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Jesus in hell?

Radically Biblical, Apostolic, Christianity



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JESUS IN HELL?

The Theory of Jesus' Descent into Hell

It is argued, in various Church organizations, that Jesus went to Hell (for whatever purpose). Did He go and does the Bible support this doctrine?

We are going to examine a number of texts, used by many known and respected Church leaders and theologians. Might I make this disclaimer first: because 99% of the commentaries we read, may hold to this view, does not make it the truth. If so, the argument can be made for the doctrine of the Trinity, which is held to be the truth in most commentaries and Churches. The majority does not make anything the truth. This is something every Christian needs to understand. Just because it is held by the majority, does not make it the truth.

A few of the texts that are commonly used to teach this theory are Ephesians 4:8-10, Romans 10:7, 1 Peter 3:18-20, and so forth. Do these texts actually teach this?

At this point, I am going to dispel the theory, that Jesus went to Hell to redeem any Old Testament saints or anyone else, for that matter.

Matthew 27:50-53: A close look at this text will show, that soon after Jesus died, several things took place. What were they?

- 1) Jesus yields up His Spirit and dies (v. 50).
- 2) The Temple veil is torn from top to bottom (v. 51).
- 3) An earthquake took place and the rocks were rent (v. 51).
- 4) The graves were opened and the bodies of many saints arose (v.52).
- 5) After His resurrection, they came out of the tombs that were already opened and the resurrected remained in, until then (v. 53).

Luke 23:46: Which way did Jesus go, as soon as He died? Jesus said, “Pater, eis cheiras sou parathasomai to pneuma mou. Kai tauta eipon exepneusen” (Textus Receptus Greek New Testament). Key words: “into Your hands, I commend My Spirit.” To say that His Spirit went one way and His soul went another, would imply, that two Spirit-beings resided in the flesh of Christ. The word, “Spirit,” (pneuma) is here used, of the actual human Spirit of Jesus’ humanity, the man’s Spirit-being. Thus, Jesus went up into Heaven, not into Hell.

Two points: 1) the saints already arose when Jesus died, not at His resurrection. 2) According to Luke’s Gospel, Jesus went up into Heaven, the moment He died. I understand that there are Apostolic Christians, that deprive Jesus of some portion of His humanity when they deny, that He had a human Spirit; for a human is comprised of body, soul, and Spirit. The Spirit-being of Jesus went to the Father, not to Hell. If we assert, that His soul went to Hell, we may as well say, that the Trinity is true and that man is comprised of three persons, as well (a physical-being, a Spirit-being, and a soul-being, which is absurd).

We are certainly not told, that Jesus went down to the lake of fire to redeem any Old Testament saints. On the other hand, we can be sure of this, once in Hell, always in Hell (Hebrews 9:27).

1 Peter 3:18-20: While this text is used by many, to advocate this theory, the immediate context clearly shows, that it cannot imply such a theory. Why? If Jesus went to preach to anyone, who did He preach to? Did He preach to the Antediluvian people or the Postdiluvian people? When did He do this? According to Peter, Jesus preached to the Antediluvian people of Noah’s day (the people, prior to the flood).

In verse 19 of this text, those people were called, “tois en phulake pneuma,” i.e., “the Spirits in prison.” Peter equates these Spirits, in prison with the people of Noah’s time, in verse 20. Notice that Peter said it was by the same Spirit, that raised Jesus from the dead, that Jesus preached to those people. How? through Noah. When? In their

lifetime. Why would Peter call them, Spirits in prison? The people, in that day, were in just as much bondage as any other human being, that has ever lived (with the exclusion of Jesus Christ). The text nowhere says, Jesus went to Hell (the lake of fire) to deliver anyone.

We need to understand, that the Old Testament people had a system provided for their redemption. On that side of the cross, people were filled with ignorance and did every manner of sin, under the sun. Paul said, “And the times of this ignorance, God winked at; but now commandeth all men everywhere, to repent” (Acts 17:30). On this side of the cross, we do not have any excuse. On this side of the cross, the people of Israel, now have no excuse. Nevertheless, they had a system on that side of the cross for salvation. That being so, there was no reason for Jesus to go to Hell, (the lake of fire) to get anyone.

Every Apostolic needs to understand this, the moment we begin to find reasons for Jesus having to do anything other than that cross, is to deprive it of its saving power. We are, in essence, saying, that the crucifixion was not enough. In doing this, we are walking on very dangerous grounds.

Ephesians 4:8-10: What about this text? It is one of several, that is used to teach this theory. We would like to believe it does, based on the translations we might use. From my study of the New Testament Greek, this interpretation is in error. What seems to be in certain places, is just that, what it seems to be. This text seems to teach, that Jesus went to Hell (the lake of fire) to deliver someone.

What does it mean when Paul says, “*echmaloteusen aichmalosian?*” That is, “He led captivity captive.” When did this happen? It happened when Jesus ascended! Not when He allegedly went to Hell. Hence, Jesus’ resurrection and ascension has something to do with this leading captivity captive. Those who accepted Jesus’ atonement plan were freed from the captivity of the powers of darkness. But, think about what Paul is saying here. Jesus, when He ascended, “led captivity captive.” Why

would Jesus lead someone into captivity? Did Jesus lead the Old Testament saints captive? Is that what He allegedly went there to do? To make captives out of them. They were already captives! So, this metaphor has some other meaning to it. To be a captive, is to be under the control of another. When Jesus ascended, he led us to a place of freedom, under His Lordship.

What does it mean when Paul says, “katebe proton eis ta katotera mere tes ges?” The KJV says, “He also descended, first, into the lower parts of the earth.” According to my understanding of the Greek text, the Greek preposition, **eis** before the accusative, may be rendered, “toward.” Based on the reading of various Bible translations and what Greek scholars understand, the words noted, are understood as Jesus having come down from Heaven, as God robed, in flesh, into the region or realm of the earth. It should not be comprehended, as Him going to Hell. I understand that a faulty translation lead to faulty understanding. Yes, even Spirit-filled believers can have a faulty understanding. The verse could read, “He also came down towards the realm of the earth.” Or, “He also descended into the earthly region.” God did, indeed, come down from Heaven to earth to redeem His Creation. After having accomplished this mission at the cross, the Scripture says, “He that descended, is the same also, that ascended up far above all Heavens.” In reality, it speaks of His descent to the earth, His mission on the cross, and His ascension up to Heaven.

One thing we Apostolics need to understand, is that the Bible does not speak of God having a plan of redemption for those already in Hell (the lake of fire).

According to our study of Matthew 27, Jesus did not need to go to Hell, to retrieve any Old Testament saints. They had already resurrected, the day He was crucified. Thus, the Ephesians text, has to be interpreted another way. I will side with the scholars, that understand it, as I have.

Acts 2:27-31: In this text, is included, the Messianic prophecy dealing with Jesus’ resurrection, as is clearly stated by Peter himself (v. 31). Even David, in the prophecy,

spake of the flesh resting in hope (v. 26). The NIV says, “because you will not abandon Me to the grave, nor will you let your Holy One see decay” (v. 27). Verse 29, also makes it plain, that David was speaking of His being in the grave. This is the way Peter was interpreting David’s words, with reference to being in the grave. Thus, Peter was interpreting the word, “soul,” as the physical body. Therefore, the NIV correctly renders, verse 31, as follows: “Seeing what was ahead, He spoke of the resurrection of the Christ, that He was not abandoned to the grave, nor did His body see corruption.” The words, “My soul in Hell” in verse 27, may be understood, “My body in the grave.” Jesus was not raised to life out of Hell. He was resurrected from the grave. I have to conclude, with this text, that it does not place Jesus in Hell (the lake of fire).

Do you actually believe, that Jesus went to the lake of fire to save souls?

Revelation 1:18: We need to understand, that the word, “Keys,” denotes authority and power of various types. Jesus did not go to Hell to get any keys. In fact, the verse itself, does not say He went anywhere to get anything. What it does clearly imply, is that He possesses the authority of death and the grave. He has power over them both. Grave would be the appropriate translation of the Greek work, “Hades.” Again, this verse does not prove Jesus went to Hell, for any reason. (See Luke 11:52; Matthew 16:19; Revelation 1:18; 3:7, 9:1, 20:1, for “key references”).

Romans 10:7: This verse uses the Greek term, “abussos” (abyss) and is understood, by many, to teach Jesus’ descent into Hell. However, in the case of its use in this verse, it denotes the grave. Understand, Hell as we know it, in Scripture, and its description, i.e., lake of fire, a lake that burns with sulfur and brimstone, and this is how we understand it. The word, “abyss,” is used to describe a different type of place, i.e., a bottomless pit. This is not Hell. It is a place where fallen angels have been and will be placed, for a time. Nonetheless, it is used, in this verse, in the sense of a grave. Paul equates the “deep,” (abyss) here, with the place of the dead. Where do the dead reside? In their graves. “To bring up Christ again from the dead,” is referring to raising

Him up again from the grave, not from a bottomless pit.

paradeisos (paradise): This word appears 3 times in the Greek New Testament (Luke 23:43; 2 Corinthians 12:4; Revelation 2:7). It is always used of a place of blessedness, the dwelling place of God. The word is never used, with any reference, to Hell or a place associated with Hell. Jesus did not tell the man on the cross that he would be with Him in Hell, but rather, in paradise (i.e., Heaven). Paul equated it with the “third Heaven” (2 Corinthians 12:2, 4), when he went into a trance to receive a revelation from God. In the Revelation text noted, Jesus used it with reference to God’s Kingdom. It would be inaccurate to use this term, with reference to Hell or making it some mythological compartment in Hell.

gehenna: This word appears 12 times in the Greek New Testament (Matthew 5:22, 29-30; 10:28; 18:9; 23:15, 33; Mark 9:43, 45, 47; Luke 12:5; James 3:6). Everyone of these verses declares Hell, to be a place of extreme torment and anguish. But, in none of these texts, do we find Jesus in this dark place of torment. At all.

It is very clear, in Scripture, that once a soul goes into this gehenna (Hell fire-lake of fire), there is no coming out. For any reason.

abussos (abyss, deep, bottomless pit, grave): This word appears 9 times in the Greek New Testament (Luke 8:31; Romans 10:7; Revelation 9:1, 2, 11; 11:7; 17:8; 20:1, 3). In all, but one place, it is used of some dark bottomless pit. In Romans 10:7, it is used of the grave.

Hades (Hell, grave): This word appears 11 times in the Greek New Testament (Matthew 11:23; 16:18; Luke 10:15; 16:23; Acts 7:27, 31; Revelation 1:18; 6:8; 20:13; 14; 1 Corinthians 15:55). We have already discussed two of the texts, used in the list given. None of these verses teach, that Jesus descended into Hell, i.e., the lake of fire. Jesus Christ defeated the grave and death (1 Corinthians 15:55). He possesses power over death and the grave (Revelation 1:18). He made the claim, that before His death,

He had the power to lay His life down to death and to raise Himself back up from the dead, from the grave (John 2:19 and John 10:15-18). This is what is implied in Revelation 1:18.

tartaro-o (or Tartarus): It appears, only once, in the Greek New Testament (2 Peter 2:4). Who was cast down to this place of Hell? The Greek verb, noted, is not a place. Thus, the adding of the word, "Hell," is not appropriate. No word, in the text, can be used for the reading, for there is no word, in the Greek text, to translate to "Hell." It actually says, "thrust down to chains of darkness." The word, "Tartarus," was used in extra Biblical works, in earlier times, as a place of confinement. Thus, the word, "chains," makes that point. The question: who was cast down to chains of darkness? Peter said, "the sinning angels." Why? For the time of judgment. No souls are said to be in this place of confinement.

It is to my understanding, that Jesus, in no case, went to Hell, for any reason. The heart of the Gospel message, is this and nothing more: "that Christ died for our sins, according to the Scriptures; and that He was buried, and that He rose again, the third day, according to the Scriptures"

(1 Corinthians 15:3, 4). Going to Hell was not included by Paul. And Paul stated elsewhere, this, "Do not go beyond what is written" (1 Corinthians 4:6, NIV).

Apostolic Fellowship Association of Texas

Founder & President: Gary D. Landers

Gary D. Landers presents his view of Jesus going to Hell, now let us study the opposite opinions of Jesus going to Hell.

Question:

“Did Jesus go to Hell after He died (as some people claim)? Surely, He didn’t burn in Hell, right?”

Answer:

In order to determine whether or not Jesus went to Hell, first we need to find out what “Hell” is. We’ll do this by looking at several Hebrew and Greek words in the Bible.

Sheol

In the Old Testament, the Hebrew word, *Sheol* refers to the place where the departed Spirits of the dead went. Here are some things that Bible scholars say about Sheol:

*“hades or **the world of the dead** (as if a subterranean *retreat*), including its accessories and inmates: -grave, Hell, pit.”* (Strong’s Hebrew Dictionary, emphasis added).

*“not the earth, for Joseph was supposed to be torn in pieces, but the unknown place -- **the place of departed souls**, where Jacob expected, at death, to meet his beloved son.”* (Jamieson, Fausset, and Brown Commentary, verse 35, emphasis added).

*“A grave is one particular cavity, purposely digged, for the interment of a dead person, shoel,” is a collective name, for all the graves. He, that is in the grave, is in “sheol;” but, he that is in “sheol,” may not be in a grave, but in any pit, or in the sea. **In short, it is the region of the dead**, which is figuratively considered, as a city or large habitation, with gates and bars, in which, there are many chambers, Proverbs 7:27. “Sheol,” is never full, but is always asking or craving more,*

Proverbs 27:20; Hebrews 2:5. Here, it means, not a place of punishment, but the region of the dead, **where the ghosts of the departed are considered as residing together.**" (Isaiah 14:9, emphasis added).

So, in the Old Testament, Sheol was considered to be the place where the Spirits of the dead went. Here are a few examples of the 63 passages, which contain the Hebrew word, *Sheol*:

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"All his sons and daughters came to comfort him, but he refused to be comforted. "No," he said, "in mourning will I go down to **the grave** [*Sheol*] to my son." So, his father wept for him" (Genesis 37:35).

"As a cloud vanishes and is gone, so he who goes down to **the grave** [*Sheol*] does not return" (Job 7:9).

"If I go up to the Heavens, you are there, if I make my bed in **the depths** [*Sheol*], you are there" (Psalms 139:8).

"The path of life leads upward, for the wise, to keep him from going down to **the grave** [*Sheol*]" (Proverbs 15:24).

"**The grave** [*Sheol*] below is all astir to meet you at your coming; it rouses the Spirits of the departed to greet you -- all those who were leaders in the world, it makes them rise from their thrones -- all those who were kings over the nations." (Isaiah 14:9).

"From within **the grave** [*Sheol*] the mighty leaders will say of Egypt and her allies, 'They have come down and they lie with the uncircumcised, with those killed by the sword'" (Ezekiel 32:21).

"Though they dig down to the depths of **the grave** [*Sheol*]; from there my hand will take them. Though they climb up to the Heavens, from there, I will bring them down" (Amos 9:2).

Throughout the Old Testament, the Hebrew word, *Sheol* is often translated in the NIV, as "the grave," and it is sometimes translated as, "Hell," in other versions of the Bible

(such as the KJV). In the above passages, notice that people go “down” to Sheol (they never go “up” to Sheol). In a moment, we’ll examine some passages which give us an indication of where Sheol is located.

Hades

In the New Testament, the Greek equivalent of Sheol is *Hades*. Here are some things that Bible scholars say about Hades:

“the place (state) of departed souls: -grave, Hell.” (Strong’s Greek Dictionary).

“Hades, is technically, the unseen world, **the Hebrew Sheol, the land of the departed**, that is, death.” (Robertson’s Word Pictures of the New Testament, emphases added).

“The Greek word, “Hades,” means literally, “a place devoid of light; a dark, obscure abode;” and in Greek writers, was applied to **the dark and obscure regions, wheredisembodied Spirits were supposed to dwell.**” (Barnes, Acts 2:27, emphasis added).

“Hades never denotes the physical grave nor is it the permanent region of the lost. **It is the intermediate state between death and the ultimate Hell, Gehenna**” (*The Complete Word Study Dictionary of the New Testament*, Spiros Zodhiates, p. 82, emphases added).

So, according to a number of Bible scholars, Hades is a temporary place of confinement, where the Spirits of the dead go, and it is equivalent to Sheol in the Old Testament. Here are all of the New Testament references to Hades (with one exception, which we’ll get to in a moment):

“And you, Capernaum, will you be lifted up to the skies? No, you will go down to **the depths** [*Hades*]” (Matthew 11:23).

“And I tell you that you are Peter, and on this rock I will build my Church, and the gates of **Hades**

will not overcome it" (Matthew 16:18).

"And you, Capernaum, will you be lifted up to the skies? No, you will go down to **the depths** [*Hades*]" (Luke 10:15).

"Therefore, my heart is glad and my tongue rejoices; my body also will live in hope, because you will not abandon me to **the grave** [*Hades*], nor will you let your Holy One see decay" (Acts 2:26-27).

"Seeing what was ahead, he spoke of the resurrection of the Christ, that he was not abandoned to **the grave** [*Hades*], nor did his body see decay" (Acts 2:31).

"When the perishable has been clothed with the imperishable, and the mortal with immortality, then the saying that is written will come true: "Death has been swallowed up in victory." "Where, O **death** [*Hades*], is your victory? Where, O **death**, is your sting?" (1 Corinthians 15:54-55).

"I am the Living One; I was dead, and behold, I am alive forever and ever! And I hold the keys of death and **Hades**" (Revelation 1:18).

"I looked, and there before me, was a pale horse! Its rider was named Death, and **Hades** was following close behind him. They were given power over a fourth of the earth to kill by sword, famine and plague, and by the wild beasts of the earth" (Revelation 6:8).

"The sea gave up the dead that were in it, and death and **Hades** gave up the dead that were in them, and each person was judged, according to what he had done. Then death and **Hades** were thrown into the lake of fire. The lake of fire is the second death" (Revelation 20:13-14).

In the above passages, we can see that Hades is considered to be "down" in the New Testament, just like Sheol is considered to be "down" in the Old Testament. Notice that some of the passages in the Book of Revelation (above), have "personified" both, death and Hades (referring to them, as if they were alive), and Revelation 20:13-14 (above), indicates that death and Hades, will ultimately, be conquered by being thrown into the Lake of Fire. We'll examine this "Lake of Fire" in a moment, but first let's look at the

remaining New Testament passage, which mentions Hades:

“The time came when the beggar died and the angels carried him to Abraham’s side. The rich man also died and was buried. In **Hell** [*Hades*], **where he was in torment, he looked up and saw Abraham far away**, with Lazarus by his side. So, he called to him, ‘Father Abraham, have pity on me and send Lazarus to dip the tip of his finger in water and cool my tongue, because ***I am in agony in this fire.***’ But Abraham replied, ‘Son, remember that in your lifetime, you received your good things, while Lazarus received bad things, but now he is comforted here and you are in agony. And besides all this, **between us and you, a great chasm has been fixed, so that those who want to go from here to you, cannot, nor can anyone cross over from there to us**” (Luke 16:22-26).

In this story, Jesus described an unrighteous man being tormented in Hades, and this man looked “up” and saw Abraham far away. This passage seems to indicate, that Hades consisted of two “compartments” (so to speak), before the cross. In one compartment, the unrighteous are being held in torment until Judgment Day, and in another compartment, the righteous were held in comfort (until the cross, as we’ll see later). Between these two compartments, there was some kind of “chasm,” which made it impossible for people to travel from one compartment to the other, and this seems to imply, that unrighteous people did not have a second chance to receive salvation after they died.

Sometimes people say, that Luke 16:22-26 (above), is a parable, not an actual event. Because of this, they argue, that we can’t take this passage literally, which means, that we can’t learn anything about Hades from this passage. But, if you look closely at all of Jesus’ parables, you’ll find that they **always** contain real places and realistic people and realistic events. For example, in the parable of the Good Samaritan, (Luke 10:30-35), notice that the robbers and the robbery victim and the priest and the Levite and the Samaritan, are all realistic people, and the setting is a real place on a real road, somewhere between the real cities of Jerusalem and Jericho. There are no fantasy creatures, such as unicorns, mermaids, talking animals, fairies, leprechauns, enchanted ice queens, etc., anywhere in Jesus’ parables, and His

parables never take place in mythical, imaginary, settings, such as Atlantis or Metropolis, or the Hundred Acre Wood, or Whoville, and so on. Jesus **always** used real-life objects and characters and settings and events in His parables. Therefore, if Luke 16:22-26, (above) is a parable, then we have every reason to believe, that it takes place in a real-life setting, because Jesus never invented any fantasy settings for any of His parables or stories. To see for yourself, here are all of Jesus' parables, according to *The Bible Knowledge Commentary* (Walvoord and Zuck, Dallas Theological Seminary, p. 35): Matthew 7:24-27, 9:16-17, 13:5-8, 24-30, 31-32, 33, 44, 45-46, 47-50, 18:12-14, 23-35, 20:1-16, 21:28-32, 33:46, 22:1-14, 24:45-51, 25:1-13, 14-30, Mark 4:26-29, 13:34-37, Luke 7:31-35, 41-43, 10:25-37, 11:5-8, 12:16-21, 13:6-9, 14:15-24, 28-33, 15:8-10, 11-32, 16:1-9, 17:7-10, 18:1-8, 9-14, 19:11-27.

Notice that the NIV has translated the Greek word, *Hades*, as "Hell" in Luke 16:22-26 (above). This might cause us to assume, that Hades is "Hell," but, we're going to see that this is not necessarily an accurate assumption.

Where Is Hades?

Throughout the entire Bible, Hades (i.e., Sheol) is always considered to be "down," as we have seen in some of the passages above. Hades and Sheol are never referred to, as being "up." Here are some examples from the Old Testament:

- Notice that Sheol is "below:"

"For a fire has been kindled by my wrath, one that burns to **the realm of death** [*Sheol*] **below**. It will devour the earth and its harvests and set afire, **the foundations of the mountains.**" (Deuteronomy 32:22).

This says, that Sheol is "below," possibly where "the foundation of the mountains" are located (depending on how literally we should take that expression).

- Sheol, is sometimes referred to, as being "in the depths:"

“But, little do they know, that the dead are there, that her guests are *in the depths* of the grave [*Sheol*]” (Proverbs 9:18).

- When King Saul commanded the witch of Endor to bring up the departed Spirit of the prophet, Samuel, notice that Samuel’s Spirit came “up” from the ground:

“Saul then said to his attendants, “Find me a woman, who is a medium, so I may go and inquire of her.” “There is one in Endor,” they said. So, Saul disguised himself, putting on other clothes, and at night, he and two men went to the woman. “Consult **a Spirit** for me,” he said, “and **bring up for me, the one I name.**” But the woman said to him, “Surely, you know what Saul has done. He has cut off the mediums and Spiritists from the land. Why have you set a trap for my life to bring about my death?” Saul swore to her by the LORD, “As surely as the LORD lives, you will not be punished for this.” Then the woman asked, “Whom shall I **bring up** for you?” “**Bring up Samuel,**” he said. When the woman saw Samuel, she cried out at the top of her voice and said to Saul, “Why have you deceived me? You are Saul!” The king said to her, “Don’t be afraid. What do you see?” The woman said, “**I see a Spirit coming up out of the ground.**” “What does he look like?” he asked. “An old man wearing a robe **is coming up,**” she said. Then Saul knew it was Samuel, and he bowed down and prostrated himself with his face to the ground. Samuel said to Saul, “Why have you disturbed me **by bringing me up?**” “I am in great distress,” Saul said. “The Philistines are fighting against me, and God has turned away from me. He no longer answers me, either by prophets or by dreams. So I have called on you to tell me what to do” (1 Samuel 28:7-15).

So, the Spirit of the prophet, Samuel came “up” from the ground. Some people might question whether this was the dead prophet, Samuel or whether it was a trick by the witch of Endor (possibly using an accomplice). Since this “apparition” accurately prophesied the timing and manner of Saul’s death, as well as the deaths of Saul’s sons, as well as the Israelite army’s defeat by the Philistines (1 Samuel 28:19), it is likely that this was actually the Spirit of the prophet, Samuel. If so, then Samuel came “up” from beneath the ground, and Barnes points out in his commentary that:

“Hell, or the place of the departed (compare 1 Samuel 28:19; 2 Samuel 12:23), is represented as **under the earth**” (Barnes, from Sword Commentaries, 1 Samuel 28:13, emphasis added).

By the way, notice that this passage does not say that the witch of Endor did anything to bring Samuel up. In fact, she was shocked and terrified when Samuel suddenly appeared. Therefore, it is more likely that it was God who caused Samuel to appear, just as He did with Moses and Elijah in Matthew 17:1-8.

- The prophet Isaiah said that people **descended** into Sheol:

“Therefore, **the grave** [Sheol] enlarges its appetite and opens its mouth without limit; **into it will descend** their nobles and masses with all their brawlers and revelers” (Isaiah 5:14).

This describes people “descending” into Sheol when they died. According to Barnes:

“[Sheol] was represented by the Hebrews as, **“low down, or deep” in the earth** - contrasted with the height of Heaven; Deuteronomy 32:22; Job 11:8; Psalms 139:7-8. It was a place where thick darkness reigns; Job 10:21-22: ‘The land of darkness and the shadow of death; a land of darkness, as darkness itself.’ It is described, as having “valleys, or depths,” Proverbs 9:18,” (Barnes, from Sword Commentaries, Isaiah 5:14, emphasis added).

- The prophet Isaiah said that Sheol is **below** and **down**:

“**The grave** [Sheol] **below** is all astir to meet you at your coming: it rouses **the Spirits of the departed** to greet you -- all those who were leaders in the world; it makes them rise from their thrones -- all those who were kings over the nations. They will all respond, they will say to you, “You also have become weak, as we are; you have become like us.” All your pomp has been **brought down to the grave** [Sheol], along with the noise of your harps; maggots are Spread out beneath you and worms cover you” (Isaiah 14:9-11).

According to Barnes:

“The word [Sheol] denotes, says Taylor (“Hebrew Con.”), **‘The underground parts of the earth,** otherwise called, the nether, **or lower parts of the earth beneath in opposition to the earth above,** where people and other animals live. In “sheol” are the foundations of the mountains, Deuteronomy 32:22. In “sheol,” men penetrate, by digging into the earth, Amos 9:2. Into “sheol,” the roots of trees do strike down, Ezekiel 31:16. ... **“Sheol” was always represented as being “in” or “under” the ground,** and the grave was the avenue or door that led to it” (Barnes, from Sword Commentaries, Isaiah 14:9, emphasis added).

Gill says in his commentary, that this passage refers to:

“those that are **under the earth,** in the grave, or in Hell” (Gill’s Exposition of the Bible, from Sword Commentaries, Isaiah 14:9).

- The prophet, Ezekiel also described Sheol, as being “down” and “in the depths of the earth:”

“I made the nations tremble at the sound of its fall, when I brought it **down to the grave** [Sheol] with those who go down to the pit. Then, all the trees of Eden, the choicest and best of Lebanon, all the trees that were well-watered, were consoled **in the earth below** [or “in the depths of the earth,” according to Strong’s]” (Ezekiel 31:16).

From all of the evidence throughout the Old Testament, it seems that Sheol was considered to be a place of departed Spirits, which was located **under** the earth.

In the New Testament, we see exactly, the same idea:

- We are told that there are Spirits of departed people **under** the earth:

“that at the name of Jesus, every knee should bow, in Heaven and on earth

and ***under the earth***" (Philippians 2:10).

Here are some things that Bible commentators have written about this passage.

"**And things under the earth --** Beings ***under the earth***. The whole universe shall confess that He is Lord. This embraces, doubtless, ***those who have departed from this life, and perhaps, includes also fallen angels.***" (Barnes, from Sword Commentaries, Philippians 2:10, emphasis added).

"**Under the earth** (*katachthonion*). Homeric adjective for ***departed souls, subterranean***, simply the dead." (Robertson's Word Pictures of the New Testament, emphasis added).

- Once again, we see the idea in the New Testament, that there are Spirits of departed people ***under*** the earth:

"But, no one in Heaven or on earth or ***under the earth*** could open the scroll or even look inside it." (Revelation 5:3).

Based on this verse, a number of Bible commentators have pointed out, that Hades is ***under*** the earth:

"**Under the earth -- *In Hades.***" (Vincent's Word Studies, from Sword Commentaries, Revelation 5:3, emphasis added).

"**Under the earth --** namely, ***in Hades.***" (Jamieson, Fausset, and Brown Commentary, verse 3, emphasis added).

"**Neither under the earth --** These divisions compose, in common language, the universe: what is in Heaven above; what is on the earth; ***and whatever there is under the earth -- the abodes of the dead.***" (Barnes, from Sword Commentaries, Revelation 5:3, emphasis added).

- Once again, we see the idea in the New Testament, that there are Spirits of departed people ***under*** the earth:

“Then I heard every creature in Heaven and on earth **and under the earth** and on the sea, and all that is in them, singing: “To Him who sits on the throne and to the Lamb, be praise and honor and glory and power, forever and ever!” (Revelation 5:13).

Again, Bible scholars sometimes point out that “under the earth,” refers to Hades:

“Under the earth -- the departed Spirits in Hades.” (Jamieson, Fausset, and Brown Commentary, verse 13, emphasis added).

So, the Bible tells us that Hades (Sheol) is somehow **under** (or inside) the earth.

Tartarus

Another Greek word, which is sometimes translated into English as, “Hell,” is *Tartarus*. Here’s what a prominent Greek dictionary says about Tartarus:

“The subterranean abyss of Greek mythology, where demigods were punished. It is mentioned in the pseudepigraphical book of Enoch, **as the place where fallen angels are confined**. It is found, only in its verbal form, in 2 Peter 2:4, meaning to cast into or consign to Tartarus. It is part of the realm of death designated in Scripture, as *Sheol* (7585, OT), in the OT and *Hades* (86), in the NT. **These angels are being held in this netherworld dungeon, until the day of final judgment.**” (*The Complete Word Study Dictionary of the New Testament*, Spiros Zodhiates, p. 1367, emphasis added).

Once again, we see, that Sheol and Hades, both, refer to the same “realm of death,” and we see, that Tartarus is considered to be, a “dungeon,” within Hades (according to the Greek dictionary quoted above), in which, certain fallen angels are confined, until Judgment Day. This is the only passage, in the Bible, which mentions Tartarus:

“For if God did not spare **angels** when they sinned, but sent them to **Hell** [*Tartarus*], putting them into gloomy dungeons to be held for judgment” (2 Peter 2:4).

Here, we see the NIV, using the English word, “Hell” again. However, this time the actual Greek word, is *Tartarus*, which is perhaps another compartment within Hades.

Gehenna

Another Greek word, which is often translated, as “Hell,” is *Gehenna*. Here are some things that Bible scholars say about Gehenna:

“The word, *Gehenna*, rendered *Hell*, occurs outside of the Gospels only at James 3:6. It is the Greek representative of the Hebrew Ge-Hinnom, or Valley of Hinnom, a deep, narrow glen to the south of Jerusalem, where, after the introduction of the worship of the fire-gods by Ahaz, the idolatrous Jews sacrificed their children to Molech. Josiah formally desecrated it, “that no man might make his son or his daughter pass through the fire to Molech” (2 Kings 23:10). After this, it became the common refuse-place of the city, into which, the bodies of criminals, carcases of animals, and all sorts of filth, were cast. From its depth and narrowness, and its fire and ascending smoke, *it became the symbol of the place of the future punishment of the wicked.*” (Vincent’s Word Studies, from Sword Commentaries, Matthew 5:22, emphasis added).

“Gehenna is the Valley of Hinnom, where the fire burned, continually. Here, idolatrous Jews, once offered, their children to Molech (2 Kings 23:10). Jesus finds one cause of murder to be abusive language. ***Gehenna “should be carefully distinguished from Hades, which is never used for the place of punishment, but for the place of departed Spirits, without reference to their moral condition”*** (Vincent).” (Robertson’s Word Pictures of the New Testament, emphasis added).

“Hell, the place or state of the lost and condemned ... ***In the NT, Gehenna is presented always, as the final place of punishment into which the wicked are cast after the last judgment. It is a place of torment, both for body and soul***” (*The Complete Word Study Dictionary of the New Testament*, Spiros Zodhiates, p. 360-

361, emphasis added).

So, a number of scholars describe Gehenna, as the **permanent** place, where unrighteous people will be punished, forever, which is different from the **temporary** place of confinement, called Hades. Here, is every New Testament passage, which uses the Greek word, *Gehenna*:

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“But, I tell you that anyone who is angry with his brother, will be subject to judgment. Again, anyone who says to his brother, ‘Raca,’ is answerable to the Sanhedrin. But, anyone who says, ‘You fool!’ will be in danger of the fire of **Hell** [*Gehenna*]” (Matthew 5:22).

“If your right eye causes you to sin, gouge it out and throw it away. It is better for you to lose one part of your body, than for your whole body to be thrown into **Hell** [*Gehenna*]. And if your right hand causes you to sin, cut it off and throw it away. It is better for you to lose one part of your body, than for your whole body to go into **Hell** [*Gehenna*]” (Matthew 5:29-30).

“Do not be afraid of those who kill the body, but cannot kill the soul. Rather, be afraid of the One, who can **destroy both, the soul and body, in Hell** [*Gehenna*]” (Matthew 10:28).

“And if your eye causes you to sin, gouge it out and throw it away. It is better for you to enter life with one eye, than to have two eyes and be thrown into the fire of **Hell** [*Gehenna*]” (Matthew 18:9).

“Woe to you, teachers of the law and Pharisees, you hypocrites! You travel over land and sea to win a single convert, and when he becomes one, you make him twice as much as a son of **Hell** [*Gehenna*] as you are” (Matthew 23:15).

“You snakes! You brood of vipers! How will you escape being condemned to **Hell** [*Gehenna*]?” (Matthew 23:33).

“If your hand causes you to sin, cut it off. It is better for you to enter life, maimed, than with two hands to go into **Hell** [*Gehenna*], **where the fire never goes out**” (Mark 9:43).

“And if your foot causes you to sin, cut it off, it is better for you to enter life crippled, than to have two feet and be thrown into **Hell** [*Gehenna*]” (Mark 9:45).

“And if your eye causes you to sin, pluck it out. It is better for you to enter the Kingdom of God with one eye, than to have two eyes and be thrown into **Hell** [*Gehenna*]” (Mark 9:47).

“But, I will show you whom you should fear: Fear Him, who, after the killing of the body, has power to throw you into **Hell** [*Gehenna*]. Yes, I tell you, fear Him” (Luke 12:5).

“The tongue, also is a fire, a world of evil among the parts of the body. It corrupts the whole person, sets the whole course of his life on fire, and is itself set on fire by **Hell** [*Gehenna*]” (James 3:6).

In the above passages, notice that the NIV always translates the Greek word, *Gehenna* as “Hell.” So, what we have seen, is that the NIV refers to Hades (i.e., the temporary dwelling of human Spirits) as “Hell,” **and** the NIV refers to Tartarus (i.e., the temporary prison for certain fallen angels), as “Hell,” **and** the NIV refers to Gehenna (i.e., the permanent place of punishment) as “Hell.” The NIV and other versions of the Bible are not very clear about “Hell,” so we need to dig deeper in order to understand what “Hell” is, before we can determine whether or not Jesus went to “Hell” after He died.

The Lake of Fire

In the Book of Revelation, Gehenna is referred to as, “the Lake of Fire.” Here are some things that Bible scholars say about the Lake of Fire:

“These both were cast . . . into a lake -- Greek,” . . . **the lake of fire,** *Gehenna*.

Satan is subsequently cast into it, at the close of the outbreak, which succeeds the Millennium (Revelation 20:10). Then, Death and Hell, as well as those not found at the general judgment, “written in The Book of Life;” this constitutes “the second death.”” (Jamieson, Fausset, and Brown Commentary, verse 20, emphasis added).

“In this short sentence, the doom is told of all, who are out of Christ, for they too

follow the Devil and the two beasts into **the lake of fire** (**the counterpart of the Gehenna of fire**, Matthew 5:22). There is no room here for soul sleeping, for an intermediate state, for a second chance, or for annihilation of the wicked.” (Robertson’s Word Pictures of the New Testament, emphasis added).

So, the Lake of Fire is the same thing as Gehenna, according to a number of Bible scholars. Here are all of the passages in the New Testament, which mention the Lake of Fire:

“But, the beast was captured, and with him, the false prophet who had performed the miraculous signs on his behalf. With these signs, he had deluded those who had received the mark of the beast and worshipped his image. The two of them were thrown, alive, into **the fiery lake of burning sulfur**” (Revelation 19:20).

“And the Devil, who deceived them, was thrown into **the lake of burning sulfur**, where the beast and the false prophet had been thrown. **They will be tormented day and night forever and ever**” (Revelation 20:10).

“**Then death and Hades were thrown into the lake of fire. The lake of fire** is the second death. If anyone’s name was not found written in the Book of Life, he was thrown into **the lake of fire**” (Revelation 20:14-15).

“But, the cowardly, the unbelieving, the vile, the murderers, the sexually immoral, those who practice magic arts, the idolaters and all liars -- their place will be in **the fiery lake of burning sulfur**. This is the second death” (Revelation 21:8).

The above passages tell us, that the Lake of Fire is the permanent place where all of the unrighteous people, throughout history, will be punished in agony forever.

So far, we have seen that there is a **temporary** prison, in which, the Spirits of unrighteous people are being held, until Judgment Day (called Sheol in the Old Testament and Hades in the New Testament), and there is a **permanent** place of torment, into which, all unrighteous people and fallen angels will be cast on Judgment Day (called Gehenna and the Lake of Fire). We have seen, that the NIV refers to **both** of these places, as “Hell,” but, notice that someday, Hades will be thrown **into** Gehenna (Revelation 20:14-15, above). This tells

us, that Hades and Gehenna are not the same place and should, not both, be called, “Hell.”

Consider that “Hell,” is an **English** word, so the original texts of the Bible did not use this word (because the Bible was written mostly, in Hebrew and Greek). Therefore, there is no Scriptural definition of what the English word, “Hell” means, since the word, “Hell” did not exist in Bible times. In fact, English dictionaries are not much help in understanding what “Hell” is, as these quotes demonstrate:

“1. *Bible*: the place where the Spirits of the dead are: identified with **Sheol** and **Hades**. 2. [often **H-**] a) *Christianity*: the place where Devils live and to which variously sinners and unbelievers are doomed to **eternal** punishment after death” (Webster’s New World Dictionary, emphasis added).

“1. the place or state of punishment of the wicked, after death; the abode of evil and condemned Spirits: **Gehenna or Tartarus**. ...

5. the abode of the dead; **Sheol or Hades**.” (Random House Unabridged Dictionary, emphasis added.)

“1. a. often Hell: The abode of condemned souls and Devils in some religions; the place of **eternal punishment** for the wicked after death, presided over by Satan. ...

“2. The abode of the dead, identified with **the Hebrew Sheol and the Greek Hades**; the underworld.” (The American Heritage Dictionary of the English Language, Fourth Edition, emphasis added).

“3. (Christianity), the abode of Satan and the forces of evil; where sinners suffer **eternal punishment**, “Hurl’d headlong...To bottomless perdition, there to dwell” - John Milton; “a demon from the depths of the pit,” “Hell is paved with good intentions” -Dr. Johnson [ant: Heaven] 4. (religion) the world of the dead; “No one goes to **Hades** with all his immense wealth” - Theognis” (Princeton University, emphasis added).

According to these dictionaries, the definition of “Hell” includes Sheol, Hades, and

Gehenna (i.e., the eternal Lake of Fire). But, as we have seen, these definitions are erroneous, because Hades and Gehenna are not the same (remember, Hades will be thrown **into** Gehenna).

To help us figure out what “Hell” is, notice that, people tend to think of Heaven, as being “the permanent good place,” and people tend to think of Hell, as being “the permanent bad place.” To put it another way, there is no place better than Heaven, and there is no place worse than Hell. Since Gehenna (the Lake of Fire) is the **permanent** place where all unrighteous people will burn in agony for all eternity (as we saw above), this means that Gehenna is a worse place than Hades, because Hades is only a **temporary** prison. Therefore, Gehenna best fit’s the description of being, “the permanent bad place,” and so, Gehenna best fit’s the concept of “Hell.”

There is a popular belief (described in some of the dictionary definition above), that the Devil lives in Hell and that he is the ruler of Hell. However, the truth is, that he has never been there (as we can see in Revelation 20:10, above, which is a prophetic passage that has not happened yet). No-one is in the Lake of Fire, at the moment, and no-one has ever been there. When the Devil is finally thrown into the Lake of Fire, it will be for his eternal punishment, in agony. (Revelation 20:10, above).

Paradise

Now that we have a better understanding of what the Bible says about Hades and the Lake of Fire, I think we can agree, that Jesus did not go to the Lake of Fire to be tormented forever. But, did Jesus go to **Hades** after He died?

Before we try to answer this question, there is one more place that we need to know about. This place is called, “Paradise,” and here are some things that Bible scholars say about it:

“In paradise - ***The place where the souls of the righteous remain from death till***

the resurrection." (Wesley's Explanatory Notes, verse 43, emphasis added).

"In the Jewish theology, **the department of Hades where the blessed souls await the resurrection; and therefore, equivalent to Abraham's bosom** (Luke 16:22, Luke 16:23)." (Vincent's Word Studies, from Sword Commentaries, Luke 23:43, emphasis added).

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"In later Jewish usage and in the NT, *paradeisos* is used for **the abode of the blessed, after death**. Paradise, before Christ's resurrection, has been thought to be, **the region of the blessed, in Hades**, although it was not specifically called by that name (Luke 16:23)." (*The Complete Word Study Dictionary of the New Testament*, Spiros Zodhiates, p. 1102, emphasis added).

So, according to a number of Bible scholars, Paradise was the section of Hades, where Abraham and the other righteous people went after they died. Here, are all of the passages in the New Testament, which mention Paradise:

"One of the criminals who hung there hurled insults at him: "Aren't you the Christ? Save yourself and us!" But, the other criminal rebuked him. "Don't you fear God," he said, "since you are under the same sentence? We are punished justly, for we are getting what our deeds deserve. But, this man has done nothing wrong." Then he said, "Jesus, remember me when you come into your Kingdom." Jesus answered him, "I tell you the truth, today, you will be with me in **paradise.**" (Luke 23:39-43).

"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." (2 Corinthians 12:2-4).

"He, who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the Churches. To him, who overcomes, I will give the right to eat from the tree of life, which is in **the paradise of God.**" (Revelation 2:7).

Vincent's Word Studies (quoted above), says that Paradise is equivalent to "Abraham's bosom," which is mentioned in the following passage:

“The time came when the beggar died and the angels carried him to Abraham’s side [or “Abraham’s bosom,” as in some translations]. The rich man also died and was buried. In Hell, [Hades], where he was in torment, he looked up **and saw Abraham far away**, with Lazarus by his side. So, he called to him, ‘Father Abraham, have pity on me and send Lazarus to dip the tip of his finger in water and cool my tongue, because I am in agony in this fire.’ **But, Abraham replied, ‘Son, remember that, in your lifetime, you received your good things, while Lazarus received bad things, but now he is comforted here and you are in agony.** And besides all this, **between us and you, a great chasm has been fixed, so that those who want to go from here to you, cannot, nor can anyone cross over from there to us.**” (Luke 16:22-26).

So, wherever the Spirits of Abraham and the other righteous people were, that’s what was called, “Paradise.”

In Luke 23:39-43 (above), notice that while Jesus hung on the cross, He said to one of the thieves on a cross next to Him, “today you will be with Me in Paradise.” Jesus’ death and resurrection had not happened yet, and the Church had not yet been born, so the repentant thief did not become a Christian. Rather, he became an Old Testament Saint, by his faith. Therefore, after his death, the repentant thief went to be with Abraham in Hades, and that place is what Jesus called, “Paradise.” In fact, Jesus went to Paradise, as well, because Jesus told the thief, “today you will be **with Me** in Paradise.”

Some people correctly point out, that there were no punctuation marks in the original Greek texts, and then they argue, that Jesus’ Words were actually, “I tell you the truth today, you will be with Me in Paradise.” They dispute the placement of the comma before the word, “today,” on the grounds that there were no commas in the original Greek texts, and they argue that the comma should really be placed after the word, “today” (which fits better with their doctrines, concerning Heaven). But notice that, if there is no evidence that the comma should be placed **before** the word, “today” (according to the argument, that some people make), then the same lack of evidence

means, that there is no proof that a comma should be placed **after** the word, “today.” (as those people want to do). As it turns out, though, we do have evidence, that a comma should be placed before the word, “today.” In the NIV translation, Jesus is recorded as saying, “I tell you the truth,” 78 times in the Gospels (here are the references: Matthew 5:18, 26, 6:2, 5, 16, 8:10, 10:15, 23, 42, 11:11, 13:17, 16:28, 17:20, 18:3, 13, 18, 19:23, 28, 21:21, 31, 23:36, 24:2, 34, 47, 25:12, 40, 45, 26:13, 21, 34, Mark 3:28, 8:12, 9:1, 41, 10:15, 29, 11:23, 12:43, 13:30, 14:9, 18, 25, 30, Luke 4:24, 9:27, 12:37, 44, 18:17, 29, 21:3, 32, 23:43, John 1:51, 3:3, 5, 11, 5:19, 24, 25, 6:26, 32, 47, 53, 8:34, 51, 58, 10:1, 7, 12:24, 13:16, 20, 21, 38, 14:12, 16:7, 20, 23, 21:18). When we look at every one of these references, other than Luke 23:43 (above), we can easily see, that there is not a single example where Jesus said, “I tell you the truth today.” That was not an expression which Jesus used. Instead, Jesus frequently used the expression, “I tell you the truth,” before He explained something. Based on Jesus’ consistent use of that expression, the weight of evidence supports the view, that Jesus told the repentant thief, “I tell you the truth, today you will be with Me in Paradise.” This indicates, that both, Jesus and the repentant thief, went to “Paradise,” on the day that they died.

So, the weight of evidence supports the view, that Jesus went to Paradise on the day that He died, which is where Abraham and the other Old Testament saints were. Since Paradise was a compartment within Hades, this means, that Jesus went to Hades, after He died. This also appears to be confirmed in Acts 2:31:

“Having foreseen, He did speak concerning the rising again of the Christ, that **His soul was not left to Hades**, nor did His flesh see corruption” (Acts 2:31, Young’s Literal Translation).

This passage seems to confirm, that Jesus went to Hades after He died, but that He didn’t remain in Hades.

What happened to Paradise?

As we have seen, the evidence seems to indicate, that Hades contained one

compartment for the unrighteous and another compartment, called Paradise, for the righteous (and possibly, another compartment, called Tartarus, for certain fallen angels). Now let's take a look at what a prominent New Testament Greek dictionary says about Hades:

"In Acts 2:27, 31, the word, *Hades* occurs in a quotation from Psalms 16:10, in an application of OT faith, in the advent of Christ, His death, and His resurrection. Therefore, it has again, the meaning of the world of the departed, ***into which, Christ passed like other men, but only to transform its nature from a place, accommodating both, believers and unbelievers, to one for unbelievers only.***" (The Complete Word Study Dictionary of the New Testament, Spiros Zodhiates, p. 81, emphasis added).

The above quote expresses the view, that after Jesus died, He went down to Hades, and then, He took the Paradise compartment of Hades (and all of the righteous people, in that compartment), up into Heaven. This would mean, that Paradise is now in Heaven, and that righteous people go immediately to Heaven after we die, rather than going down to Hades, first. For example, notice what the Apostle Paul said about Paradise:

"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" (2 Corinthians 12:2-4).

Bible scholars tend to believe, that it was Paul himself, who went up into the third Heaven, and they say, that the ancient Jews referred to the atmosphere, as the "first Heaven," and the area of the stars, as the "second Heaven," and the "third Heaven," was considered to be where God's throne is:

"To the third Heaven - The Jews sometimes speak of seven Heavens, and Muhammed has borrowed this idea from the Jews. But, the Bible speaks of but three Heavens, and among the Jews in the Apostolic ages, also the Heavens were divid-

ed into three:

(1) The aerial, including the clouds and the atmosphere, the Heavens above us, until we come to the stars.

(2) the starry Heavens, the Heavens in which the sun, moon, and stars appear to be situated.

(3) the Heavens beyond the stars. That Heaven was supposed to be the residence of God, of angels, and of Holy Spirits. ***It was this upper Heaven, the dwelling-place of God, to which, Paul was taken,*** and whose wonders he was permitted to behold - this region where God dwelt; where Christ was seated, at the right hand of the Father, and where the Spirits of the just, were assembled.” (Barnes, from Sword Commentaries, 2 Corinthians 12:2, emphasis added).

“Paul was permitted, not only to “hear” the things of Paradise, but to see also, in some degree, the things of the third Heaven (compare “visions,” 2 Corinthians 12:1). ...The first Heaven, is that of the clouds, the *air*, the second, that of the stars, the *sky*, the third is *Spiritual*. (Ephesians 4:10).” (Jamieson, Fausset, and Brown Commentary, verse 2, emphasis added).

“Even to the third Heaven. It is unlikely that Paul alludes to the idea of seven Heavens, held by some Jews. (Test. of the Twelve Pat., Levi ii.iii). He seems to mean the highest Heaven, where God is. (Plummer).” (Robertson’s Word Pictures of the New Testament).

“It is plain, from 12:6,7, that he [Paul], means himself, though in modesty he speaks as of a third person. ...The third Heaven - Where God is; far above the aerial and the starry Heaven. Some suppose it was here, the Apostle was let into the mystery of the future state of the Church; and received his orders, to turn from the Jews and go to the Gentiles.” (Wesley’s Explanatory Notes, verse 2).

So, the Apostle Paul was caught up to Paradise, which he said, is in the “third Heaven,” where God is. In addition, Paul said, that when he died, he would immediately be with Christ (i.e., in Heaven):

“If I am to go on living in the body, this will mean fruitful labor for me. Yet, what

shall I choose? I do not know! I am torn between the two: I desire to **depart and be with Christ**, which is better by far; but, it is more necessary for you, that I remain in the body" (Philippians 1:22-24).

Since Paul said, that he would be with Christ right after he died, this tells us, that he would go to Heaven, rather than going to Hades. Again, righteous people no longer go to the Paradise section of Hades, after death, but rather, we immediately go to Heaven (where Paradise is now).

To summarize so far, Jesus went down to Hades after He died, and then, at some point, He took the Paradise section of Hades up into Heaven with Him. With that in mind, take a look at Ephesians 4:8-10:

"Wherefore, He saith, '**Having gone up on high, He led captive captivity,** and gave gifts to men,' - and that, He went up, what is it except that **He also went down first to the lower parts of the earth?** He who went down is the same also, who sent up far above all the Heavens, that He may fill all things" (Ephesians 4:8-10, Young's Literal Translation).

This confusing passage brings up a number of questions. For example, where are "the lower parts of the earth," "that Jesus went down to? The NIV has a footnote for this verse, which says that, "the lower, earthly regions" (i.e., "the lower parts of the earth") can also be translated as, "the depths of the earth," In Psalms 63:9, "the depths of the earth" appears to refer to Hades, so it seems possible, that the above passage is referring to Jesus going down to Hades, after He died.

The above passage also says, "Having gone up on high, He led captive captivity," and the expression, "Having gone up on high," refers to Jesus' ascension into Heaven, 40 days after His resurrection, according to Bible scholars. Concerning the phrase, "he led captive captivity," there seem to be two main interpretations. One interpretation, is that it refers to captive enemies, meaning such things as the Devil, demons, death, sin, and so on (see for example, Wesley's Explanatory Notes, verse 8, and Jamieson, Fausset, and Brown's Commentary, verse 8). However, notice that the

Devil, demons, death, sin, etc., are all still operating freely in the world, which means that they are **not** in captivity anywhere. Also notice, that the phrase, “He led captive captivity,” is redundant, unless it means, that something was **already** in captivity, and that Jesus led it “captive” when He ascended into Heaven. Since the Devil, demons, sin, etc., were not held captive anywhere at the time of the Ascension (and they still are not held captive anywhere today), it is unlikely that those are the “captives,” in that passage.

Now, here is another possible interpretation of that passage, which fits perfectly with all of the evidence that we have examined. If you recall, we saw that the Spirits of all of the righteous people throughout history, were confined to the Paradise section of Hades, and we saw that they couldn’t go anywhere (they were held captive there). We also saw that the repentant thief went down to Paradise after he died, which was still in Hades, at that time. In addition, we saw that the Paradise section of Hades is now in Heaven, which means that, at some point, it was moved from Hades to Heaven. Finally, we saw that Jesus went down to the Paradise section of Hades, after He died on the cross, and now we are examining a passage which says, that Jesus led some captives with Him, when He ascended up to Heaven. So, the question is, who or what was being held captive in Hades, until the cross, but is now, in Heaven? The only things which fit this description, are the righteous people who were confined to the Paradise section of Hades. So, when Ephesians 4:8-10 (above) says, “Having gone up on high, He led captive captivity,” it most likely means, that Jesus took Paradise (and all of the righteous Spirits in Paradise), up into Heaven at the Ascension, as we have already seen. That’s why when Paul was “caught up to Paradise” (2 Corinthians 12:2-4 above), he said, that he was taken **up** to the “third Heaven.” Paradise is no longer in Hades, it is now in Heaven, and therefore, Paul said, that when he died, he would immediately be with Jesus, in Heaven. (Philippians 1:22-24, above).

What Did Jesus Do While He Was in Hades?

Many people believe that 1 Peter 3:18-20 tells us, that Jesus preached to some departed Spirits, while He was in Hades:

“For Christ died for sins, once for all, the righteous for the unrighteous, to bring you to God. He was put to death in the body, but made alive **by the Spirit, through whom also He went and preached to the Spirits in prison, who disobeyed long ago when God waited patiently in the days of Noah, while the Ark was being built**” (1 Peter 3:18-20).

People sometimes interpret this passage to mean, that when Jesus went down to Hades, He preached to some Spirits there. However, this interpretation has a number of problems.

1. First let's ask ourselves, **which** Spirits did Jesus preach to? Was it the Spirits of the unrighteous people in Hades? Was it the Spirits of the righteous people in the Paradise section of Hades? Was it the fallen angels in Tartarus? To answer these questions, notice that Jesus preached specifically to those who were disobedient, in the time of Noah. But, why did He only preach to them, and how did He preach **only** to those people from Noah's time without preaching to anyone else in Hades?
2. Now let's ask ourselves **what** Jesus preached to the people from Noah's time? Did He preach the Gospel to them? Was Jesus offering them salvation in Hades? If so, then why did He **only** offer salvation to the people who were disobedient in Noah's time, and why didn't He also offer salvation to the other unrighteous people in Hades? Recall that **no-one** was able to cross over from the “agony” compartment of Hades to the Paradise compartment of Hades (Luke 16:22-26), which seems to mean, that it would have been impossible for some one from Noah's time to receive salvation and cross over from the “agony” section of Hades to the Paradise section.
3. If Jesus was not preaching the Gospel in Hades, then did Jesus “preach” in the sense of proclaiming His victory? If so, then why did He **only** proclaim His victory to the Spirits from Noah's time?
4. In the passage which we are studying (1 Peter 3:18-20, above), notice that it says, that Jesus was made alive **by the Spirit, through whom He preached**. Why does this passage specifically say, that Jesus preached a message

“through the Spirit?” If Jesus was right there in Hades, then why didn’t He preach this message Himself?

As we can see, if we interpret 1 Peter 3:18-20 (above), as meaning that Jesus “preached” something while He was in Hades, this interpretation brings up a number of problems and questions. However, there is another way to interpret 1 Peter 3:18-20 (above), which does **not** bring up those problems and questions. First, let me offer an illustration. My Granddad was a Presbyterian minister in North Carolina for many years, and there was a graveyard on the grounds of his Church. Undoubtedly, some people in his congregation were buried there over the years. So, if I visit the Church where my Granddad used to preach, I could point to the graveyard and say that my Granddad preached to many of the dead people who are buried there. Obviously, I don’t mean that those people were dead when my Granddad preached to them, but instead I mean that he preached to them while they were alive and that now they are in these graves. With that illustration in mind, let’s look at 1 Peter 3:18-20 again, in a literal translation of the Bible:

“Because also Christ, once for sin, did suffer -- righteous for unrighteous -- that He might lead us to God, having been put to death indeed, in the flesh, and having been made alive in the Spirit, in which also to the Spirits in prison, having gone He did preach, who sometime disbelieved, when once the long-suffering of God did wait, in the days of Noah” (1 Peter 3:18-20, Young’s Literal Translation).

Based on the sentence construction in the Greek (according to various Bible scholars, such as the ones quoted below), it is valid to interpret this passage, as meaning that Jesus preached through the Spirit to the un-believers in Noah’s time (while they were still alive), and that they were dead and confined to Hades, when Peter wrote the above passage. In other words, this is not something that Jesus did when He went down to Hades after He died on the cross, but instead, this was a message proclaimed by the Holy Spirit, through Noah, while those people were still alive. Here are some things that Bible scholars say about 1 Peter 3:18-20:

“Wohlenberg holds, that ***Peter means that Christ in His pre-existent state,***

preached to those who rejected the preaching of Noah, who are now in prison. Augustine held, that Christ was in Noah, when he preached. ...The language is plain enough, except that it does not make it clear, whether Jesus did the preaching to Spirits in prison, at the time, or to people whose Spirits are now, in prison." (Robertson's Word Pictures of the New Testament, emphasis added).

"By which Spirit he preached - **Through the ministry of Noah.** To the Spirits in prison - **The unholy men before the flood**, who were then reserved by the justice of God, as in a prison, till He executed the sentence upon them all; and are now also reserved to the judgment of the great day." (Wesley's Explanatory Notes, verse 19, emphasis added).

"As "He CAME and preached peace," *by His Spirit* in the Apostles and Ministers after His death and ascension: **so, before His incarnation, He preached in Spirit through Noah to the antediluvians** [i.e., to the people who lived before the Flood]" (Jamieson, Fausset, and Brown Commentary, emphasis added).

"The plain and easy sense of the words is, that **Christ, by His Spirit**, by which, He was quickened, **went in the ministry of Noah**, the preacher of righteousness, **and preached both, by words and deeds, by the personal ministry of Noah, and by the building of the Ark, to that generation, who was then in being**; and who being disobedient, and continuing so, a flood was brought upon them which destroyed them all; and whose Spirits, or separate souls, were then in the prison of Hell." (Gill's Exposition of the Bible, emphasis added).

"As to the old world, **Christ sent His Spirit; gave warning by Noah.** But though the patience of God waits long, it will cease, at last. And the Spirits of disobedient sinners, as soon as they are out of their bodies, are committed to the prison of Hell, where those that despised Noah's warning now are, and from whence, there is no redemption." (Matthew Henry's Concise Commentary, emphasis added).

"For Christ is He who, in those days, (when God, through His patience, appointed a time of repentance to the world) was present, not in corporal presence, but by His Divine Power, **preaching repentance, even by the mouth of Noah himself, who then prepared the Ark, to those disobedient Spirits who are now in prison**, waiting for the full recompense of their rebellion" (Geneva Study Bible, emphasis added).

So, a number of Bible scholars believe, that Jesus preached by the Holy Spirit, through Noah, to the people of Noah's time, while they were still alive. This would mean, that 1 Peter 3:18-20 (above) does not say, that Jesus "preached" to anyone, after He went down to Hades. Perhaps He did preach or proclaim His victory after He arrived in Hades, but that does not appear to be what 1 Peter 3:18-20 (above) is talking about.

Elijah

We have seen that the righteous people who died before the cross, all went "down" to the Paradise compartment in Hades. But, how do we explain what happened to Elijah?

"As they [Elijah and Elisha] were walking along and talking together, suddenly a chariot of fire and horses of fire appeared and separated the two of them, **and Elijah went up to Heaven in a whirlwind**" (2 Kings 2:11).

This verse says, that Elijah went **up** to "Heaven" in a whirlwind. Since Elijah was a righteous man who lived during Old Testament times, shouldn't he have gone **down** to the Paradise compartment of Hades, as we have seen throughout this course?

When we read 2 Kings 2:11 (above), we might assume that Elijah went directly up to the "third Heaven" (where God lives), but if we interpret it that way, then we run into some problems with other passages of Scripture. For example, notice that the Apostle Paul said, that we will all be "changed" ("translated") from mortality to immortality when Jesus returns at the Rapture to take us up into Heaven (because flesh and blood cannot enter into Heaven):

"I declare to you, brothers, that **flesh and blood cannot inherit the Kingdom of God**, nor does the perishable inherit the imperishable. Listen, I tell you a mystery: We will not all sleep, **but we will all be changed -- in a flash, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trumpet. For the trumpet will sound, the dead will be raised imperishable, and we will be changed.** For the perishable must clothe itself with

the imperishable, and the mortal with immortality” (1 Corinthians 15:50-53).

“But, our citizenship is in Heaven. And we eagerly await a Saviour, from there, the Lord Jesus Christ, who, by the Power that enables Him, to bring everything under His control, will **transform our lowly bodies, so that they will be like His glorious body**” (Philippians 3:20-21).

These passages say, that our mortal bodies will be “glorified” or “changed” or “translated,” when Jesus returns for us at the Rapture. Since flesh and blood cannot enter Heaven, then how could Elijah have physically gone into Heaven in that whirlwind? The only way to explain it, would be to say, that he was “translated” and given his glorified, immortal body. However, this explanation brings up more problems. For example, how was it possible for Elijah to become glorified and immortal before Jesus’ death and resurrection? After all, the only reason why humans are able to gain entrance into Heaven, is because Jesus made this possible, yet, Elijah was carried up to “Heaven” long before Jesus was born. On the surface, this appears to be an inconsistency in the Bible.

Another problem, is that Jesus specifically said, that **no-one** has ever gone into Heaven:

“No one has ever gone into Heaven, except the One who came from Heaven -- the Son of Man.” (John 3:13).

Jesus said, that **no-one**, other than Himself, had **ever** gone into Heaven, so why does 2 Kings 2:11 (above) say that Elijah went up to “Heaven” long before Jesus was born? This seems like another inconsistency in the Bible.

Sometimes people say, that Jesus meant that, no-one had ever ascended into Heaven and then **returned** to talk about it. However, this is just an assumption on their part, because Jesus did not say that no-one had ascended **and returned**. Instead, Jesus specifically said, that no-one has ever gone **into** Heaven. In fact, Jesus also said:

“No one has every seen God, but God, the One and Only, who is at the Father’s side, has made Him known” (John 1:18).

“No one has seen the Father, except the One who is from God; **only He has seen the Father**” (John 6:46).

Consider that God the Father lives in Heaven (the “third Heaven”), so if no-one had ever seen the Father, then this would imply that no-one had ever gone into the “third Heaven,” (because, if we believe otherwise, then we would have to prove, that a person could go into the “third Heaven,” and **not** see God). Since Jesus said, that **no-one** had ever gone into Heaven, and He said, that **no-one** had ever seen God, it seems that Elijah could not have been taken up into the “third Heaven,” where God lives.

As it turns out, there is another explanation of 2 Kings 2:11 (above), which resolves these apparent contradictions, and which fits with the rest of the evidence in the Bible, concerning Paradise and Hades. Recall that Bible scholars say, that the ancient Jews considered the “first Heaven” to be the sky, and they considered the “second Heaven” to be where the stars are, and the “third Heaven,” was considered to be where God’s throne is. Since the word, “Heaven,” has different meanings, it is possible that Elijah was carried by the whirlwind up into the “first Heaven” (the sky). Notice that the prophets from Jericho, who witnessed the whirlwind, sent 50 men to search for Elijah (2 Kings 2:15-17). They didn’t find Elijah’s body, but it is interesting that they did not assume, that Elijah had been taken up into the “third Heaven.” Instead, they said that, “Perhaps the Spirit of the Lord has picked him up and set him down on some mountain or in some valley” (2 Kings 2:16). So, even the prophets, who witnessed this event, did not assume that Elijah had been taken up into the “third Heaven,” but, instead, they thought that His body might have been taken somewhere else. Based on all of the evidence, perhaps Elijah was lifted up into the “first Heaven” (the sky) by the whirlwind, and then Elijah’s Spirit was taken to Paradise in Hades. This explanation harmonizes very well with all of the information that the Bible gives us, concerning Paradise and Hades and Heaven.

Enoch

In addition to Elijah, we also need to examine what happened to Enoch:

“Altogether, Enoch lived 365 years. **“Enoch walked with God; then he was no more, because God took him away”** (Genesis 5:23-24).

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“By faith, Enoch was taken from this life, so that he did not experience death; he could not be found, because God had taken him away. For before he was taken, he was commended, as one who pleased God” (Hebrews 11:5).

There are many ways that people experience death (drowning, heart attack, cancer, old age, etc.), but Elijah and Enoch did not experience death, because God took them away. The Bible doesn't tell us where Enoch went, but if we say, that Enoch was glorified and then taken up into the “third Heaven” (**before** the cross), then we run into the same problems that we saw, concerning Elijah. Perhaps, the same explanation for Elijah's being “taken away,” works for Enoch, as well.

When we look at Hebrews 11:5, in a more literal translation of the Bible, it appears, that Enoch was “translated.”

“By faith, **Enoch was translated** [*metatithemi*] -- not to see death, and was not found, **because God did translate** [*metatithemi*] **him**; for before **his translation** [*metatithemi*], he had been testified to -- that he had pleased God well” (Hebrews 11:5, Young's Literal Translation).

The Greek word for “translate,” in this verse, (*metatithemi*), means:

“To **transfer**, that is, (literally) **transport**, (by implication) exchange, (reflexively) change sides, or (figuratively) pervert: -- **carry over**, change, **remove**, **translate**, turn.” (Strong's Greek Dictionary).

Christians tend to use the word, “translate” when we talk about our physical bodies being “glorified” and “changed,” from mortality to immortality, in order for us to enter the “third Heaven,” at the Rapture. Perhaps, a similar

meaning is intended, in Hebrews 11:5 (above), which would imply that Enoch was “translated” and taken up into the “third Heaven,” where God lives. But, remember, that Jesus said that **no-one** had **ever** gone into Heaven and that **no-one** had seen the Father, which means, that Enoch could not have gone into the “third Heaven” before the cross. So, here’s a possible explanation. If Enoch was, “transferred” to Paradise in Hades, or if he was “transported” to Paradise in Hades, or if he was “carried over” to Paradise in Hades, or if he was “removed” to Paradise in Hades, then this information can be conveyed using the same Greek word, *metatithemi*, which is used in Hebrews 11:5 (above), according to Strong’s Greek Dictionary (above).

Therefore, it is easily possible, that Enoch was “carried away” or “removed” to Paradise in Hades, rather than being translated and taken up into the “third Heaven.” This explanation is supported by the fact, that the same Greek word, *metatithemi*, is used four more times in the New Testament, and it never has the meaning of being “translated,” from mortality or immortality:

“Their bodies were **brought back** [*metatithemi*] to Shechem and placed in the tomb that Abraham had bought from the sons of Hamor, at Shechem, for a certain sum of money” (Acts 7:16).

“I am astonished that you are so quickly **deserting** [*metatithemi*], the One who called you by the grace of Christ and are turning to a different Gospel --” (Galatians 1:6).

“For when there is a **change** [*metatithemi*] of the priesthood, there must also be a change of the law” (Hebrews 7:12).

“For certain, men whose condemnation was written about long ago, have secretly slipped in among you. They are godless men, who **change** [*metatithemi*], the grace of our God into a license for immorality and deny Jesus Christ, our only Sovereign and Lord” (Jude 1:4).

These are the only places where, *metatithemi* is used in the New Testament, other than

in Hebrews 11:5 (above), and we can see that it is never used in the sense of someone being glorified and taken up into Heaven. So, the explanation, that Enoch was “transferred” to Paradise, best fits all of the information that the Bible gives us, about Paradise and Hades and Heaven.

Conclusion

We saw that the Hebrew word, *Sheol* is equivalent to the Greek word, *Hades*, and they refer to a temporary “prison,” where the Spirits of all of the unrighteous people throughout history, will remain, until Judgment Day.

We saw that the Greek word, *Tartarus* refers to a “dungeon” (possibly, within Hades), in which, certain fallen angels are being held, until Judgment Day.

We saw that the Greek word, *Gehenna* is equivalent to the Lake of Fire, and this is the place where all of the unrighteous people throughout history will be tormented forever (along with the Devil and his Demons). This is probably the place that most people associate with the English word, “Hell.”

We saw that “*Paradise*” was a compartment within Hades, in which, the Spirits of all of the righteous people were held, during the Old Testament times.

Finally, we saw that *Jesus* went down to Hades after He died, and then He took the *Paradise* compartment up into Heaven. So, *Paradise* and all of the Old Testament saints are now in Heaven, and we Christians, will go straight to **Heaven**, after we die (rather than going down to *Hades*, first).

I hope this has been helpful, and may the Lord, abundantly Bless You, as you study His Word!

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