

The Life and Ministry of Christ, Part 52

Death and Resurrection

Upon the death of Christ, several things happened. Joseph of Arimathea and Nicodemus took the body of the LORD and bound it in strips of linen with the spices, and placed it in the garden tomb. Scripture bears witness to the fact that His body was sealed behind the stone within the tomb and that He descended into the realm of the dead. Philippians 2:8 says “He humbled Himself and became obedient to death — even death on a cross!” Jesus the eternal Son of God revealed His total identity with our humanity by really dying and entering into the realm of the dead. James 2:26 tells us, “the body without the spirit is dead.” As a human being, Jesus experienced death.

What happened when Christ was in the grave?

Jesus gave a hint of what would happen while He was on the cross. One of the thieves begged Jesus, “*remember me when you come into your kingdom.*” Jesus spoke these words to the man on the cross.

Luke 23:43 NKJV And Jesus said to him, “Assuredly, I say to you, today you will be with Me in Paradise.”

After saying that to the thief, Jesus spoke to the Father in heaven.

Luke 23:46 NKJV And when Jesus had cried out with a loud voice, He said, “Father, ‘into Your hands I commit My spirit.’ ” Having said this, He breathed His last.

These two verses indicate some of what happened when Jesus Christ died. There are many philosophical suppositions about what happened and many of them have no Biblical foundation. Before we consider these, we must notice that everything necessary for our salvation took place on the cross.

Ephesians 2:13-14 NKJV But now in Christ Jesus you who once were far off have been brought near by the blood of Christ. For He Himself is our peace, who has made both one, and has broken down the middle wall of separation,

Ephesians 2:15-16 NKJV having abolished in His flesh the enmity, that is, the law of commandments contained in ordinances, so as to create in Himself one new man from the two, thus making peace, and that He might reconcile them both to God in one body through the cross, thereby putting to death the enmity.

Through the cross, Jesus paid the full price for our salvation and made

peace with God. The handwriting that was against us was nailed to His cross and all who believe in Him are reconciled to God.

Colossians 2:13-14a NKJV And you, being dead in your trespasses and the uncircumcision of your flesh, He has made alive together with Him, having forgiven you all trespasses, having wiped out the handwriting of requirements that was against us, which was contrary to us.

Colossians 2:14b – 15 NKJV And He has taken it out of the way, having nailed it to the cross. Having disarmed principalities and powers, He made a public spectacle of them, triumphing over them in it.

It is important for us to note that Jesus triumphed over principalities and powers in the cross. The cross is the place where victory was gained. After satisfying God's just demand that was against us, immediately after dying, Jesus descended into the lower regions of the earth, into the region of the dead.

According to Jesus, after death the spirit goes to one of two places.

Luke 16:22-23 NKJV So it was that the beggar died, and was carried by the angels to Abraham's bosom. The rich man also died and was buried. And being in torments in Hades, he lifted up his eyes and saw Abraham afar off, and Lazarus in his bosom.

Lazarus was in Paradise, in Abraham's bosom. The rich man who was suffering in Hades saw both Lazarus and Abraham on the other side of a great gulf or chasm. Both Lazarus and Abraham were in a better place. At that time, the people in torment had awareness of what was happening in Paradise.

The Psalmist prophesied about Christ's death.

Psalms 16:10 NKJV For You will not leave my soul in Sheol, nor will You allow Your Holy One to see corruption.

Sheol or Hades was the place of the dead, the underworld, or the lower parts of the earth. The prophet David is talking about two different things. Corruption refers to the decay after a body dies and Sheol refers to the place the soul goes after death.

Jesus spoke of two chambers in Sheol or Hades.

One was a place of torment and the other was Paradise. When Jesus died, His spirit went into the place known as Paradise. On the cross, He told the thief, "today you will be with Me in Paradise."

Luke wrote in the Acts of the Apostles about this.

Acts 2:25-26 NKJV For David says concerning Him: 'I foresaw the Lord

always before my face, For He is at my right hand, that I may not be shaken. Therefore my heart rejoiced, and my tongue was glad; Moreover my flesh also will rest in hope.

Acts 2:27–28 NKJV For You will not leave my soul in Hades, Nor will You allow Your Holy One to see corruption. You have made known to me the ways of life; You will make me full of joy in Your presence.'

Acts 2:30 NKJV Therefore, being a prophet, and knowing that God had sworn with an oath to him (David) that of the fruit of his body, according to the flesh, He would raise up the Christ to sit on his throne,

Acts 2:31–32 NKJV he, foreseeing this, spoke concerning the resurrection of the Christ, that His soul was not left in Hades, nor did His flesh see corruption. This Jesus God has raised up, of which we are all witnesses.

Jesus spoke about the three days His body would lay in the tomb, (Matthew 16:21; 17:23; 20:19; 26:61; Mark 8:31; 10:34; Luke 9:22; 13:33; 24:6, 7; John 2:19). He knew He would die and would arise in three days. We have been given great clarity on these three things that transpired.

The Bible refers to His body, spirit and soul after His death.

1. Jesus' physical body was buried in the tomb of Joseph of Arimathea, Matthew 27:57-60.
2. At the moment of His death, Jesus committed His spirit to the Father for protection, Luke 23:46.
3. According to David's prophecy, His soul was in Paradise, Psalms 16:10; Acts 2:25-32.

Paradise

What did Jesus do while His soul was in Paradise?

Both David and Luke tell us that Jesus descended to Sheol or Hades, or the lower parts of the earth. Jewish philosophies varied about what happens after death. In Ecclesiastes 9:10, there is no work, device, knowledge or wisdom in the grave. David said, "The dead praise not the Lord, neither any who go down into silence." (Psalms 115:17) In Psalms 88:10-12, he depicts the dead as incapable of knowing God's wonders and the realm of the dead as destruction and darkness.

Jesus, the Son of God countered the idea of soul sleep and unconsciousness when a person dies.

He made the point clear in His story of the rich man and Lazarus that this applies to everyone who dies. The spirit or soul of both Lazarus and the rich man were aware of their condition after death and were either in

torment or bliss. Moses and Elijah's appearance on the Mount of Transfiguration offer further proof of this conscious awareness. After Christ arose, 2 Corinthians 5:6, 8 tells us that *"when we are absent from the body we are present with the Lord."* Revelation 6:9-11 speaks of those who have been slain for the word of God actively petitioning God, crying with a loud voice, saying, *"How long, O Lord, holy and true, until You judge and avenge our blood on those who dwell on the earth?"* This represents the intermediate abode where the believer goes while they await the day of their resurrection, when the body and soul will be reunited.

So, what happened when Jesus was in the lower parts of the earth?

Ephesians 4:8–10 NKJV Therefore He says: "When He ascended on high, He led captivity captive, And gave gifts to men." (Now this, "He ascended" —what does it mean but that He also first descended into the lower parts of the earth? He who descended is also the One who ascended far above all the heavens, that He might fill all things.)

1 Peter 3:18–19 NKJV For Christ also suffered once for sins, the just for the unjust, that He might bring us to God, being put to death in the flesh but made alive by the Spirit, by whom also **He went and preached to the spirits in prison,**

1 Peter 4:6 NKJV For this reason **the gospel was preached also to those who are dead,** that they might be judged according to men in the flesh, but live according to God in the spirit.

Between His death and resurrection, Jesus Christ went to the world or region of the dead and preached the gospel to pre-Christian believers who were in Paradise. He did not go into the place of torment but into Paradise in Hades or Sheol. Paradise was the place where Lazarus found comfort in the bosom of Abraham. Hell is a place of torment. In the end, death and hell will be cast into the lake of fire. Christ's preaching the Gospel to the righteous dead declared and confirmed His redemption to those who were temporarily residing in Abraham's bosom, the abode of those under the old covenant who were awaiting the Redeemer and Messiah. It is most likely that those in torment heard the message that God's promise was true and that God was just in their judgment and eternal loss.

Jesus the Christ fully became a man, had a human body, and was constrained to the limitations of time and space during His earthly

life.

His descent into Hades/Sheol shows His complete identity with our human condition, even to the full experience of death. He died with a broken and bleeding body and fully purchased salvation on the cross. After His death, as all human beings, He descended into Hades/Sheol, the abode of the dead. There is no Biblical evidence that Jesus Christ entered into the place of torment, suffered in hell, or that He wrestled with demons or the devil. His death was just as real as any other human being's death. Before He ascended into heaven to a place of honor and power, He descended into the lower parts of the earth (Ephesians 4:9–10). He really experienced death, but then on the third day Jesus Christ arose in resurrection power and life.

Since Christ descended into Hades, His triumph over hell, death and the grave is all-inclusive.

The message of His salvation is for the living and the dead. During His descent to Hades/Sheol, He proclaimed and validated the sufficiency of His Atonement, released the righteous dead into eternal glory in the presence of the Father, and validated the testimony of the prophets. No corner of the universe is without an adequate witness of the Christ and God's message of salvation. Jesus Christ not only tasted death, but drained the cup of death and conquered it. His triumph shows that the grace of God appeared to all men. He confounded the powers of darkness by completely reversing the power of sin that was against us through His sufferings on the cross. When He descended into the stronghold of Hades and broke the chains of those held by the power of death, He conquered and destroyed death and Hades, (Psalms 107:14). The gatekeepers of Hades trembled when they saw the Christ approach, knowing that He was entering into the realm of death with all authority and power. He did not wrestle with the devil or suffer in Hades, but rather entered into the realm of the dead as the conquering Savior having accomplished redemption through His cross, (Isaiah 53:5, Romans 5:6-10). After preaching to those held captive in Abraham's bosom, He led captivity captive and gave gifts unto men.

When Christ arose from the dead, there was a dramatic change made in the region of the dead.

Ephesians 4:8 says: *"When he ascended on high, he led captives in his train and gave gifts to men."* In Revelation 6:9-11 the souls of them that

had been slain are under the altar and conscious. The souls of the righteous dead still go into Paradise, but Paradise is now above.

2 Corinthians 12:2–4 NIV84 I know a man in Christ who fourteen years ago was caught up to the third heaven. Whether it was in the body or out of the body I do not know—God knows. And I know that this man—whether in the body or apart from the body I do not know, but God knows— was caught up to Paradise. He heard inexpressible things, things that man is not permitted to tell.

The state of the believer immediately after death is greatly preferred to life in the body upon the earth.

Philippians 1:23 NIV84 I am torn between the two: I desire to depart and be with Christ, which is better by far;

Paradise is now in the third heaven in the presence of God.

When a believer dies, they immediately go to be with God as the Apostle Paul said, *“to be absent from the body and be present with the Lord,”* (2 Corinthians 5:6-8; Ecclesiastes 12:7).

Then to completely strip the Adversary the devil, Jesus came out of the grave with all authority and power having conquered the realm of the dead and death itself.

Revelation 1:18 NKJV I am He who lives, and was dead, and behold, I am alive forevermore. Amen. And I have the keys of Hades and of Death.

His authority over death represents a fundamental reversal of dominion. In that He holds the keys of death and hades, Jesus is not just in administrative control but has redemptive power to liberate the dead and give eternal life. Jesus the Christ is arisen and He is alive.