

## The Sons of Korah & Two Important Places

Psalms 48 & 49

### Korah's rebellion and the feeding of Sheol (Numbers 16)

The Sons of Korah wrote 11 psalms, and we will look at two of them today.

#### A Place Down Low: Sheol in Psalm 49

Psalm 49 refers to *Sheol* more than any other psalm (see verses 14-15):  
14 Like sheep they are appointed for Sheol; death shall be their shepherd,  
and the upright shall rule over them in the morning. Their form shall be  
consumed in Sheol, with no place to dwell. **15 But God will ransom my soul  
from the power of Sheol, for he will receive me.**

*What can wealth buy you?* It cannot save you from death—from Sheol. (49:1-12)

What is *Sheol*? It is a Hebrew word used in the Old Testament:  
*Sheol* refers to:

1. The realm of the dead
2. A place "beneath" us
3. A devouring force that swallows all people
4. A destination with no return
5. A symbol of mystery, fear, and the unknown

Two sidenotes: Clarifications about *Sheol* and the Afterlife

1. *Sheol* is *not* the whole story/ full picture concerning the afterlife
2. What about the Apostles' Creed: "he descended into hell"?
  - This old English translation "hell" is misleading. Hell, originally meant *Sheol* or *Hades* (which is clearly true of Jesus, see Psalm 16:10), but now the word means the final state of fiery retribution for the godless (*Gehenna*). See WLC Q50.

Who wants to think about death? I don't. But God wants us to. It's all over Scripture.

- Psalm 49:15 is so important: *Sheol* is inevitable and ominous, but no worry—God will ransom my soul from it!

#### A Place Up High: Zion in Psalm 48

Upon Mount Zion, Jerusalem is "the city of our God" (48:8)

- Wait, does God have a favorite city? Yes! The Sons of Korah answer this elsewhere (Ps 87:1-2).

Why this city? One might say it is the opposite of *Sheol*!

- "Beautiful in elevation" (48:2), "A fortress" (48:3), the temple is there (48:9), the king is there (48:2)

What about Mt. Zion today?

- About the earthly Jerusalem, Christians might disagree. Earthly Jerusalem has changed, but the *heavenly Mount Zion*—described in Hebrews 12:22–24—is where the true temple and eternal King now dwell.

#### Questions for Further Reflection and Application:

1. Read Psalm 49.
  - a) Scripture encourages us to think about death and be ready for it. How does the teaching about *Sheol* in Psalm 49 prepare you?
  - b) Consider especially 49:15. What do you think the Sons of Korah knew about God that made this statement possible?
2. Read Psalm 48 and Hebrews 12:22–24. Consider the words of the old hymn, "*We're marching to Zion, beautiful, beautiful Zion. We're marching upward to Zion, Zion, the beautiful city of God!*" How is this message essential to the good news of Jesus? How should it encourage us?