

## II. The Afterlife under the Old Covenant

A. Heaven – the Hebrew word for heaven is \_\_\_\_\_ שָׁמַיִם. *Shamayim* is the \_\_\_\_\_, the \_\_\_\_\_, and the \_\_\_\_\_. It is used over 400 times in the OT.

1. Atmosphere – *shamayim* is \_\_\_\_\_ used to refer to the dwelling of the birds and the air we breathe. Whenever the word heaven is used in the Bible, our default interpretation should be to see it as the sky above our heads (Genesis 1:9, 20; 9:2; Judges 20:40; I Kings 18:45).
2. Universe – *shamayim* is also used to refer to \_\_\_\_\_ where the sun, moon, and stars dwell. The heavens contain all the vastness that is space as illustrated through the promises to Abraham (Genesis 1:14; 15:5; Exodus 32:13; Nehemiah 9:23).
3. The Abode of God – *shamayim* is the term for God's abode in \_\_\_\_\_ where the \_\_\_\_\_ at His throne. The abode of God is also known as the \_\_\_\_\_ heaven. There is very little description or discussion of the highest heaven in the Old Testament. The longest description is found in Isaiah 6 (Gen 28:12-17; Deut 10:14; I Kings 8:27; Isaiah 6:1-4).
4. Not the Abode of Man – *shamayim* is \_\_\_\_\_ presented as a dwelling of man or the souls of man after death under the Old Covenant. None of the 400+ uses of *shamayim* speak of the presence of our race in any of the three heavens. No OT saint uses *shamayim* as their hope for eternity.

### ❖ The Curious Case of Elijah

The possible exception to the point of above is the departure of Elijah the prophet from the earth. In II Kings 2:1-12, we read the story of Elijah's miraculous ride in a whirlwind. We are not given any explanation of this event outside of this being the end of Elijah's days walking upon the earth. The specific phrase in vs. 11, "And Elijah went up by a whirlwind to heaven," has been seen as a reference to the highest heaven.

Elijah most likely did not go to the third heaven, because the normal understanding of *shamayim* is the \_\_\_\_\_ and not the Highest Heaven. We are also reading Elisha's view of the event. If Elijah was taken away by a whirlwind, Elisha would have seen his mentor taken up into the sky with his eyes and not into glory. Due to the lack of

supporting passages in the Old Testament it is best to read II Kings 2:11 as simply stating that Elijah went up into the sky in a whirlwind.

B. *Sheol* – there has been much debate over the meaning of the Hebrew word *Sheol*. The KJV translators understood it as \_\_\_\_\_ or the \_\_\_\_\_. Many current scholars now see this word as referring to the \_\_\_\_\_ of the Hebrews. There is no parallel in another language of the Ancient Near East to the word *Sheol* to help in understanding, so we only use the Biblical text as a guide.

1. Place of the Godly after Death – \_\_\_\_\_ all speak of *Sheol* as a destination or possible destination for their soul (Gen 37:35; II Sam 22:6; Job 7:9). Three passages (Ps 49:15; 86:13; Hosea 13:14) speak of redemption from *Sheol* for God's people.
2. Place of Judgment – the most common use of *Sheol* in the Old Testament is a description of the \_\_\_\_\_ of the ungodly. Death is seen as \_\_\_\_\_ for the wicked in this world (Num 16:30; Job 21:13; Ps 9:17; Proverbs 5:5; 15:24).
3. Description of God's wrath – twice *Sheol* is used to picture \_\_\_\_\_. Moses speaks of the burning of *Sheol* in Deut 32:22 while Solomon speaks of the severity of *Sheol* in Song of Songs 8:6.
4. The Place of the Dead – *Sheol* is equated with \_\_\_\_\_ death in numerous passages (I Sam 2:6; I Kings 2:6; Ps 89:48; Isaiah 28:15).
5. The grave – Job may have equated *Sheol* to the physical \_\_\_\_\_ in Job 17:13-16.
6. Conclusion – The saints under the old covenant did not speak of dwelling in heaven after death, but they spoke of death followed by *Sheol* for both \_\_\_\_\_ alike. Deut 32:22 appears to teach that there are levels of *Sheol* where souls will dwell depending on their lives on earth.