

From Golgotha To Glory

The Journey of Jesus

A brief look at what the Scriptures teach concerning the whereabouts of the Lord Jesus Christ during the three days His Body lay in the Tomb of Joseph of Arimethea

Gene L. Jeffries, Th.D.

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Prior to His death on the Cross for our sins, Jesus Christ promised that He would rise again from the dead (John 2:19-22; 10:17-18). *And rise He did, establishing the most incontrovertible fact of human history* (1 Corinthians 15:3)!

But, where was Christ Jesus during the three days and nights that His Body lay in the Tomb of Joseph of Arimethea? What places exist beyond the grave?

The Bible uses several words to designate the nature of the afterlife. These definitions are necessary to our assessment of the Biblical teaching before us.

SHEOL שְׁאוֹל (shee-ol) is a Hebrew word designating the place of the dead. The Old Testament people viewed the dead, both righteous and unrighteous, as going to "the realm of the dead." They had no developed doctrine of the afterlife, as did the believers of the New Testament era. *Sheol*, therefore, was the eternal abode of both righteous and unrighteous persons.

HADES ᾍδης (hay-deez) is a Greek word that corresponds to the Hebrew word *sheol*. When the translators brought the Hebrew Old Testament over into the Greek language (called the Septuagint, or designated as LXX), they used *hades* to translate *sheol*. *Hades*,

therefore, simply means the realm of the dead, and encompasses both righteous and unrighteous persons.

GEHENNA γέεννα (geh-hen-nah) is a Greek word, meaning "the Valley of Hinnom." It was the city dump--the rubbish heap--for Jerusalem in the days of our Lord Jesus. The fires in the valley never went out. Gehenna is used twelve times in the New Testament (11 times by Christ, and once in James 3:6). It always relates to the Jews.

TARTARUS ταρταρώω (tar-ta-rah-o) is used only once in Scripture, and that by Simon Peter in II Peter 2:4. That usage refers to God's imprisonment of the angels that followed Lucifer in his rebellion against God (Ezekiel 28:11-19; Isaiah 14:12ff).

LAKE OF FIRE λίμνην τοῦ πυρὸς refers to the final abode of all who have rejected the Father and His Son, Jesus Christ.

PARADISE παράδεισος is used only three times in Scripture. It designates the abode of the righteous until the time of the Resurrection of Jesus Christ.

HEAVEN οὐρανός is the ultimate, eternal place of the righteous with the Father and the Savior, Jesus Christ. The word Heaven occurs 272 times in the New Testament alone.

The accompanying diagram is based upon the Scriptures. It is intended as an overview to the teaching, and not as a comprehensive study of the doctrine itself. The numberings are intended as a guide to the sequence of the events. The letters *A* and *B* are sequential, but are disassociated from the events in the journey of Jesus from Golgotha to Glory.

1. At the point of His death on the Cross, our Lord Jesus promised the repentant thief who hanged beside Him, "Today you shall be with Me in *Paradise*" (Luke 23:43).

Paradise may be understood as the righteous compartment of *Hades* that houses those who die within the state of God's righteousness. Salvation in Old Testament times was realized by believing toward the coming Messiah. Thus, all those individuals from Adam onward, who believed upon the Father and upon His revelation of His coming Son, were declared righteous by the Father Himself (See Romans 4:1-25).

2. Following His three days in the Tomb, Christ arose! Mary saw Him in the Garden after she discovered that He was no longer in the Tomb, but she did not recognize Him as being

Jesus. He called her name, "Mary!" Then, she knew He was Jesus, and she grasped Him and held on to Him. He responded to her saying, "Stop clinging to Me, for I have not yet ascended to My Father who is in Heaven" (John 20:17). It is evident that Christ Jesus had been in *Paradise*, but He had yet to ascend into the presence of His Father in Heaven. Mary must be made to know the Father's plan for His Son; and she must begin now to learn that it is upon the coming Holy Spirit that she must lean and depend.

3. When the Apostle Paul wrote the Ephesian Christians, he alluded to Christ's eternal-world journey. Paul quotes the Old Testament Psalm (68:18) that foretold Christ's descent into *Hades (Sheol)*:

Who is He that ascended, but He who also descended into the lower parts of the Earth? ...He led captivity captive, and gave gifts to men (Ephesians 4:8-10).

Following His post-resurrection appearances, Christ ascended into Heaven (Acts 1:9-11). *En route* to the Father, Christ led those who were captive in *Paradise* into the captivity of eternity in Heaven.

The "gifts" He gave to men, do not refer to rewards for the righteous, as the context shows. Rewards are indeed distributed to the righteous, but that occurs at another time. Here the "gifts" are the apostles, the prophets, the evangelists, and the pastor-teachers of whom Paul speaks. These offices were given to the early Church for her benefit in becoming what the Lord intends.

4. In the midst of his Epistle to the Hebrews, Paul discloses that the furniture and ritual connected with the Old Testament Tabernacle and Temple were merely copies of the true sanctuary in Heaven itself (Hebrews 9:23-24).

As the blood of bulls and goats was offered for a temporary covering for sins upon the "copies" of the Heavenly Altar, so it was necessary for Christ to offer His own Blood upon the Heavenly Altar itself.

Man's redemption is only in the Blood of Jesus Christ (Acts 4:12; Ephesians 1:7). Old Testament saints awaited in Paradise the full and final offering of Christ Jesus' Blood spilled at Calvary, to be sprinkled upon the Heavenly Altar.

5. When Christ presented His own Blood upon the Heavenly Altar, the way was opened forever for saints of all time to enter Heaven itself; therefore, for all mankind since the Resurrection, the order is: "...absent in the body...at home with the Lord" (II Corinthians 5:8). Paradise today is empty. When saved persons die, they go directly and immediately into Heaven, for the Blood of the Lord Jesus Christ has already opened the way!
 - A. The historical account of the Rich Man (*Dives*) and Lazarus gives us considerable insight into the atmosphere of *Hell* (Luke 16:19ff).
 - B. Both men have the capabilities of speaking, hearing, feeling, remembering and reasoning beyond the grave. They are separated, however, by a "gulf" that is eternally impassable. And the eternal abode is, for one of them, comfort, and for the other, torment.
6. Those imprisoned today in *Hell* are the unrighteous of all time. There they abide in the torment of flames and of eternal separation from the Righteous Christ, until the time of the Great White Throne

Judgment of God (Revelation 20:15).

This judgment will formally declare the guilt of the lost— that guilt being their failure to accept Christ in their "time appointed." Already the lost are condemned (John 3:18), but they await formal condemnation from the Father.

At the point of the Father's final judgment, death and Hell will be cast into the Lake of Fire. This Lake is the "second death," and with it comes the seal of finality upon one's place of eternal abode.

Summary and Conclusion

You, who find yourself reading this booklet, fall into one of two categories: you are either saved or you are lost. That is, you either are committed to Jesus Christ or you are not. If you are lost, your greatest need is to turn immediately away from sin, telling the Lord God that you are sorry for having rejected Him so long. Believe upon the Lord Jesus Christ as God's Supreme Sacrifice for your sin, and accept Him as Lord and Savior of your personal life. You can do it right where you are, in the quietness of your own heart and life.

If you are saved, you need to become concerned for those among your friends and acquaintances who are lost. Jesus Christ is adequate to save every person who is lost, but

He must be personally received by the lost person in order to affect His salvation.

We who are saved must be prayerful for those who are lost. And we must be vigilant, not only for our Lord's return, but for opportunities to witness regarding His saving grace. Remember, you live next door to someone's "five brothers!"

*Therefore, we are ambassadors for Christ, as though God were entreating through us; we beg you on behalf of Christ, **be reconciled to God*** (II Thessalonians 5:20).

(See the *Golgotha-to-Glory* Chart on the next page.)



