**Low in the Grave He Lay**

*A Consideration of Christ Between His Death and Resurrection*

**Introduction**

1. “Low in the grave He lay – Jesus, my Savior! Waiting the coming day – Jesus, my Lord!” (“Christ Arose,” Lowry Robert)
2. It was necessary that Christ die for the sins of the world, and be raised to gain ultimate victory, and ascend to Heaven to enter the Holiest with His blood that we might follow.
3. The scripture records that He would be buried for 3 days before His resurrection – **1 Corinthians 15:4; Matthew 12:40**
4. During those 3 days Christ lay in the tomb, His disciples were distraught and confused. What about Christ? Where was He? What was He doing? What does it mean for us?
5. Misconceptions
6. Translations Confusing Hades and Gehenna
   1. **Misconception** – Christ, upon His death, descended to hell to suffer torment on our behalf.
      1. Stems from a more fundamental ignorance of the efficacy of Jesus’ death on the cross as atonement for sins.
      2. **Hebrews 10:10, 14** – it was His death on the cross, the offering of His body and blood which provided atonement and sanctified those who have faith.
   2. *hadēs* – properly, unseen, i.e. “Hades” or the place (state) of departed souls (STRONG)
   3. *geenna* – valley of (the son of) Hinnom; ge-henna (or Ge-Hinnom), a valley of Jerusalem, used (figuratively) as a name for the place (or state) of everlasting punishment (STRONG)
      1. **Matthew 10:28** – fear Him who is able to destroy body and soul in hell.
      2. **Revelation 21:8** – hell (Gehenna) is the lake which burns with fire, the second death.
   4. Mistranslations:
      1. KJV translates *hadēs* into “hell” in all 10 occurrences.
      2. Peter preaching about Jesus, quoting David in **Psalm 16:10** – ***“Because thou wilt not leave my soul in hell, neither wilt thou suffer thine Holy One to see corruption… He seeing this before spake of the resurrection of Christ, that his soul was not left in hell, neither his flesh did see corruption.” (Acts 2:27, 31, KJV)***
         1. Hell – *hadēs*
         2. **Psalm 16:10** – Sheol – *še’ôl* – “The abode of the dead” (NKJV, fn)
7. The Apostles Creed
   1. Apostles’ Creed – statement of faith written by men in the 2nd century.
   2. Roman Catholic Version – “[Jesus] was crucified, died and was buried; he descended into hell; on the third day he rose again from the dead;”
      1. Amended from earlier versions.
      2. Earlier – “he descended to the dead”
      3. (<https://zondervanacademic.com/blog/apostles-creed>)
   3. Many have taken the words at face value, and assume Jesus went to hell to suffer for us. The Bible teaches no such thing.
8. Jesus in Hades
   1. Jesus died as we do – **Hebrews 2:9, 14-15; 9:27-28** – tasted death as we do, and in that way through His victory releases us from fear of death; ***“die once”*** parallels with ***“offered once.”***
   2. Death – **James 2:26** – separation of body and spirit.
      1. Jesus – **John 19:30** – gave up His spirit, died.
      2. His body – buried in a tomb.
      3. **Acts 2:27, 31** – His soul departed and went to *hadēs*, His body remained in the tomb, but his soul was reunited with His body in the resurrection.
      4. Hades is not the same as Gehenna – **Luke 16:22-23** – both a place of comfort and torment in Hades.
9. Jesus and the Spirits in Prison – A Misinterpretation
   1. **1 Peter 3:18-20** – this difficult passage is misinterpreted by many to teach that Jesus did something that cannot be harmonized with other Scripture, and which Scripture simply does not teach.
   2. Many realize the inconsistencies with scripture concerning the idea that Jesus went to hell upon His death but realize the truth concerning Him going to Hades. However, they misinterpret some passages to teach He did something the Scripture does not reveal.
      1. They say Jesus Christ, in between His death and resurrection, preached the gospel to spirits in prison (in the Hadean realm) who were disobedient during the days of Noah.
      2. Some say He proclaimed His victory to those lost souls.
   3. There are reasons within the immediate context, and remote context which show this is not true:
      1. **The text does not necessitate Christ preaching personally:**
         1. ***(vv. 18b-19) – “but made alive in the spirit; in which also He went and made proclamation to the spirits now in prison” (NASB)***
         2. It was in spirit form that Jesus preached – **1 Peter 1:10-11** – Spirit of Christ working in prophets.
            1. **2 Peter 3:5** – Noah preached – Christ preached through Him.
            2. **(v. 20)** – Divine longsuffering in the days of Noah.
      2. **The language indicates the preaching was done during the days of Noah:**
         1. **(v. 19)** – the spirits are in prison at the time of Peter’s writing.
            1. ***“to the spirits now in prison” (NASB***, “now” supplied, because implied)
            2. Then, during Noah’s time, they weren’t.
         2. **(v. 20)** – ***“formerly were,” “when once”*** – i.e. when they were in the flesh, they were disobedient to the preaching ***“in the days of Noah”*** – God was longsuffering, not willing that they perish.
      3. **The text indicates the preaching was exclusively to those disobedient during Noah’s time:**
         1. Why would Jesus only go and preach to those spirits who were contemporaries with Noah?
         2. God is impartial – **Acts 10:34; 2 Peter 3:9** – not willing that any should perish.
      4. **Such an idea contradicts what Scripture teaches about the sealing of destiny upon death:**
         1. If true, the implication is Jesus preached the gospel to them so they could repent.
         2. **Hebrews 9:27** – death, then judgment – no second chance.
         3. **Luke 16:25-26** – death seals our fate.
         4. **2 Peter 2:9** – they are reserved under punishment for judgment day.
      5. **How could He preach the full gospel before His resurrection?** – **1 Corinthians 15:1-4** – the gospel includes His resurrection.
      6. **Meaning? – Christ died physically but was made alive in spirit form. Earlier, during the days of Noah, in that same spirit form Christ preached through Noah to men in the flesh. These men were disobedient, thus, died in the flood and their spirits were put in prison to suffer punishment until the Day of Judgment.**
10. When Jesus Died…
11. He Was in God’s Care
    1. Jesus before dying – **Luke 23:46** – He committed His spirit into His Father’s hands.
       1. **Commit** – *paratithemi*, lit., “to put near” (*para*, “near”), in the Middle Voice, denotes “to place with someone, entrust, commit.” (VINE)
          1. “to entrust for safekeeping, give over, entrust, commend” (BDAG)
       2. Jesus entrusted His spirit to God for safekeeping, for protection, for comfort.
    2. This was not a last second committing:
       1. **1 Peter 4:19** – commit souls to Him in doing good.
          1. Same word used.
       2. Jesus – **1 Peter 2:21-24** – throughout His life to its end.
          1. Synonym – *paradidōmi*; to entrust for care or preservation, give over, commend, commit (BDAG)
    3. Quotation of **Psalm 31:5**
       1. **(vv. 1-5)** – Faith/trust in God, request for guidance, committing spirit in God’s hands in trouble as a continued act of faith.
       2. **(v. 6)** – trust in the Lord.
       3. **(vv. 13-14)** – trust in the Lord continued in adversity.
       4. **(vv. 19-20)** – goodness to those who fear God, and trust in Him.
       5. **(vv. 23-24)** – preserves the faithful, strengthens those who hope in Him.
    4. Jesus had lived a life devoted to God, continually committing Himself to God every day. At the end of His life, He could confidently express His trust that God would take His spirit into safekeeping.
    5. **2 Timothy 1:12** – As we put our trust in God by being faithful, we can rest assured He will preserve us upon our death for eternal glory in the end.
12. He Was Comforted in Paradise
    1. Jesus to the penitent thief – **Luke 23:43** – i.e. that day, when He died, He would be in “Paradise,” and the thief with Him.
       1. When Jesus died, His spirit went to Hades – **Acts 2:31**
       2. **Paradise** – *paradeisos* – a transcendent place of blessedness (BDAG)
    2. Corresponds to Abraham’s Bosom – **Luke 16:22-23, 25** – carried to Abraham’s bosom, and comforted.
    3. **Revelation 14:13** – blessedness of death for the faithful because they receive rest.
13. He Awaited His Resurrection
    1. **1 Peter 3:18-22** – speaks of the blessedness of Christ upon His death, the victory of His resurrection, all in context to express the blessedness of suffering for doing good, and the promise of comfort and victory to follow.
    2. Context – **1 Peter 3:17** – better to suffer for good than evil.
       1. **1 Peter 1:7** – genuineness of faith tested by trial.
       2. **1 Peter 2:20-21** – to follow Christ’s example of faithfulness and suffering for doing good.
       3. **1 Peter 3:18** – expressing the blessedness of suffering for good with the case of Christ’s suffering.
    3. Jesus was put to death, but was made alive in spirit form – **1 Peter 3:18**
       1. ***“having been put to death in the flesh, but made alive in the spirit;” (NASB)***
       2. Continue to exist – **Matthew 10:28; 22:31-32** – cannot kill soul, God is God of the living.
    4. Jesus was raised from the dead, and gained victory – **1 Peter 3:21-22**
       1. When made alive in the spirit, He awaited His resurrection.
       2. In His resurrection He gained ultimate victory.
    5. In obedience to baptism we are made right with God – **1 Peter 3:21**
       1. ***“an appeal to God for a good conscience” (NASB)***
       2. Contrast – **(vv. 19-20)** – those in prison due to disobedience while in the flesh. (Suffered for doing evil – perished in flood; **2 Peter 2:9** – reserved in punishment for judgment).
    6. Application: Continue doing good, even in suffering, for the gospel ensures your blessed victory – **1 Peter 4:1-2, 4-6**
       1. They may speak evil of you – judge you.
       2. That is why the gospel is preached to you – so you, like Jesus, may live according to God in the spirit.
       3. ***“preached also to those who are dead”*** – i.e. preached to them while alive, but they are dead now, living according to God in the spirit.
    7. The faithful have hope – **1 Thessalonians 4:13-18**
       1. Like Lazarus, they await the resurrection in comfort.

**Conclusion**

1. The scripture is not silent concerning the whereabouts of Jesus in between His death and resurrection.
2. Jesus was made a man like we are, and we who are faithful have the promise of hope and comfort that He experienced.
3. Jesus died, was buried, was comforted, and kept by the Lord, and found eternal victory in His resurrection. We are promised the same if we are faithful.