, the DEAD, for sheol has no others in its dark abode, are stirred up to meet him. The kings that had been conquered and destroyed by the king of Babylon in the days of his prosperity, now rise up from their thrones in that dark abode, and mock him with feigned obeisance as in life they had rendered real homage. Now they taunt him saying, “Art thou become weak as we? Art thou become like unto us?” Those that see him shall narrowly look upon him saying, “Is this the man that made the earth to tremble, that did shake kingdoms.” Is.xiv,9-20.

23. Pharaoh and his army slaughtered in battle with the king of Babylon, are set forth in this same manner. The slain upon the field of battle being buried indiscriminately, and friend and foe cast down together into pits, into the nether parts

of the earth,” into sheol, “the strong among the mighty speak to him out of the midst of sheol.” And this sheol in the nether parts of the earth full of the dead, is contrasted with “the land of the living.” These slaughtered soldiers went down to sheol with their weapons of war, and their swords they “laid under their heads.” Pharaoh, lying among them, and seeing the multitude of his enemies that were slain, is “comforted” at the sight. See this remarkable prophecy, Eze.xxxii,17-32; xxxi,15-18.

24. Perhaps the case of Rachel is even more remarkable than these. Long ages after her decease and entrance into sheol, a dreadful slaughter of her posterity takes place. Upon this, Rachel breaks forth into lamentation and bitter weeping, and refuses to be comforted, because her children are not. Then the Lord says to her, “Refrain *thy voice from weeping and thine eyes from tears*: for thy work shall be rewarded saith the Lord.” Jer.xxxi,15-17; Matt.ii,17,18; Gen.xxxv,18-20.

25. That Rachel did literally weep and shed bitter tears at the murder of her children nearly 2000 years after her entrance into sheol, no one will assert. Nor will it be maintained that the slaughtered Egyptians and Chaldeans lying in sheol with their swords under their heads, were able to converse together in the nether parts of the earth; and that one was literally “comforted” or the other literally “ashamed.” Equally difficult is it to believe that the kings who had been overthrown by the king of Babylon were literally seated on thrones in sheol deep in the earth, and that when he was cast down to sheol they arose from their thrones and mocked him, declaring that he was now become weak as they. Please compare the following texts on the king of Babylon. Jer.li,39,57; Dan.v,1-4,30; Is.xiv,4-30.

26. Taking our leave of “Moses and the prophets,” whose testimony on this subject has the direct endorsement of our Lord, let us now return to the case of Dives and Lazarus. Luke xvi,19-31. Lazarus lived in the deepest poverty; too helpless to walk, or even to stand, he was *laid* at the rich man’s gate; he had no other food than the crumbs, perhaps grudgingly bestowed from the table of the rich man; and no other nurses than the dogs which licked his sores. In process of time, death comes to his relief; but his burial is not mentioned, though that of the rich man, who died soon after, is distinctly named. It is likely that the dead beggar covered with sores, was disposed of with as little trouble as possible; in the sight of man, he had the burial of a dog; but this poor man, forsaken of all earthly friends, and apparently unnoticed of Heaven, had, unseen to mortal eye, such a burial as the wealth of the whole world could not command. The angels of God took part as his bearers to that quiet resting place from which, by and by, when hades gives up the righteous dead, at the sound of the last trumpet, they shall take him up through the air, to meet his triumphant Redeemer. Till that time, we leave him asleep in Jesus, resting in hope, with Abraham, the father of the faithful, and all the ancient worthies who have not yet received the promises. Heb.xi,8-16,39,40.

27. The rich man lived in luxury, faring sumptuously every day. To the eye of all beholders his lot was to be envied, and that of the beggar to be despised. But he dies also, and of him it is recorded that he was buried. All that wealth could purchase, all that pride could exhibit of earthly pomp and grandeur were no doubt displayed at his funeral. But there were, no doubt, no angels of God to participate in it. He had lived for himself, neglecting the great preparation for the future. He goes down to hades a lost man, waiting the resurrection to damnation. As the Douay Bible reads, “he was buried in hell,” i.e., in hades or sheol. Here he lifted up his eyes being in torment, and seeth Abraham afar off and Lazarus in his bo-

som. Then as though calling to mind the littleness of the favors he had bestowed on Lazarus, he asks a favor at the hands of the despised beggar—the smallest indeed that he could ask—that Lazarus should dip the tip of his finger in water and cool his tongue. This being denied, he asks that Lazarus may be sent to warn his brethren. And this also was refused because they had Moses and the prophets whose testimony was sufficient.

28. This scene transpires in hades or sheol, which, as we have seen, is in the nether parts of the earth. The place is one of darkness and silence, where there is neither wisdom nor knowledge. It is the place of the dead, and those who are therein are called “the congregation of the dead.” Prov.xxi,16. In the utter darkness of hades, how can men see each other? “In the land of forgetfulness,” how can they remember the events of their past lives? In a place where there is no knowledge, how could Dives know Abraham whom he had never seen? Where there is no work nor device, how could he devise a plan to warn his wicked brethren? And in hades where there is no wisdom, how could Abraham give such wise answers? In hades where the wicked are silent in death, how could Dives converse? As the righteous cannot praise God in hades, and do not even remember his name, how does it happen that they can so well understand and converse on every thing else?

29. We answer these questions precisely as we do those which arise from the testimony of “Moses and the prophets,” to which we are in this parable referred. When Rachel long dead, is represented as shedding tears and lamenting the murder of her children; when the mighty dead converse with Pharaoh in hades, and he is “comforted” with what he sees in the nether parts of the earth; and when the king of Babylon is mocked by dead kings who rise up from their thrones in hades and taunt him with his overthrow; when we read all this of that place where all is darkness, silence, secrecy and death,—a place within the earth itself, and when we consider that this parable relates to this very place, and cites us to these very testimonies for information on the subject, it becomes evident that one common answer pertains to all these questions.

30. The dead are personified and made to speak and act in reference to the facts of their respective cases as though they were alive. Why should not the Spirit of God do this when it has seen fit to personify every kind of inanimate thing? Thus the blood of Abel cried to God. Gen.iv. The stone by the sanctuary heard all the words of Israel. Josh.xxiv. The trees held an election and made speeches. Judges ix. The thistle proposes a matrimonial alliance with the cedar. 2Kings xiv; 2Chron.xxv. All the trees sing out at the presence of God. 1Chron.xvi. The stone cries out of the wall, and the beam answers it. Hab.ii. The hire of the laborers kept back by fraud, cries to God. James v. Dead Abel yet speaketh. Heb.xi. The souls under the altar slain for their testimony and who do not live till the first resurrection, cry to God for vengeance, Rev.vi; xx. And finally death and hades are both personified,—the one riding a pale horse, the other following, and both cutting down mankind. And this personification is still further carried out, when both, as though living enemies, are at last cast into the fire of gehenna. Rev.vi; xx; 1Cor. xv; Hosea xiii,14.

31. The apostle Paul has given us the key to all this, when he says of God, that he “quickeneth the dead, and calleth those things which be not, as though they were.” Rom.iv,17. And our Lord, in that remarkable discussion with the Sadducees, in which he proved the resurrection of the dead by the fact that God spoke of