

# THREE DAYS THAT CHANGED THE WORLD

## Where Was Jesus on Saturday?

### The Descent Into Sheol

1 Peter 3:18-20

We are looking at THREE DAYS THAT CHANGED THE WORLD!

- Thursday night, Jesus prepared His disciples and us for the changes He was about to bring to the lives of those who would follow Him.
- On Friday, Jesus willingly went to the cross where He
  - Paid the penalty for our sins by giving His body to be broken, and
  - Opened up our access to God the Father by the sacrifice of His own blood.

#### WHAT HAPPENED NEXT?

- We know that before sundown, they removed the body of Jesus from the cross and hurriedly prepared it for burial.
- Then they put the body of Jesus in the new tomb Joseph of Arimathea had carved out for himself. Joseph was a member of the Sanhedrin, along with his friend Nicodemus. He had become a believer that Jesus was the Promised Messiah. So he donated the tomb he had made for himself for the body of his newly found Lord.
- Before sundown Friday afternoon ushered in the Jewish Saturday or Sabbath, the stone over the mouth of the tomb had been rolled into place.
- Looking forward, we all know that early on Sunday morning, Jesus rose from the dead and came out of that grave. We'll talk all about that next week.
- This morning we are talking about what happened between the death of the Lord Jesus and His glorious resurrection?

Where Was Jesus on Saturday?

Actually, it is not a mystery. The Bible tells us plainly.

However, it is a mystery to a lot of people, because they are not familiar with the Scripture.

It is a mystery to many others because they have heard this Scriptural answer, but they do not understand it.

So let's read that answer, right out of God's Word, and then I am going to do my best to explain it so you can understand exactly what it means.

Would you pray with me that the Lord would fill me with His Spirit, which means He would control me and empower me to be able to clearly explain this portion His Word to you?

And would you pray that God would fill you with the Spirit to enable you to understand what His Word is declaring and then to apply the implications of that truth to your life?

Would you pray that for me and with me?

Let's pray!

So, let's read the answer from God's Word. Where Was Jesus on Saturday?

1 Peter 3:18-20 NKJV 18 For Christ also suffered once for sins, the just for the unjust, that He might bring us to God, being put to death in the flesh but made alive by the Spirit, 19 by whom also He went and preached to the spirits in prison, 20 who formerly were disobedient, when once the Divine longsuffering waited in the days of Noah, while *the* ark was being prepared, in which a few, that is, eight souls, were saved through water.

Let's just make a list of what this text says:

- **Christ suffered for our sins.**
- **He was put to death in the flesh.**
- **He was made alive by the Spirit.**
- **By the Spirit Christ went and preached to the spirits in prison.**

Now, so far this is not difficult to understand.

Jesus suffered and died for us on the cross, but even though His body was dead, God kept His spirit and soul alive.

This is not strange to us who are at all familiar with God's Word. Each of us is body, soul, and spirit. Death is the separation of the soul and spirit from the body.

We believe that those of us who trust in Christ, that when our body dies, our soul and spirit go immediately to be with the Lord in heaven because the Bible says “to be absent from the body is to be present with the Lord.”

So Jesus’ body was dead and put into the tomb. But His spirit and soul were very much alive and the Holy Spirit led Jesus to go preach.

Nothing strange here is there?

The Spirit led Jesus to go preach to the spirits in prison.

OK, here is where folks can start to get lost.

### **WHO ARE THE SPIRITS IN PRISON? WHERE ARE THE SPIRITS IN PRISON?**

The text tells us who the spirits are, so let’s look again.

1 Peter 3:18-20 NKJV 18 For Christ ... went and preached to the spirits in prison, 20 who formerly were disobedient, when once the Divine longsuffering waited in the days of Noah, while *the ark was being prepared, in which a few, that is, eight souls, were saved through water.*

- **spirits – God is spirit. Angels are also called spirits.** Which of those was disobedient in the days of Noah before the flood while the ark was being built? Well, certainly not God. So the spirits in prison are clearly angels.
- **Disobedient angels**

The Bible tells us about this.

Gen. 6:1, 2, 4 NKJV 1 Now it came to pass, when men began to multiply on the face of the earth, and daughters were born to them, 2 that **the sons of God** saw the daughters of men, that they were beautiful; and they **took wives** for themselves of all whom they chose. 4 There were **giants** on the earth in those days, and also afterward, **when the sons of God came in to the daughters of men and they bore children to them.** Those were the mighty men who were of old, men of renown.

In the Old Testament, the term “sons of God” is only used of the angels.

So, during this time, the Bible says that man was getting more and more wicked. The fallen angels who had followed Satan in his rebellion against God decided to join the wickedness and perversion of the human culture by cohabitating with women.

They produced abnormal offspring by this perverse union of a fallen angelic being, a demon, with a human being, having children that were giants and very unusual in other ways as well. As a result of their sin,

- **God put these disobedient angels in a prison.**

The New Testament refers to this event.

2 Peter 2:4 NKJV For if God did not spare **the angels who sinned**, but **cast them down to hell** and **delivered them into chains of darkness**, to be reserved for judgment;

Jude 6 NKJV And the **angels who did not keep their proper domain**, but left their own abode, He has **reserved in everlasting chains under darkness** for the judgment of the great day;

So, back to the question: **WHERE ARE THE SPIRITS IN PRISON?**

**Peter says the prison house was in hell**, but he does not use the customary word for hell. He uses a place name - **Tartarus**

The name of the prison, Tartarus, was then picked up by Greek mythology as the prison underneath hell where the Titans were tortured. Who were the Titans? In Greek mythology, they were the original sons of god.

This mythology has its basis in the truth that is revealed in the Holy Scriptures.

- The man Moses, who Jesus says wrote the Book of Genesis, far predates the beginnings of Greek mythology.
- Even Wikipedia dates Moses 700 years before the first of the poems written about the mythological Greek gods and their exploits.
- So the mythology comes later and then usually expands upon the truth and perverts it.
- The biblical statement does not come from mythology; the biblical statement is the original and perfect truth.
- The mythology is the exaggerated, error ridden copy!

In the New Testament, this prison house is

- **often called the abyss**

- **or the bottomless pit and**
- **it is in the lowest part of Sheol, the abode of the dead.**
  - The term Sheol is often confusing to people.
  - Did you know the Hebrew word Sheol appears 65 times in the Old Testament?
  - In most translations you rarely see the word, even though it is a place name.
  - It is usually translated as either grave or hell. Even the NKJV which I use for preaching and dearly love as a translation, makes this tragic mistake of translating Sheol as grave or hell. Of current popular translations, only the ESV and NASB keep the name Sheol as a place name in all the verses of the Old Testament where it appears.
  - Here is what you need to know about Sheol. **Before Jesus' resurrection from the dead, everybody went to Sheol when they died.**
  - The Old Testament **believers like Jacob** talked about going to Sheol when they died.
  - Unrighteous **unbelievers like rebellious Korah** and his followers went to Sheol.

Jesus Himself actually gives us the most complete description of Sheol. Here is a picture which I believe represents well the parts of Sheol described by both Jesus and Peter and depicts the truth revealed in Scripture. I am going to leave this picture up while we see what Jesus said about it in Luke 16.

Now some say, Luke 16 is a parable, but it isn't.

- Parables don't use names for the characters. This is a story Jesus told about two men. One of them is named Lazarus. This is not the Lazarus Jesus raised from the dead, but another man name Lazarus. This Lazarus, who was poor, died and along with a rich man, they both went to Sheol, which is the Old Testament name for the abode of the dead.
- **The rich man went to hell which is a part of Sheol.**
- **Lazarus went to Abraham's Bosom.**
- **Abraham himself, was there with Lazarus.**
- **Hell was a place of fire and torment.**

- **Abraham's Bosom was a place of comfort and good things.**
- **There was a great gulf between Hell and Abraham's Bosom that no one was able to cross.**

Now, remember what Jesus said to the repentant, believing thief on the cross. "Today, you shall be with Me in Paradise."

- **Paradise is where Abraham and Lazarus and Jacob and David were before the resurrection of Jesus.**

Now listen, when Jesus arose from the dead, all of this about Paradise changed. So don't miss next week when we talk about how Jesus' resurrection changed the world.

**But on Friday afternoon after He died, Jesus, in the spirit, went to Sheol.**

- **He took the repentant thief to Paradise.**
- **And He went down to the abyss, to Tartarus, where the rebellious angels of Noah's Day had been imprisoned for more than two thousand years and He preached.**
- **The word translated "preached" is the Greek "kerusso" which means "to announce."**
- **Jesus did not go to hell and suffer.** The Scripture says He suffered once for sin, not twice. He went to preach!

I cannot know for sure, but I suspect that everyone,

- The spirits in the prison house of Tartarus,
- The Old Testament believers in Paradise,
- And every lost soul in hell with the rich man amidst the burning torments,
- I think everybody heard Jesus preach.

The timetable of the crucifixion and resurrection would indicate that Jesus was in Sheol preaching for between 24 and 36 hours, and nobody had a watch or a clock!

I suspect Jesus preached to them the whole counsel of God. I suspect He reminded them

- It was God and God alone who made all things. He, Himself, was personally the Agent of Creation!
- That God is holy, holy, holy and sin cannot abide in His presence.
- He probably reminded them of how often the prophets had declared that God had a plan to forgive and save the world through the sending of His own Son, the Messiah.
- Jesus announced He was that Messiah and had proven Himself by fulfilling all that was spoken of Him.
- I imagine Jesus told them about what He had just done on the cross, paying the sin debt of mankind in full by the shedding of His own blood.
- And Jesus probably looked up from the prison house toward Paradise and said to the believers, "And after I rise from the dead tomorrow, I'm coming back for you!"
- I'm going to take you to my Father's House, where there are many mansions, and there's a place prepared for you!"
- And I am sure there are many, many other things Jesus preached to the spirits in prison and all of those who could hear His voice.
- But there is one thing I know Jesus did not do. There is something I do almost every time I preach, but Jesus did not do it when He preached to the spirits in prison.
- Jesus did not give an invitation.
- He did not tell anybody that at that moment they had the glorious, precious opportunity to be saved.
  - You see, salvation is not for the angels. The Bible says the angels look at what God has made available to men and women by way of the gospel and they gaze in awe.
  - The angels are filled with wonder at the grace God shows to people and are in awe that people can be forgiven and saved through faith in the Lord Jesus Christ.
  - But grace and salvation are not available to the angels.
  - And the believers in Paradise did not need an invitation because each of them had already believed. They believed in Christ even before He came and died on the

cross. They believed the promise of God about Messiah, and their faith was credited as righteousness and they were saved.

- And all the men and women in hell had already had their opportunity to believe and turned it down.
  - Some of them had heard the gospel preached by Jesus Himself and had not believed. They had not been in hell very long, but their stay in this place of torment was only just beginning.
  - Others had heard the promises of the coming Messiah but they had scoffed and did not believe it was true. They believed it was true now but it was too late to invite Jesus to be the Lord of their lives.
  - Others never heard the promises of Messiah's coming and might have shouted aloud or said to one another, "I didn't know!" Maybe Jesus explained God's Word that if they had just responded to the testimony God gave them every day through the things He had made at the creation of the universe, He would have sent them more revelation.
  - But they didn't. They did not honor the God of creation. They believed instead in gods of wood or stone or they served gods of lust and pleasure.
  - Now it was too late. As the Scripture says, "As the tree falls, so shall it lie."

Dear friend, there was, there is no second chance for those who have gone to hell because they did not believe in, put their trust in, Jesus Christ who died on the cross that they might be saved. As Jesus Himself said,

**John 3:16–18 NKJV**

**16 For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have everlasting life.**

**17 For God did not send His Son into the world to condemn the world, but that the world through Him might be saved.**

**18 He who believes in Him is not condemned; but he who does not believe is condemned already, because he has not believed in the name of the only begotten Son of God.**

Have you trusted in Jesus? Have you invited Him to be your Lord and Savior?

You can right now. You may not be able to do so later.