

## “HE DESCENDED INTO HELL”

I Pet 3:18-19; 4:6; Col 2:12; Lk 16:19-31; Mt 27:51-53

### I. TERMS re “Hell”:

*Sheol* (Heb)—“covered place,” “invisible underworld”

*Hades* (Gk)—*ad inferna* (Lt)—“lower regions, underworld;” **Neither** *Gehena*—“place of torment,” **Nor** *Abyssos*—“bottomless pit,” **Nor** *Tartaros*—gloomy nether world

### II. BIBLICAL BASIS

- A. OT hints—Jonah 2:3; Ps 16:10
- B. Jesus’ words—Mt 12:40; Lk 23:43; “Paradise” re intermediate heaven; parable re Lazarus & “Abraham’s bosom” (Lk 16:22-26)
- C. Peter’s Pentecostal message—Acts 2:24, 31
- D. Peter’s letter—I Pet 3:18-19; 4:6
- E. Paul’s declarations—Eph 4:9; Col 1:18; Ro 10:6

### III. CHURCH TRADITION

- A. Church Fathers’ consensus—Ignatius of Antioch; Polycarp; Justin Martyr; Origen; Hermes; Irenaeus; Cyprian; Tertullian; Hippolytus; Clement of Alexandria
- B. Catholic Theologians
  1. Augustine: “He was in hell, of which He loosed the sorrows whereby it was impossible that He should be held; from these it is rightly understood that He loosed and released the souls whom He chose; that He received back the Body which He had left on the cross, and which had been laid in the tomb.”
  2. Thomas Aquinas, *Summa Theologica*, III, Q. 52
- C. Protestant Theologians—Luther; Aquinas

### IV. DOCTRINAL POSSIBILITIES (cf. Thomas Oden: *The Word of Life*)

- A. *Burial Motif*—dying, Christ fully shared our destiny, finitude; illustration for us (generally propounded in liberal circles)
- B. *Empathetic Suffering Motif* (Reformed stance)
  1. Shows His final humiliation, obedience
  2. Demonstrates the utter alienation, loneliness He knew (Calvin)
  3. *Heidelberg Catechism*: “That in my severest tribulations I may be assured that Christ my Lord has redeemed me from hellish anxieties and torment.”
- C. *Exaltation Motif* (Patristic/Early Church, Lutheran view; **N.B.** Jerusalem tombs opened on Good Friday (Mt 27:51-53; Jn 5:25-29)
  1. Defeated Satan (Heb 2:14-16) & demons,
  2. Demolished Hell’s gates (Rev 1:18; Col 2:14-15)—Bonaventure
  3. Delivered Saints (Zech 9:11)—Aquinas
- D. *Kerygmatic Motif* (Catholic tradition; Greek *Catechism*: “While His body lay dead in the tomb, His deified soul descended into Hell, and carried to the souls which, since time began, had lain bound there, the good news of reconciliation.”)
  1. Christ preached to the worthy dead (I Pet 4:6)
  2. “Petrine sequence” evident in I Pet 3:18-19
  3. Intermediate state?
  4. “Spirits in prison”?
    - a. Antedeluvians? patriarch & prophets? fallen angels?
    - b. Souls of just (*limbus patrum*)? all who die ignorant of Gospel? righteous pagans like Socrates?