

**QUESTION: I'm confused about when Jesus was crucified and He told the man to His right that believed in Him, "Today you will be with Me in Paradise." Yet the Bible also says that Jesus spent three days and nights in "the belly of the earth", so what is the chronology of these events? Which happened first?**

**ANSWER:** Well, there is no "chronology" to wonder about, as the two are one and the same event. At the time of Jesus' crucifixion, Paradise was indeed "in the heart of the earth." Jesus was not telling the thief on the cross that he would be with Him in HEAVEN that day, because no one went directly to heaven to be with the Lord until AFTER Jesus' own resurrection and ascension. In the Old Testament, all the saints of God died and went to Paradise, also called Hades and Sheol, and called "Abraham's Bosom" in Luke. So, you see, the thief went directly to the part of Hades known as Abraham's Bosom, or Paradise, immediately after he died. Jesus also went there in His spirit, and was three days and nights in Hades, before His resurrection, preaching to the Old Testament saints, and preaching to the non-believers ("the wicked") on the other side of the chasm between the two, while His physical body was in the tomb (above ground).

- **Luke 23:32-43** "And two others also, who were criminals, were being led away to be put to death with Him. And when they came to the place called \*The Skull, there they crucified Him and the criminals, one on the right and the other on the left.....Now there was also an inscription (sign) above Him, written in Greek, Latin, and Hebrew, 'THIS IS THE KING OF THE JEWS.' And one of the criminals who were hanged there was hurling abuse at Him, saying, 'Are You not the Christ? Save Yourself and us!' But the other answered, and rebuking him said, 'Do you not even fear God, since you are under the same sentence of condemnation? And we indeed justly, for we are receiving what we deserve for our deeds; but this Man has done nothing wrong.' And he was saying to Jesus, '**Lord, remember me when You come into Your kingdom!**' And Jesus said to him, '**Truly I say to you, today you shall be with Me in Paradise.**'"

**LOCATION of PARADISE** - No one's soul or spirit could **go directly into the presence of God BEFORE JESUS opened the way**. God could not open the way to heaven **until Jesus paid for the sins of the world**, and that is what the veil (curtain) in the temple being torn in two from top to bottom symbolizes - God opening the way into His presence. Then, after His resurrection, **Jesus went first with a glorified resurrection BODY** into the presence of God the Father, because **Christ is the "firstfruits"** of the resurrection and **"firstborn from the dead"** (Colossians 1:18, I Corinthians 15:20). See also John 14:1-6, Hebrews 11:32-40, Hebrews 9:8-14, Hebrews 10:19-23 - **Jesus had to go FIRST and PREPARE the WAY for us to come into the Father's presence**. Therefore, Jesus went into Hades for the three days between His death and His resurrection (Matthew 12:40) and, after His resurrection, took out all the spirits (souls) of **those who had died believing God and trusting in Him**, and took them up to heaven (Ephesians 4:8-10). Hades is the place of the dead, located in the center of the earth. It is called **Hades** (Greek) in the New Testament, and **Sheol** (Hebrew) in the Old Testament. Hades was divided into two parts: (1) a place of **torment for the unbelievers**; and (2) a place called "Abraham's bosom" (Luke 16:19-31) which was a place of **comfort for Believers**. When Jesus said to the thief on the cross, "Truly, I say to you, today you shall be with Me in Paradise," He was referring to Abraham's Bosom. Then, three days later, after His own bodily resurrection, Jesus emptied out Paradise, and brought all of those saints to heaven.

- **Ephesians 4:8-10** "Therefore He says, 'When He (Jesus) ascended on high He LED CAPTIVITY CAPTIVE, and gave gifts to men.' Now this, 'He ascended' - what does it

mean but that He also **FIRST DESCENDED** into the **LOWER PARTS OF THE EARTH?**"

- **Matthew 27:51** "And behold, the veil of the temple was rent (torn) in two from the top to the bottom...."

The only ones left in Hades NOW are unbelievers, those who died rejecting Christ, and for them it is a place of torment. Their spirits are waiting for the resurrection and Judgment Day, when they will be reunited with their resurrected bodies, and after the judgment, thrown into the Lake of Fire (Revelation 20:11-15). **Hades is NOT Purgatory!** The teaching of a purgatory, where one can somehow atone for ones sins (or "purge" them away), is a **MAN-MADE doctrine**, an invention of the Roman Catholic popes to enslave people to that religious system. **Purgatory is not found anywhere in the word of God.** Before Jesus' death and resurrection, Believers did not go directly into the presence of God when they died. Now, **the spirits and souls** of ALL believers in Christ go directly and immediately to heaven (II Corinthians 5:6-8), and there they wait for the resurrection of their BODIES.

- **II Corinthians 5:6 & 8** "Therefore we are always confident, knowing that while we are at home **in the BODY**, we are absent from the Lord." "We are confident, yes, well pleased rather to be **ABSENT from the BODY** and to **be PRESENT with the Lord.**"

The Bible teaches that a Believer in Jesus Christ goes directly to be with the Lord in heaven when he or she dies, but there are some groups that teach otherwise. There are some people who believe in something they call "soul sleep," which means they believe both the soul and body are in a kind of limbo, or "sleep" until the resurrection. For the purpose of this study, we will use the term spirit and soul almost interchangeably. There is a difference between spirit and soul, but that would be another Bible study altogether. The two are closely linked in the word of God (many times referred to as our "heart"), and I believe the soul and spirit TOGETHER goes to be with the Lord, while the body "sleeps" awaiting the resurrection.

Jesus made it very clear in His story of the rich man and Lazarus the beggar, that both the righteous dead and the unrighteous dead are **fully conscious after death**, even though their bodies were buried in the grave (Luke 16:19-31). Jesus does NOT say that this is a parable, but instead says, "a certain rich man" and "a certain beggar" to indicate that these are actual people. Also, when Jesus raised Jairus' daughter from the dead, it says "**her spirit came again**, and she rose," which indicates that **her spirit had already left her body** (something has to leave first before it can return). Then what about when Jesus said, "she is not dead, but sleeps," and "Our friend Lazarus sleeps; but I go that I may awake him out of sleep"? There are places in Scripture where death is referred to as "sleep" but it is only referring to the **physical BODY** being asleep, and that body will be "awakened" at the resurrection. Notice, in Matthew 27:52, it says the "**BODIES of the SAINTS who had fallen asleep were RAISED**" - it is not their bodies and souls. To **Jesus, who is the very "Resurrection and the Life,"** death does seem like mere sleep, but that does not give us any grounds to teach a doctrine of "soul sleep" (see John 11:11-25).

- **Luke 8:52-55** ".....but He said, 'Weep not; she is not dead, but sleeps.' And they laughed Him to scorn, knowing that she was dead. And He put them all out, and took her by the hand, and called, saying, 'Maid, arise.' And **her SPIRIT came again**, and she arose..."
- **Matthew 12:40** "For as Jonah was three days and three nights in the belly of the great fish, so will the Son of Man (Jesus) be **three days and three nights** in the **HEART** of the earth."
- **Psalms 16:10** "For You will not leave **my SOUL in Sheol**, nor will You allow Your Holy One (Christ) to see corruption (decay)."

Hades or Sheol is below, in the lower parts of the earth. We see that Jesus said He would be there for three days and three nights, "in the heart of the earth." He cannot mean in His tomb, because His tomb was carved out of rock in the side of a hill, ABOVE the ground. **His body**

**was in the tomb** for three days, but **His spirit went into Hades** to preach to the souls/spirits there who were "in prison" (I Peter 3:19-20), and to release the souls of all the Old Testament Believers (He led "captivity" - the captive spirits), and take them up to heaven when He ascended to the Father (John 20:17). David prophesied of the Messiah, but was also speaking of himself in Psalm 16:10, that **his SOUL would not be left in Sheol**, and he also prophesied of the resurrection of Jesus when he said that God would not leave His Holy One, the Messiah, to decay in the grave.

- **Luke 16:22-24** "So it was that the beggar died, and was carried by the ANGELS into Abraham's bosom. The rich man also **died and was buried**. And **being in TORMENTS in Hades**, he lifted up his eyes and saw Abraham afar off, and Lazarus in his bosom. Then he cried and said, "Father Abraham, have mercy on me, and send Lazarus that he may dip the tip of his finger in water and cool my tongue; for **I am TORMENTED in this FLAME.**" (Verse 26) "And besides all this, between us and you there is a great gulf fixed, so that **those who want to pass from here to you cannot**, nor can those from there pass to us."
- **Matthew 27:51-53** "And behold, the veil of the temple was torn in two from top to bottom; and the earth quaked, and the rocks were split, and **the graves were opened**, and many **BODIES of the SAINTS who had fallen asleep were RAISED**; and COMING out of the GRAVES AFTER His RESURRECTION, they went into the holy city and appeared to many."

**Definition: "AFTER HIS RESURRECTION" - NO ONE could be bodily resurrected from the dead until Jesus went FIRST**, because **Christ is the firstfruits** of the resurrection and **firstborn from the dead** (see Colossians 1:18, I Corinthians 15:20). **No one's soul or spirit could go directly into the presence of God BEFORE JESUS opened the way** (that is what the VEIL in the temple being TORN in TWO symbolizes). See also John 14:1-6, Hebrews 11:32-40, Hebrews 9:8-14, Hebrews 10:19-23 - Jesus had to go FIRST and PREPARE **the WAY for us to come into the Father's presence**.

**Definition: "ABRAHAM'S BOSOM" -** This denotes a place of COMFORT, as in saying Abraham's LAP, or that Abraham is HUGGING one to his chest (bosom). This name was used to describe the TEMPORARY place where **the SOULS of the RIGHTEOUS dead** would go BEFORE CHRIST. This part of Hades was also called Paradise. When Jesus said to the thief on the cross, "Truly, I say to you, today you shall be with Me in Paradise," He was referring to Abraham's Bosom. Then, three days later, after His own resurrection, He emptied out Paradise, and brought all of those saints to heaven.

- **Ephesians 4:8-10** "Therefore He says, "When He (Jesus) ascended on high He LED CAPTIVITY CAPTIVE, and gave gifts to men.' Now this, "He ascended' -- what does it mean but that He also **FIRST DESCENDED** into the **LOWER PARTS OF THE EARTH?**" **Definition: "He LED CAPTIVITY CAPTIVE"** - Jesus EMPTIED OUT the part of Hades with the SOULS of the righteous dead, the saints of God, and **He LED THEM up to heaven**. He was able to do this, because **He was victorious over Satan at the cross** Colossians 2:14-15) and **He now holds the KEYS of death and Hades** (Rev. 1:17-18). Their SOULS were REUNITED with their BODIES which came out of the graves when Jesus rose from the dead. In like manner, the SOULS (and spirits) of all those who have died IN CHRIST will be reunited with their NEW bodies at the "Rapture" (I Thess. 4:13-18, I Cor. 15:50-54).

**Definition: "LOWER PARTS OF THE EARTH" -** The Bible is clear about the location of Hades as being in the lower parts of the earth. There is NO ONE left in the "Abraham's Bosom" part, because Jesus emptied it out. However, all the SOULS of the UNBELIEVERS, the unrighteous dead, are STILL WAITING in Hades until the Great White Throne Judgment (Rev. 20:11-15). If a person died TODAY, rejecting Christ, their soul and spirit would go to Hades, the place of torment, to await their

resurrection and the Judgment. It is not until after their bodies are resurrected that they will be judged and thrown into the Lake of Fire. Every unrighteous person (the Bible calls them "the wicked") since Cain is still waiting there. **This IS NOT Purgatory!** The teaching of a purgatory, where one can somehow atone for ones sins (or "purge" them away), is a **MAN-MADE doctrine**, an invention of the Roman Catholic popes to enslave people to that religious system. **Purgatory is not found anywhere in the word of God.**

- **Psalm 49:15-17** "But God will redeem **my SOUL from the power of Sheol**, for He shall receive me. Do not be afraid when one becomes rich, when the glory of his house is increased; for when he dies he shall carry nothing away; his glory shall not **DESCEND** after him."
- **Psalm 55:15** "Let death seize them; let them **go DOWN alive into Sheol**, for wickedness is in their dwellings and among them."
- **Psalm 63:9** "But those who seek my life, to destroy it, shall go into **the LOWER PARTS of the earth.**"

**IN SUMMARY:** There are actually two places referred to as "hell" in the Bible: Hades and the Lake of Fire. The King James version uses the word "hell" for both the Lake of Fire and for Hades, while most newer translations use the Greek word, Hades, and Hebrew word, Sheol. Hades is the place of the dead, located in the center of the earth. It is called **Hades** (Greek) in the New Testament, and **Sheol** (Hebrew) in the Old Testament. Hades was divided into two parts: (1) a place of **torment for the unbelievers**; and (2) a place called "Abraham's bosom" in Luke 16, which was a place of **comfort for Believers**. Jesus went into Hades (for the three days between His death and His resurrection, Matthew 12:40) and took out all the spirits (souls) of those who had **died believing God and trusting in Him**, and took them up to heaven (Ephesians 4:8-10). The only ones left in Hades NOW are the unbelievers, those who died rejecting Christ, and for them it is a place of torment. Their spirits are waiting for the resurrection and Judgment Day. Before Jesus' death and resurrection, Believers did not go directly into the presence of God when they died. Now, the **spirits** of ALL BELIEVERS IN CHRIST go directly and immediately to heaven (II Corinthians 5:6-8), and there they wait for the resurrection of their BODIES.

**Hades (Sheol) - Location** - in the center of the earth; consists of two parts: 1. "Abraham's Bosom", a place of comfort for Believers; and 2. The Place of the Unrighteous Dead, which is a place of torment for the unbelievers. **Occupants** - 1. In "Abraham's Bosom" - none, it has been emptied out; all Believers go directly to heaven now. 2. In the Place of the Unrighteous Dead - All the souls/spirits of the unsaved. They are awaiting the resurrection of their bodies, after which they will stand before the Lord Jesus Christ at the Great White Throne Judgment "and anyone who is NOT found written in the BOOK of LIFE will be cast into the LAKE of FIRE" (Revelation 20:11-15).

**The Lake of Fire - Location** - unknown, possibly "outer space" **Occupants** - no one is there now; Satan, his demons, and all the unsaved will be there for all eternity, but not until AFTER the Great White Throne Judgment. Revelation 20:10, "And the devil, who deceived them, was **cast into the LAKE of FIRE and brimstone** where the beast and the false prophet are. And **they will be TORMENTED** day and night FOREVER and EVER.