

JESUS WENT WHERE?

I Peter 3:18-19

January 13, 2008 Sunday p.m.

INTRODUCTION

- A. We've been studying the Apostle's Creed
 - 1. It's the oldest known Christian statement of faith.
 - 2. It was written in the middle of the second century.
 - 3. It was not written by the Apostles, but could have been.
 - 4. It follows a Trinitarian outline.
- B. Today we look at the strangest and most controversial statement in the Creed: "He descended into Hell".
 - 1. Not every version includes this phrase. Some say, "He descended to the dead".
 - 2. The Bible nowhere explicitly says Jesus went to Hell.
- C. Two passages, however, may say something similar.
 - 1. One is **Psalms 139:7-8**.
 - ⁷ Where can I go from your Spirit? Where can I flee from your presence?
 - ⁸ If I go up to the heavens, you are there; if I make my bed in the depths, you are there.

The phrase "in the depths" translates the Hebrew word "Sheol", which the KJV translates as "Hell".
 - 2. Another passage is **1 Peter 3:18-19**.
 - ¹⁸ 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,
 - ¹⁹ through whom also he went and preached to the spirits in prison
 - a. The NIV capitalizes the word "Spirit" so it refers to the Holy Spirit.
 - b. The original Greek does not capitalize words, so it could refer to the human spirit rather than the Holy Spirit.

1 Corinthians 15:44 may help at this point.

 - ⁴⁴ it is sown a natural body, it is raised a spiritual body. If there is a natural body, there is also a spiritual body.
 - c. So the idea is that Jesus may have gone somewhere in his spiritual body while he was in the grave. But where?
 - d. The Bible uses three words that are sometimes translated as "hell".
 - i. "Sheol" is a Hebrew word the O.T. uses to refer to the place of the dead. Not just the grave, but a place where human spirits reside.
 - ii. "Hades" is a Greek word the N.T. uses as an equivalent to "sheol".
 - iii. "Gehenna" is another Greek word the N.T. uses to refer to a place of fire and brimstone.
 - e. When the Creed uses the word "hell" it uses it like "Sheol" or "Hades", not "Gehenna".
 - f. Now lets consider what this statement of Jesus descending to hell means.

I. FIRST, LETS CONSIDER WHAT IT CANNOT MEAN.

- A. First, it can't mean people get a second chance to be saved after they are dead.
 - 2 Corinthians 6:1-2**
 - ¹ As God's fellow workers we urge you not to receive God's grace in vain. ² For he says, "In the time of my favor I heard you, and in the day of salvation I helped you." I tell you, now is the time of God's favor, now is the day of salvation.

The Greek word for “preached” in 1 Peter 3:19 does not mean “evangelize”. Instead it means to “announce” or “proclaim” something. What could Jesus have proclaimed while in hades? That he was indeed God’s Son and the Savior of the world and that those who rejected him in life will be separated from him in death.

- B. Second, it can’t mean that Jesus suffered in a fiery hell. Jesus did suffer for our sins, but it was while he was on the cross, not while he was in the grave.

II. SECOND, LETS CONSIDER WHAT IT MIGHT MEAN.

- A. It might mean Jesus went to “sheol” or “hades”, but not “Gehenna”.
- B. Some believe O.T. saints remained in “hades” until Jesus’ ascension.
 - 1. Based on the story of Lazarus and the Rich man (Luke 16:19-31), “hades” is thought to have two divisions or sections.
 - 2. One section is called “Paradise” for O.T. saints.
 - 3. The other is called “Torments” for O.T. unbelievers.
 - 4. This may be supported by what Jesus said to the thief on the cross.
Luke 23:43 Jesus answered him, "I tell you the truth, today you will be with me in paradise."
 - 5. Further, its thought that when Jesus resurrected and ascended into heaven, he emptied “Paradise” but left “Torments” intact until the final judgment.

Ephesians 4:8-9

⁸ This is why it says: "When he ascended on high, he led captives in his train and gave gifts to men."

⁹ (What does "he ascended" mean except that he also descended to the lower, earthly regions?)

So, now when a Christian dies he goes to heaven not hades.

2 Corinthians 5:8

⁸ We are confident, I say, and would prefer to be away from the body and at home with the Lord.

III. THIRD, LETS CONSIDER WHAT IT MUST MEAN.

- A. First, it means Jesus fully experienced death.
This again, may be intended as another answer to the Gnostics who denied that a divine God could really die.
- B. Second, it means that Jesus completely defeated Satan.

Colossians 2:15

¹⁵ And having disarmed the powers and authorities, he made a public spectacle of them, triumphing over them by the cross.

- C. Third, it means we should not be afraid of death.

Psalms 16:9-11

⁹ Therefore my heart is glad and my tongue rejoices; my body also will rest secure,

¹⁰ because you will not abandon me to the grave, nor will you let your Holy One see decay.

¹¹ You have made known to me the path of life; you will fill me with joy in your presence, with eternal pleasures at your right hand.

CONCLUSION

- A. Whatever the phrase “He descended to Hell” or “the Dead” means, Jesus did so willfully.
- B. Why? Because he loves us.