

## The keys of hell and death from Satan

<http://www.letusreason.org/Biblexp14.htm>

Some teach Jesus fought Satan when he went to hell to conquer him. The Bible does not say this at all. You can't find any scripture to support the "keys" view because there isn't any.

**Rev. 1:18** simply says that Jesus **HOLDS** (not 'now has') the keys of death and Hades. Having a key to some place means you can enter it and leave it at will.

In **John 10:17-18** Jesus said He had the authority to lay down His life and the authority to take it up again. After His death he walked into Hades and when He was ready He walked out again. Only someone with the keys can do that.

While in Hades, **1 Peter 3:18-20** says He preached to the disobedient spirits from the time of Noah. And **1 Peter 4:6** says the gospel was preached to those who had died in faith of a coming redeemer. Jesus probably did this too.

But the clearest reason is that this was the sign He offered to His enemies in **Matt. 12:39-40** as proof that He was who He claimed to be. He said He would spend three days and three nights in the belly of the Earth, which is where people believe Hades to be.

### What did Jesus do for the three days and three nights while he was in the heart of the earth?

**Q.** What did Jesus do for the three days and three nights while he was in the heart of the earth? Was preaching the only thing he did, and also, who were the spirits he preached to that were sometime dis-obedient, and why did he preach to them? I have heard that he emptied hell because those spirits died without hearing the gospel. Thank you.

**A.** Every human ever born has to have at least one legitimate opportunity to hear the Gospel and be saved before he or she dies. Otherwise God could not justifiably condemn unbelievers to Hell. The gospel didn't begin with the New Testament. It began with **Genesis 3:15**.

All we're told about that 3 days and 3 nights is that He went to Paradise and preached the gospel to the spirits of Old Testament believers who had died in faith of His coming (**1 Peter 4:6**) and to hell where He also visited the spirits of the unsaved.

**1 Peter 3:19** says that while there Jesus preached to the spirits who disobeyed in the days of Noah. We're not told what He said, but my guess is that it was something like, "Noah was right. You should have gotten on the Ark. There was plenty of room and we gave you plenty of time. You have only yourselves to blame."

Some believe that these spirits were the fallen angels imprisoned in darkness and bound in everlasting chains mentioned in **Jude 6**. If so His message was one of victory over them and their leader Satan.

---

**Satan did not steal the keys from Adam because Adam did not ever have them.** When Adam and Eve sinned it brought sin and death into the world (Romans 5) and when people go to the grave and are not being with God when they die. There are two separate compartments in Hades, on one side is Paradise, Abrahams bosom on the other side is what we today call hell (sheol) where the unbeliever goes. "*And being in torments in Hades, he lifted up his eyes and saw Abraham afar off, and Lazarus in his bosom*"(Luke 16:23)

Jesus says in Revelation 1:18: "*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.*" Jesus conquered death

This means that everyone one day will be resurrected to face the judgment of Christ and either being with Him or cast away (into the lake of fire).

"*And I also say to you that you are Peter, and on this rock I will build My church, and the gates of Hades shall not prevail against it*" (Matt 16:18). In other words, they who believe will be resurrected to life, they will not stay dead. Jesus spoke to those who believed in Him, though you may die you will live.

**In Rev 1:18 the word is “Hades”, not “hell”; the keys are used as an emblem of power and authority. Jesus has full control, he always did.**

Regarding Revelation 1:18, A.T. Robertson in *Robertson's Word Pictures in the New Testament* writes:

*Of death and of Hades “tou” (NT:3588), “thanatou” (NT:2288), “kai” (NT:2532), “tou” (NT:3588), “hadou” (NT:86). Conceived as in Matt 16:18 as a prison house or walled city. The keys are the symbol of authority, as we speak of honoring one by giving him the keys of the city. Hades here means the unseen world to which death is the portal. Jesus has the keys because of his victory over death. See this same graphic picture in Rev 6:8; 20:13f. For the key of David see Rev 3:7, for the key of the abyss see Rev 9:1; 20:1.*

It is Jesus Christ alone that can save and destroy; can kill and make alive. Death and Hades are still under His dominion, and he can recall the dead whenever he pleases.

He is the resurrection and the life. It tells us when the Son of God speaks the graves will open - John 5:25:  
*“Most assuredly, I say to you, the hour is coming, and now is, when the dead will hear the voice of the Son of God; and those who hear will live.”*

As Paul makes it clear in 1 Corinthians 15:54-55:

*“So when this corruptible has put on incorruption, and this mortal has put on immortality, then shall be brought to pass the saying that is written: “Death is swallowed up in victory.” “O Death, where is your sting? O Hades, where is your victory?”*

Rev 20:11-15: At the White throne judgment after the Millennium

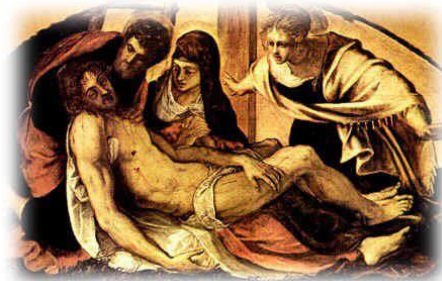
*“And I saw the dead, small and great, standing before God, and books were opened. And another book was opened, which is the Book of Life. And the dead were judged according to their works, by the things which were written in the books. The sea gave up the dead who were in it, and Death and Hades delivered up the dead who were in them. And they were judged, each one according to his works. Then Death and Hades were cast into the lake of fire. This is the second death. And anyone not found written in the Book of Life was cast into the lake of fire.”*

What this means is that everyone will be resurrected to face the judgment of Christ and either be with him forever in paradise unspeakable (2 Corinthians 12) or they will not.

---

## Jesus: Victor Over Death and Hell Itself

<http://thingsrevealed.net/jesus-victor.htm>



When we enter into an in-depth discussion of the death of Jesus, there may be many questions raised by both the sincere and skeptical inquirer <sup>(1)</sup>. Some of the questions may be expressed as follows:

### 1. **If Jesus was God and died on the cross, does that mean that God died?**

According to the Bible, Jesus was God manifest in human flesh. (John 1:14; 1Tim 3:16; Philippians 2:5-8). When Jesus died, he died a man's death and because he was the one and only righteous man *and* the one and only righteous God, "it was impossible for death to keep its hold on him" (Acts 2:22-24). Though it was impossible for God to die (Psalm 102:25-27), it was not impossible for God to take on humanity in order to die a man's death as our substitute (1Tim 2:5,6).

2. **How could the death of Jesus for three days in the grave pay for the eternal death required in hell for all mankind?**

First we need to understand that Jesus fully paid the penalty for our sins through his death on the cross. When Jesus died he said, "It is finished" (John 19:30). "It," in this case, was the work of redemption, which was fully completed by Christ's death on the cross. He did not have to suffer in hell for eternity—or even for three days—in order to add to what he had already accomplished on the cross. The basis of his payment for our sins is found in the value of his sinless and sacrificial life. As the Lamb of God, Jesus alone is "worthy" to pay for our personal sins and for the sins of the whole world (Revelation 5:1-9, 1 John 2:1,2).

Next we need to understand that the Bible does not teach that death in hell for eternity is like a prison sentence for a crime. What could one ever do to pay for or make restitution for a sin? Further, no one will find themselves in hell for reasons they do not understand. The reason will be well known and grievous to them on the day of judgement. They will all know that they had rejected whatever light God gave in order to restore a right relationship with Him (Psalm 19:1-4; Acts 14:16,17; Acts 17:23-31; John 3:16-20). Such true guiding light comes only from "God our Savior, who wants all men to be saved and to come to a knowledge of the truth" (1 Timothy 2:3,4 NIV).

Therefore, Jesus' payment must not be seen as equal to our own penalty, or even that of all mankind. The penalty due for our sin was not placed on a balance scale with the death of Christ on the other side. What we must realize is that the sinless life of Jesus Christ was of infinite worth, while the eternal suffering of the unbeliever is nothing but the natural consequence of refusal to receive the free gift of eternal life in Jesus Christ. In the end, only the Christian can begin to understand the value of this gift and will exclaim, "Thanks be to God for his indescribable gift!" (2 Corinthians 9:15 NIV).

3. **Did Jesus really go to hell and, if so, what did he do there?**

Just before Jesus died he said to the thief on the cross, "I tell you the truth, today you will be with me in paradise" (Luke 23:43 NIV). Now, the English translation of the *Apostles Creed* says, "he descended into hell" <sup>(2)</sup>. And according to the scriptures, "he also descended to the lower, earthly regions" (Ephesians 4:9 NIV). So, where did Jesus go after his death?

Some of us realize that much of the interpretative challenge is solved when we know that the OT word translated "hell" (KJV) is actually the Hebrew word "Sheol," and the corresponding NT word translated "hell" (KJV) is the Greek word "Hades." Jesus clearly described this resting-place for the dead when he recounts what happened to a poor man named Lazarus and a certain rich man after death (Luke 16:19-31). From his description we see that Hades (or Sheol) was divided into two compartments—a place of comfort (Abraham's Bosom, v.22) and a place of torment (v.28). Some commentators believe that this account is a parable and therefore it should not be taken as a literal description of the afterlife. However, it must be acknowledged that a literal interpretation of Jesus provides a perfect framework to organize the other relevant scriptures dealing with the work of Christ while in the grave. Let us now consider the following literal interpretation of these scriptures.

According to the Bible, when Jesus died, he descended into the "lower, earthly regions" (Ephesians 4:9) to what is called "Abraham's Bosom" or "Paradise" where the OT saints were comforted until he came and then "ascended on high" (to heaven) and thus he "led captives in his train" (Ephesians 4:8 NIV). He also went to the "place of torment" (Luke 16:28 KJV) to make "proclamation to the spirits now in prison" (1 Peter 3:18-20 NASB)<sup>(3)</sup>. Here Jesus made a declaration of victory over death, "Where, O death, is your victory? Where, O death, is your sting?" (1 Corinthians 15:55 NIV). As we would expect, his proclamation had an opposite effect on the OT saints as compared to the unbelievers in Hades. Jesus was not "abandoned to the grave" (Acts 2:31 NIV) because he was not a captive but a deliverer. Jesus explained it in this way, "I am the Living One; I was dead, and behold I am alive for ever and ever! And I hold the keys of death and Hades" (Revelation 1:18 NIV).

4. **Since we often hear that death is separation from God, was Jesus separated from God for the three days he was in the grave?**

Since God "made him (Jesus) to be sin for us, who knew no sin" (2 Corinthians 5:21 KJV), and because God's "eyes are too pure to look on evil" (Habakkuk 1:13 NIV), Jesus suffered separation from his Father while on the cross. Many believe that is the symbolic meaning behind the 3-hour darkness while Jesus suffered on the cross. (Mark 15:34). Whatever meaning we may draw out of these events, Jesus did cry, "My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?" (Mark 15:34 NIV). But once again, with Jesus' last breath he said, "It is finished." Jesus did not pay for our sins in hell. He paid for our sins with his sinless life on the cross and therefore no other payment was required. Jesus did not go to hell to pay for our sins; he went to Hades "to proclaim freedom for the captives and release from darkness for the prisoners" (Isaiah 61:1 NIV; see Ephesians 4:8) and make "proclamation to the spirits now in prison" (1 Peter 3:18-20 NASB). Today, believers give thanks for the wonderful truth that the death

of Jesus has freed us from our bondage to sin and spiritual darkness. But Jesus also proclaimed freedom for the believers that had been protected in Abraham's Bosom and his victory over death to the unbelievers and fallen angels that are still imprisoned in Hades. The believers he took to heaven (Ephesians 4:8)<sup>(4)</sup>, the unbelievers and demons will, one day, be cast with Hades into the eternal prison called the "lake of fire" (Revelation 20:13,14). Though God has "prepared a place" in heaven for believers (John 14:2,3), he also prepared an "eternal fire" for the Devil and his demons (Matthew 25:41), and if we refuse the gift of eternal life with God, we have chosen eternal death with Satan. This is what the Bible describes as eternal separation from the saving presence of God in hell.

5. **According to the Bible, is death in hell a state of being or a place of being?**

According to the Bible, death in hell is both a "state of being" separate from God (Isaiah 59:2) and a "place of being" separate from God (Matthew 10:28). Both of these effects are a matter of choice for those who refuse to "believe that he is, and that he is a rewarder of them that diligently seek him." (Hebrews 11:6 KJV). God will not force anyone to spend eternity with him, since a coerced love is no love at all. Therefore, he who rejects the loving presence of the eternal God will find himself eternally separated from his saving presence.

6. **Is it "fair" for God to judge sin by condemning people to an eternal hell?**

This may well be the key complaint for those who object to the idea of judgment for sin. They may feel that there is something "un-proportional" about eternal consequences for temporal sins. But first we need some clarity on this idea of "fairness" and for this a helpful picture may be found in the realm of sports. For example when athletes compete against each other they expect that there will be some give-and-take so that the outcome is "balanced and even." This arrangement represents a peer-to-peer relationship where the presence of the referee merely ensures fair play. In such cases we are not surprised to hear a competitor complain, "That's not fair!"

Justice, on the other hand, is an entirely different matter. Justice does not involve a peer-to-peer relationship, but instead an objective, and therefore independent, authority that metes out punishment for wrongdoing which is defined as "law breaking." Further, ignorance of the law is not allowed as an excuse for breaking the law. Now, a law is either just or it is not. Once a law is determined to be just, we do not even consider a complaint from the law-breaker that the judgement is "not fair."

The need for justice in the universe is undisputable. One need only consider the monstrous acts of evil committed by such agents of evil as Adolph Hitler, Joseph Stalin, and Charles Manson. Almost all people will agree that such wickedness demands a divine response, yet some argue that "lesser sins" do not merit eternal justice. But once again we need to ask, "What could one ever do to *make up* for a past sin?"<sup>(5)</sup> Whether we think of sins of commission, like murder, or sins of omission, like sloth, it is impossible to make up for the harm done, be it a lost life *or* a lost opportunity. Reason and wisdom both demand that we give up on this irrational desire to "cry over spilt milk" and simply accept the fact that we cannot make up for the sins of the past. And in the end, what peace can we find in a "I-did-my-best" rationalization of sin? Before we cross the threshold of eternity there is one more question we must all answer. "How can I be sure that I have not crossed the line of no return?"

In contrast to this attempt at self-justification, the Bible says that God is holy, and therefore he cannot even look upon sin; much less allow it to live in his presence (Isaiah 6:1-5; Habakkuk 1:13). Only the sinless life of the Son of God could be counted as worthy enough an offering to pay for our sins (Revelation 5:1-11). And if we will not accept the gracious gift of life through the Son, we have rejected the gift of life with the Father. So, what is this law that would condemn someone to hell, and is it just? The law of *free will* is simply this: Those who **will not** live with God, **shall not** live with God. Though man was created to live with God for eternity, if we refuse the gift of eternal life in his Son, then we have chosen eternal death in hell, which was "prepared for the devil and his angels" (Matthew 25:41). Hell is a free will choice of eternal consequence.

Now, for some final clarity on this question of "fairness." Let us consider a unique case where the requirement for independent objectivity cannot be met by a judge. In this hypothetical case, if a son were to stand before the bench of his father, we could not expect impartial justice. In point of fact, we would not allow this circumstance to arise at all, since a father could not be expected to give out justice, but only mercy. So it is with those who have been adopted into the family of God by faith in the death and resurrection of the Son of God. When God is your father you can expect the mercy of a loving, heavenly father. Such a judgment may not be "fair," but it is loving. And different from an earthly judge, the unconditional love of God, authentically received, ensures that his judgment is one day "justified" by our transformed lives (Romans 3:25,26). In the end, we choose to relate to God as either a judge or a father and this decision is completely dependent on our relationship to his Son.

7. **Does the Bible really teach that those who do not believe in Jesus will go to hell?**

No, the Bible does not teach that those who do not believe in Jesus will go to hell. The Bible teaches that sinners are going to hell. The bad news is that all of us have sinned (Romans 3:23) and there is no one who is righteous (Romans 3:10). The Good News is that Jesus died for our sins so that we may be reconciled to God through faith in him. The coming of Jesus into the world did not condemn people to hell; the coming of Jesus means there is a way of escape from going to hell <sup>(6)</sup>.

As the scripture says: For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life. For God sent not his Son into the world to condemn the world; but that the world through him might be saved. (John 3:16,17, KJV)

## **Conclusion**

As King David realized, these Biblical truths are actually good news for both this life and the next, since no matter if we feel that we are in heaven or hell, Jesus promised that he would never leave us nor forsake us. David expressed it in this way:

Whither shall I go from thy spirit? or whither shall I flee from thy presence? If I ascend up into heaven, thou art there: if I make my bed in hell, behold, thou art there. If I take the wings of the morning, and dwell in the uttermost parts of the sea; Even there shall thy hand lead me, and thy right hand shall hold me (Psalm 139:7-10 KJV).

Finally, Jesus used Peter's confession of faith in him to give all believers a word of encouragement concerning hell:

And I say also unto thee, That thou art Peter, and upon this rock I will build my church; and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it! (Matthew 16:18 KJV)

Tim Nordgren 4/20/02

## **Footnotes:**

1. For a good introduction to these and many other questions related to hell, see the *Baker Encyclopedia of Christian Apologetics*, Norman L. Geisler, Baker Books, 2000. In this discussion we need to acknowledge that there is good deal of latitude for interpretation regarding the scriptures considered above; however, there is no Biblical warrant for those who would set aside the reality of hell's existence. For a discussion of recent compromises concerning the Bible's teaching on hell, see "Evangelicals And The Annihilation Of Hell, Part One", Christian Research Journal, Spring 1991, by Alan W. Gomes <[www.Equip.org](http://www.Equip.org)>.
2. It is outside the scope of this discussion to consider the origin of the *Apostles Creed*, but it does represent the traditional second-century interpretation of the scriptures. However, there is a loss of precision when translating from the earlier Greek form, which uses the word "Hades," or the later Latin form, which uses the word "infernus," to the English word "hell." The form usually recited today in Protestant and Catholic churches is as follows:

I believe in God the Father Almighty, Maker of heaven and earth: And in Jesus Christ his only Son, our Lord; who was conceived by the Holy Ghost, born of the virgin Mary, suffered under Pontius Pilate, was crucified, dead, and buried; he descended into hell; the third day he rose again from the dead; he ascended into heaven, and sitteth on the right hand of God the Father Almighty; from thence he shall come to judge the quick and the dead. I believe in the Holy Ghost; the holy catholic church; the communion of saints; the forgiveness of sins; the resurrection of the body; and the life everlasting. Amen.

3. For an alternative interpretation of 1 Peter 3:19-20 we might paraphrase it as follows: "Christ, through the Holy Spirit in Noah, preached righteousness to the disobedient people of his day." To support this view we must call upon 2 Peter 2:5, where it describes Noah as a "preacher of righteousness." Then we must use 1 Peter 1:11, where it characterizes the OT prophets as speaking through the "Spirit of Christ in them." And finally, we might employ Hebrews 12:23, to equate the "spirits of men" with the "spirits in prison" (1 Peter 3:19). By stringing all these scriptures together, we could construct this alternative interpretation, however; it only applies for this particular passage. And what about the other relevant scriptures (Isaiah 61:1-3; Ephesians 4:7-10; 2 Peter 2:4, Jude 1:6). The following scripture casts doubt on such an alternative interpretation, "God spared not the angels that sinned, but cast them down to hell, and delivered them into chains of darkness, to be reserved unto judgment," (2 Peter 2:4 KJV). It seems that the literal interpretation given above for Luke 16:19-31 relates all these scriptures together best. Finally, it is instructive to know that the literal interpretation was the one traditionally held by the early church fathers.
4. The scriptures make it clear that those who die with faith in Jesus Christ go immediately to be with their Lord in heaven. As the apostle Paul said, "We are confident, / say, and willing rather to be absent from the body, and to

be present with the Lord." (2 Corinthians 5:8, KJV). For the believer, being separated from the body means being present with the Lord.

5. Some may insist that the scriptures teach that we can pay for our own sins on the basis of the parable of the "wicked servant" (Matthew 18:23-34). But, as always, the scriptural context is critical for interpretation. In this case, Jesus was teaching about forgiveness and that it should be unlimited and unconditional. In this parable, a servant owed an enormous debt to the king that he could not possibly have repaid (Today, 10,000 talents of gold ~ \$2,500,000,000), but even so, the king had mercy and forgave his debt. Unfortunately, this servant was ungrateful and when someone else owed him a trifling amount (100 denarii = 100 days wages) he had him "thrown into prison until he could pay the debt" (v.30). When the king heard about this wicked servant, he had him thrown in prison and then declared that he, "should pay back all he owed" (v.34). Jesus wants us to recognize that we have a debt of sin to God that we could not possibly repay, that he has forgiven us anyway, and therefore we must forgive the trifling sins of others. This parable, and the whole of scripture, makes it clear that we cannot "make up" for our sins, but must rely on the merciful forgiveness of God.
6. Many people wonder what the Biblical teaching, sometimes-called "original sin," means for children who die before they can have faith in Jesus. While most of us realize that we have inherited an inclination to do wrong, which the Bible says, came from Adam, we may not want to think about what will be the result of a life that starts with such a sin nature. Another related question relates to those who have never heard about Jesus in order to put their faith in him—for instance, those in Africa.

As an interesting side-note, today, there are actually more Christians in Africa than on any continent of the world. More importantly, we need to recognize that God has the power to reveal himself in many different ways, which include nature (Psalm 19:1-4, Acts 14:16,17), history (Psalm 46:8-10), and the conscience (the "law in the heart" Romans 2:14-16). These scriptural insights have led some to see the "law written in the heart" as an alternative way of salvation. However, we should first understand several things concerning the written law:

"No one will be declared righteous in his sight by observing the law; rather, through the law we become conscious of sin." (Romans 3:20, NIV)

The "law was our schoolmaster to bring us unto Christ, that we might be justified by faith." (Galatians 3:24, KJV)

If this is true for the perfect written law, how much more for the *imperfect* "law written in their hearts." We cannot come to God on the basis of any law—written or unwritten—but through faith in Christ alone. The apostle Peter said, "Salvation is found in no one else, for there is no other name under heaven given to men by which we must be saved" (Acts 4:12 NIV). And Jesus said, "I am the way and the truth and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me" (John 14:6 NIV).

And concerning faith, Jesus used the example of innocent children by saying:

"Verly I say unto you, Except ye be converted, and become as little children, ye shall not enter into the kingdom of heaven." (Matthew 18:3, KJV)

"Let the little children come to me, and do not hinder them, for the kingdom of God belongs to such as these." (Luke 18:16, NIV)

Child-like faith in Jesus is the only way to enter heaven.

By the way, those who would accuse the Old Testament Law of harshness may want to invest the time to understand what the Law actually says about accountability of the innocent (see Numbers 1:17-20; [14:28,29](#); 26:2). When we understand the scriptures as a whole, we realize that there is an age of accountability and that such accountability is based on the light revealed to us throughout our lives. Again, God's will on this matter can be summarized as follows, "God our Savior... wants all men (people) to be saved and to come to a knowledge of the truth" (1 Timothy 2:3,4, NIV).

## Comparing Versus KJV and NIV, NIV84

### 1 Peter 3:18-20 King James Version (KJV)

<sup>18</sup>For Christ also hath once suffered for sins, the just for the unjust, that he might bring us to God, being put to death in the flesh, but quickened by the Spirit:

<sup>19</sup>By which also he went and preached unto the spirits in prison;

<sup>20</sup>Which sometime were disobedient, when once the longsuffering of God waited in the days of Noah, while the ark was a preparing, wherein few, that is, eight souls were saved by water.

### **1 Peter 3:18-20 New International Version (NIV)**

<sup>18</sup> For Christ also suffered once for sins, the righteous for the unrighteous, to bring you to God. He was put to death in the body but made alive in the Spirit.

<sup>19</sup> After being made alive,<sup>[a]</sup> he went and made proclamation to the imprisoned spirits—

<sup>20</sup> to those who were disobedient long ago when God waited patiently in the days of Noah while the ark was being built. In it only a few people, eight in all, were saved through water,

**Footnotes:** [1 Peter 3:19](#) Or “*but made alive in the spirit, in which also*”

### **1 Peter 3:18-20 New International Version 1984 (NIV1984)**

<sup>18</sup> 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,

<sup>19</sup> through whom<sup>[a]</sup> also he went and preached to the spirits in prison

<sup>20</sup> who disobeyed long ago when God waited patiently in the days of Noah while the ark was being built. In it only a few people, eight in all, were saved through water,

**Footnotes:** 1 Peter 3:19 Or “*alive in the spirit, 19 through which*”

### **Matthew 12:39-40 King James Version (KJV)**

<sup>39</sup> But he answered and said unto them, An evil and adulterous generation seeketh after a sign; and there shall no sign be given to it, but the sign of the prophet Jonas:

<sup>40</sup> For as Jonas was three days and three nights in the whale's belly; so shall the Son of man be three days and three nights in the heart of the earth.

### **Matthew 12:39-40 New International Version (NIV)**

<sup>39</sup> He answered, “A wicked and adulterous generation asks for a sign! But none will be given it except the sign of the prophet Jonah. <sup>40</sup> For as Jonah was three days and three nights in the belly of a huge fish, so the Son of Man will be three days and three nights in the heart of the earth.

### **Matthew 12:39-40 New International Version 1984 (NIV1984)**

<sup>39</sup> He answered, “A wicked and adulterous generation asks for a miraculous sign! But none will be given it except the sign of the prophet Jonah.

<sup>40</sup> For as Jonah was three days and three nights in the belly of a huge fish, so the Son of Man will be three days and three nights in the heart of the earth.

---

## Is there proof in the bible that Jesus went down into hell after he was crucified?

<http://www.heaven.net.nz/answers/answer17.htm>

It is commonly taught in the Churches today that when Jesus died he went to Hell and fought the Powers of Darkness and then was raised back to the earth before being raised to the highest position in Heaven.

But where is the proof for such a commonly taught doctrine.

Below I have found some scriptures that back up this teaching. I have an explanation of each verse, but ultimately you can make your own mind up about this matter.

But before I start I want you to know that the word "[Hades](#)" & "[Geenna](#)" are the Greek words that we translate as Hell. In the Hebrew the word for Hell is "[Sheol](#)"

---

Below are the definitions for the 3 words.

**HADES** {hah'-dace} (as negative particle) hell, grave

1. name Hades or Pluto, the god of the lower regions
2. Orcus, the nether world, the realm of the dead
3. later use of this word: the grave, death, hell
4. In Biblical Greek it is associated with Orcus, the infernal regions, a dark and dismal place in the very depths of the earth, the common receptacle of disembodied spirits.
5. Usually Hades is just the abode of the wicked, Lu. 16:23, Rev. 20:13,14; a very uncomfortable place.

**GEENNA** {gheh'-en-nah} hell, hell fire



1. Hell is the place of the future punishment call "Gehenna" or "Gehenna of fire". This was originally the valley of Hinnom, south of Jerusalem, where the filth and dead animals of the city were cast out and burned; a fit symbol of the wicked and their future destruction.

## **SHEOL** {sheh-ole'}

1. sheol, underworld, grave, hell, pit
2. Sheol - the OT designation for the abode of the dead
3. place of no return
4. without praise of God
5. wicked sent there for punishment
6. righteous not abandoned to it

---

At this stage I want to show you some scriptures that refer to the location of Hell.  
See the scriptures below.

In [Ezekiel 26:20](#) (English-NIV) it says:

then I will bring you down with those who go down to the pit, to the people of long ago. I will make you dwell in the earth below, as in ancient ruins, with those who go down to the pit, and you will not return or take your place in the land of the living.

Notice that this scripture indicates that some people are dwelling in the Earth below (the pit).

[Ezekiel 31:16](#) (English-KJV)

I made the nations to shake at the sound of his fall, when I cast him down to hell with them that descend into the pit: and all the trees of Eden, the choice and best of Lebanon, all that drink water, shall be comforted in the nether parts of the earth.

Again Hell (sheol, underworld, grave, hell, pit) is referred to as being in the earth.

[Luke 16:19-28](#) (English-NIV)

19 There was a rich man who was dressed in purple and fine linen and lived in luxury every day.

20 At his gate was laid a beggar named Lazarus, covered with sores

21 and longing to eat what fell from the rich man's table. Even the dogs came and licked his sores.

22 The time came when the beggar died and the angels carried him to Abraham's side. The rich man also died and was buried.

23 In hell, where he was in torment, he looked up and saw Abraham far away, with Lazarus by his side.

24 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.

25 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.

26 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.

27 He answered, `Then I beg you, father, send Lazarus to my father's house,

28 for I have five brothers. Let him warn them, so that they will not also come to this place of torment.

Remember that these are the recorded words of Jesus himself.

Taken literally it suggests that the world of the dead is/was divided into 2 regions. One for the wicked and the other for the righteous.

The wicked are in torment in hell and the righteous are/were in peace with Abraham.

There was/is a chasm between the 2 places that stopped either side from crossing to the other, yet they could/can still communicate with each other.

Now I want to show you that Jesus went to Hades/Hell after He was crucified on the Cross according to the scripture.



[Matthew 12:40](#) (English-NIV)

For as Jonah was three days and three nights in the belly of a huge fish, so the Son of Man will be three days and three nights in the heart of the earth.

This scripture is quite blatant about the fact that Jesus went to the heart of the earth for 3 days and 3 nights.

If this is the case then how do the words of Jesus spoken to the thief on the cross make sense.

[Luke 23:42-43](#) (English-NIV)

42 Then he said, "Jesus, remember me when you come into your kingdom."

43 Jesus answered him, "I tell you the truth, today you will be with me in paradise."

The point I am making here is that Jesus was in the heart of the earth for approximately 3 days, after that he walked the earth for a short time and then he was lifted up into heaven.

So if the reference to Paradise was heaven, then when Jesus said to the thief on the cross "that he would be in paradise with him today" would have to be a contradiction because Jesus was in the heart of the earth for 3 days and 3 nights.

The only way that both scriptures can be explained without contradiction is to say that Paradise was also in the heart of the earth like Hell.

Do you find this hard to believe.

Doesn't Luke 16:19-28 say the same thing. We just read earlier in those verses that when Lazarus died he went to Abraham's side and the rich man went to hell. In hell the rich man looked up and could see Lazarus being comforted at Abraham's side. But neither could cross over to the other side because of a huge chasm.

[Ephesians 4:9](#) (English-NIV)

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 ?

10 He who descended is the very one who ascended higher than all the heavens, in order to fill the whole universe.

The focal point for the word ascended and descended is the earth itself.

In verse 9 it says that he descended to the lower earthly regions

[Hebrews 2:14](#) (English-NIV)

Since the children have flesh and blood, he too shared in their humanity so that by his death he might destroy him who holds the power of death--that is, the devil.

[Revelation 1:18](#) (English-NIV)

17 When I saw him, I fell at his feet as though dead. Then he placed his right hand on me and said: "Do not be afraid. I am the First and the Last.

18 I am the Living One; I was dead, and behold I am alive for ever and ever! And I hold the keys of death and Hades.

These scriptures indicate that Jesus was dead and is now alive, he also has the Keys of death and hell. We can see clearly that Jesus mission to destroy the power that the devil had over death was a success.

[1 Peter 3](#) (English-NIV)

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

20 who disobeyed long ago when God waited patiently in the days of Noah while the ark was being built. In it only a few people, eight in all, were saved through water,

This scripture says that Jesus preached to disobedient spirits in prison who died before the flood of Noah.

Although I myself do not quite understand the full ramifications of this verse, It does make sense that when Jesus defeated death, he could have proclaimed his victory to the wicked spirits in Hell, in other words he heralded their soon coming judgement, and then of course he set the righteous spirits free to abide in Heaven. It doesn't necessarily mean that Jesus gave the wicked a second chance to repent as the New Testament scriptures are quite blatant about the fact that you can only repent while you are alive.

[1 Peter 4:5-6](#) (English-NIV)

5 But they will have to give account to him who is ready to judge the living and the dead.

6 For this is the reason the gospel was preached even to those who are now dead, so that they might be judged according to men in regard to the body, but live according to God in regard to the spirit.

This scripture could relate to the above scripture as they are only one chapter apart ie Jesus preached to the dead.

This scripture also seems to say that the Gospel was preached to the dead and they were given a chance at life, but it can also be interpreted to say that the disobedient who are dead actually heard the gospel when they were alive, and the reference to the dead is to say that they were dead at the time of the scripture, ie now dead, but were actually alive when they heard the gospel.

I have added these 2 verses as they relate to Jesus death and journey to the world of the dead, but I do repeat the statement I made earlier, and that is that I do not understand the full ramifications of these 2 verses.

[Matthew 27:50 - 52](#) (English-KJV):

50 Jesus, when he had cried again with a loud voice, yielded up the ghost.

51 And, behold, the veil of the temple was rent in twain from the top to the bottom; and the earth did quake, and the rocks rent;

52 And the graves were opened; and many bodies of the saints which slept arose,

53 And came out of the graves after his resurrection, and went into the holy city, and appeared unto many.

After Jesus died many of the dead saints arose and walked the earth and appeared to many.

This seems to suggest that Jesus freed the dead saints from a sleep, so he probably went to the place of the dead and set them free. These saints would have been in Paradise, see Luke 16:19-28 (quoted earlier).

Remember that Jesus also rose from the dead and walked the earth before being taken up into Heaven. These saints of old that walked the earth probably were raised to heaven as well. There is no suggestion in the Bible that these saints continued to live amongst mankind.

The fact that the dead rose at the same time as Jesus resurrection is a fulfillment of what Jesus said would happen in [John 5:28-29](#) (English-NIV)

28 "Do not be amazed at this, for a time is coming when all who are in their graves will hear his voice

29 and come out--those who have done good will rise to live, and those who have done evil will rise to be condemned.

Also

[1 Thessalonians 4:16-18](#) (English-NIV)

16 For the Lord himself will come down from heaven, with a loud command, with the voice of the archangel and with the trumpet call of God, and the dead in Christ will rise first.

17 After that, we who are still alive and are left will be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air. And so we will be with the Lord forever. 18 Therefore encourage each other with these words.

Notice that the dead rise first, and at some stage all those believers who are still living will join the dead to meet the Lord. Jesus victory over death has enabled the saints who have died to by pass Hades and go to Heaven as he did, this was a result of the victory over the devil; who had the power of death. Jesus took the keys of death and hell from him, as we read earlier Revelation 1:18.

Today when the righteous die, they go straight to heaven, but the wicked remain in the grave/hell until the great day of judgement. See [Revelation 20:11-14](#) (English-NIV)

11 Then I saw a great white throne and him who was seated on it. Earth and sky fled from his presence, and there was no place for them.

12 And I saw the dead, great and small, standing before the throne, and books were opened. Another book was opened, which is the book of life. The dead were judged according to what they had done as recorded in the books.

13 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.

14 Then death and Hades were thrown into the lake of fire. The lake of fire is the second death.

There is no record of the righteous in heaven before Jesus death except for the Mount of Transfiguration where Elijah and Moses appeared with Jesus in heavenly glory.

See [Luke 9:29-31](#)

But these 2 persons were exceptions.

Elijah never saw death, he was taken up into Heaven while he was alive therefore by passing the holding place where

Abraham dwelt, see [2 Kings 2:11](#)

As they 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.

Moses was also an exception. [Jude 1:9](#) says

But even the archangel Michael, when he was disputing with the devil about the body of Moses, did not dare to bring a slanderous accusation against him, but said, "The Lord rebuke you!"

Here we see that Michael the Archangel and the devil fought over Moses body.

Each probably laying claim to why they could have it. The devil probably argued that it couldn't be taken because he had the Power over death at that stage.

Needless to say it doesn't say who won, but that fact that Moses appeared in glory next to Jesus side in the Mount of Transfiguration shows us the outcome of this dispute.

Going on now we find the following scripture.

[Revelation 1:5](#) (English-NIV)

and from Jesus Christ, who is the faithful witness, the firstborn from the dead, and the ruler of the kings of the earth. To him who loves us and has freed us from our sins by his blood,

This scripture points out that Jesus is the first born from the dead. This suggest that there must be other people born from the dead to follow.

Matthew 27:50 - 52 above compliments this.

Only the power of God can raise the dead and this is what it means to be Born Again. The power that raised Jesus from the dead will also raise all those who belong to God when they die. See

[Corinthians 15 22-28](#) English-NIV)

22 For as in Adam all die, so in Christ all will be made alive.

23 But each in his own turn: Christ, the firstfruits; then, when he comes, those who belong to him.

24 Then the end will come, when he hands over the kingdom to God the Father after he has destroyed all dominion, authority and power.

25 For he must reign until he has put all his enemies under his feet.

26 The last enemy to be destroyed is death.

27 For he "has put everything under his feet." Now when it says that "everything" has been put under him, it is clear that this does not include God himself, who put everything under Christ.

28 When he has done this, then the Son himself will be made subject to him who put everything under him, so that God may be all in all.

This scripture reveals a great mystery, that mystery being "all in Christ live". First Jesus, then the firstfruits, then those that belong to Jesus at his coming. Then the end will come when Jesus destroys all dominion and authority. The last enemy is death. This will result in God the Father being able to dwell in all.

This fits in well with the teaching that Jesus went to Hell, so as to be victorious over Hell, and therefore destroying the One who had Power over death, namely the Devil.

It makes sense that when Jesus died that he went to Hell and defeated death and took the Keys of death and Hell from Satan who had the power of death.

This victory means that Jesus defeated death in a bid to make all things subject to him. Death was the last enemy that needed to be conquered and now Jesus has been exalted to the highest position in heaven by God.

This victory has enabled all those who belong to God to be raised from the dead with the same power.

Jesus is waiting for all his enemies to be made a footstool at his feet, see [Hebrews 1:13](#) & [Hebrews 10:12-14](#) then He will give his Kingdom to his Father that the Father may dwell in all.

Alot of the work that is left is for the Church to complete, including preaching the Gospel of the Kingdom of God to all the world.

Then the end shall come.

Amen.

PS. Did you know that Hell is not forever. This is because God is going to destroy the Heavens and Earth with fire after the Millennium. If he destroys the earth and Hell is inside the earth then Hell as a dwelling place will also be destroyed. Checkout the 3 scriptures below that confirm this.

[2 Peter 3:7](#) (English-NIV)

By the same word the present heavens and earth are reserved for fire, being kept for the day of judgment and destruction of ungodly men.

[Revelation 21:1](#) (English-NIV)

Then I saw a new heaven and a new earth, for the first heaven and the first earth had passed away, and there was no longer any sea.

[Revelation 20:14](#) (English-KJV)

And death and hell were cast into the lake of fire. This is the second death.

---