

WHAT DID JESUS DO WHEN HE WAS IN THE GRAVE?

Matthew 27:58-66 Going to Pilate, he asked for Jesus' body, and Pilate ordered that it be given to him. v59 Joseph took the body, wrapped it in a clean linen cloth, v60 and placed it in his own new tomb that he had cut out of the rock. He rolled a big stone in front of the entrance to the tomb and went away. v61 Mary Magdalene and the other Mary were sitting there opposite the tomb. v62 The next day, the one after Preparation Day, the chief priests and the Pharisees went to Pilate. v63 "Sir," they said, "we remember that while he was still alive that deceiver said, 'After three days I will rise again.'" v64 So give the order for the tomb to be made secure until the third day. Otherwise, his disciples may come and steal the body and tell the people that he has been raised from the dead. This last deception will be worse than the first." v65 "Take a guard," Pilate answered. "Go, make the tomb as secure as you know how." v66 So they went and made the tomb secure by putting a seal on the stone and posting the guard.

Mark 15:42-47 It was Preparation Day (that is, the day before the Sabbath). So as evening approached, v43 Joseph of Arimathea, a prominent member of the Council, who was himself waiting for the kingdom of God, went boldly to Pilate and asked for Jesus' body. v44 Pilate was surprised to hear that he was already dead. Summoning the centurion, he asked him if Jesus had already died. v45 When he learned from the centurion that it was so, he gave the body to Joseph. v46 So Joseph bought some linen cloth, took down the body, wrapped it in the linen, and placed it in a tomb cut out of rock. Then he rolled a stone against the entrance of the tomb. v47 Mary Magdalene and Mary the mother of Jesus saw where he was laid.

Luke 23:50-56 Now there was a man named Joseph, a member of the Council, a good and upright man, v51 who had not consented to their decision and action. He came from the Judean town of Arimathea and he was waiting for the kingdom of God. v52 Going to Pilate, he asked for Jesus' body. v53 Then he took it down, wrapped it in linen cloth and placed it in a tomb cut in the rock, one in which no one had yet been laid. v54 It was Preparation Day, and the Sabbath was about to begin. v55 The women who had come with Jesus from Galilee followed Joseph and saw the tomb and how his body was laid in it. v56 Then they went home and prepared spices and perfumes. But they rested on the Sabbath in obedience to the commandment.

John 19:38-42 Later, Joseph of Arimathea asked Pilate for the body of Jesus. Now Joseph was a disciple of Jesus, but secretly because he feared the Jews. With Pilate's permission, he came and took the body away. v39 He was accompanied by Nicodemus, the man who earlier had visited Jesus at night. Nicodemus brought a mixture of myrrh and aloes, about seventy-five pounds. v40 Taking Jesus' body, the two of them wrapped it, with the spices, in strips of linen. This was in accordance with Jewish burial customs. v41 At the place where Jesus was crucified, there was a garden, and in the garden a new tomb, in which no one had ever been laid. v42 Because it was the Jewish day of Preparation and since the tomb was nearby, they laid Jesus there.

The time between the death and resurrection of Jesus has been called many different names by the traditional church. The most well-known name is Holy Saturday. It has also been called the Great and Holy Saturday, the Great Sabbath, Hallelujah Saturday, Saturday of the Gloria and Black Saturday or Easter Eve. Among Coptic Christians (those from Egypt) it was called "Joyous Saturday" or "the Saturday of Light".

According to Roman Catholic tradition, Jesus went into hell. The Hebrew word for hell is Sheol and the Greek word is Hades. According to Roman Catholic tradition, this is the place where all the dead go, because those who are there are deprived of the vision of God. They say that, while in hell, Jesus preached the Gospel to those who lived before he came to earth, and lead them from hell into heaven or Abraham's bosom.

The most prominent support for this idea is not so much Biblical support, although there are verses in 1 Peter 3:19 and Ephesians 4:8-9 that alluded to the issue, which I will address later, the prominent support comes from "The Apostles Creed" which has a line which says:

I believe in God, the Father almighty,
creator of heaven and earth.

I believe in Jesus Christ, his only Son, our Lord,
who was conceived by the Holy Spirit
and born of the virgin Mary.
He suffered under Pontius Pilate,
was crucified, died, and was buried;
he descended to hell.
The third day he rose again from the dead.
He ascended to heaven
and is seated at the right hand of God the Father almighty.
From there he will come to judge the living and the dead.

I believe in the Holy Spirit,
the holy catholic* church,
the communion of saints,
the forgiveness of sins,
the resurrection of the body,
and the life everlasting. Amen.

Many Protestants have long called for this line to be removed from the Apostles Creed, as in their understanding and teaching, it is not fully biblical, in the way it is portrayed.

SO THEN

WHAT DID JESUS DO WHEN HE WAS IN THE GRAVE?

1. **HE WAS NOT IN THE GRAVE; HE WAS IN HEAVEN.**

*Luke 23:38-43 There was a written notice above him, which read: THIS IS THE KING OF THE JEWS. v39 One of the criminals who hung there hurled insults at him: "Aren't you the Christ? Save yourself and us!" v40 But the other criminal rebuked him. "Don't you fear God," he said, "since you are under the same sentence? v41 We are punished justly, for we are getting what our deeds deserve. But this man has done nothing wrong." v42 Then he said, "Jesus, remember me when you come into your kingdom." v43 **Jesus answered him, "I tell you the truth, today you will be with me in paradise."***

HOW DO WE KNOW THIS?

THE POWER OF THE RESURRECTION WAS ALREADY ON DISPLAY ON EARTH.

*Matthew 27:50-53 And when Jesus had cried out again in a loud voice, he gave up his spirit. v51 At that moment the curtain of the temple was torn in two from top to bottom. The earth shook and the rocks split. v52 **The tombs broke open and the bodies of many holy people who had died were raised to life. v53 They came out of the tombs, and after Jesus' resurrection they went into the holy city and appeared to many people.***

2. **HE DID NOT GO INTO HELL; HE WENT PAST TO DECLARE VICTORY TO THOSE IN HELL.**

One of the passages of Scripture that is often used to teach that Jesus went into hell is Ephesians 4:1-10, particularly verse 9. It reads:

*Ephesians 4:1-10 As a prisoner for the Lord, then, I urge you to live a life worthy of the calling you have received. v2 Be completely humble and gentle; be patient, bearing with one another in love. v3 Make every effort to keep the unity of the Spirit through the bond of peace. v4 There is one body and one Spirit--just as you were called to one hope when you were called-- v5 one Lord, one faith, one baptism; v6 one God and Father of all, who is over all and through all and in all. v7 But to each one of us grace has been given as Christ apportioned it. v8 This is why it says: "When he ascended on high, he led captives in his train and gave gifts to men." v9 (What does "he ascended" mean except **that he also descended to the lower, earthly***

regions? v10 He who descended is the very one who ascended higher than all the heavens, in order to fill the whole universe.)

Why should this not be used? Verse 2 is the clue. Paul is calling the believers to a life of HUMILITY in their dealings with each, and especially in the exercise of the Spiritual Gifts which he is about to talk about. The greatest example of HUMILITY, spoken of in Philippians 2, is Jesus who humbled himself by coming to earth in the incarnation.

Paul is saying that our HUMILITY, should be exercised to the same extent as Christ's humility in coming to earth from Heaven.

A second passage that people use to teach that Jesus went to Hell is found in:

1 Peter 3:18-22 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, v19 through whom also he went and preached to the spirits in prison v20 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, v21 and this water symbolizes baptism that now saves you also--not the removal of dirt from the body but the pledge of a good conscience toward God. It saves you by the resurrection of Jesus Christ, v22 who has gone into heaven and is at God's right hand--with angels, authorities and powers in submission to him.

The big questions that flow from verse 19 is, "When did Jesus go to preach to the spirits in prison?" and "What about all the other people, other than NOAH, who died before he was born?"

For me, Jesus preached to them, through the Spirit, at the time of the flood. The word "prison" is an indicator that this was not Hell, for the Greek word used is for a literal prison, and not Hades, which would have been used if that is what Peter was teaching. The word PREACHED is also a word most often used as a proclamation, rather than Evangelising through the Gospel.

3. HE ENTERED HIS REST.

While we call this day Saturday, for Jesus this was the SABBATH. – THE DAY OF REST

Luke 23:56 Then they went home and prepared spices and perfumes. But they rested on the Sabbath in obedience to the commandment.

The Nation of Israel entered rest when they conquered the Promised Land
In Hebrews 4 we will look more fully at the idea of "Entering Rest"
GOD RESTED AFTER CREATION AND AGAIN AFTER RECREATION

**SO THEN
WHY IS THIS DAY SOMETHING WE SHOULD
CONSIDER?**

- 1. DEATH WITHOUT RESURRECTION IS A PROFOUND EXPRESSION OF HOPELESNESS.** – The Disciples were ready to go back to their old way of life.
- 2. EVEN AFTER JESUS DECLARED ‘IT IS FINISHED’, SATAN TRIED TO KEEP JESUS IN THE TOMB** – A seal put on the tomb.
- 3. THE DEATH OF JESUS FORCES US TO DISPLAY OUR TRUE ALLEGANCE** – Joseph of Arimathea and Nicodemus both chose identification with Jesus rather than the Sanhedrian.
- 4. JESUS FULFILLED PROPHECY BY BEING IN THE TOMB** – He didn’t need to stay there, but did so to prove in every way that he was Messiah.