

**WHERE WAS JESUS ON SATURDAY?
I PETER 3:19**

NEED: TO PUT OUR FAITH IN THE CRUCIFIED AND RISEN CHRIST FOR SALVATION.

PROPOSITION: JESUS WENT TO HADES AFTER HIS DEATH THUS COMPLETING HIS DEATH FOR US.

OBJECTIVE: TO BRING MEN TO FAITH IN THE CRUCIFIED AND RISEN CHRIST.

INTRODUCTION:

Where was Jesus on Saturday? To some that may seem like an absurd question. Those familiar with the details know that He died sometime Friday afternoon before the Sabbath began at 6 p.m. They also know that His body was placed in a tomb which belong to Joseph of Arimathea and was located fairly close to the place of His crucifixion. They also know that He was resurrected from the dead sometime about dawn on Sunday morning. In light of these details the answer would seem to be rather obvious, He was in a tomb that belong to Joseph of Arimathea.

But such an answer ignores the spiritual reality of death. Death involves the separation of the spirit from the body. While the body is laid to rest in a tomb, the spirit is not placed in the tomb. So, the question is - where was the spirit of Jesus from that moment of death on Friday afternoon until His resurrection on Sunday morning. The complex passage that closes the third chapter of I Peter has something to say on this subject. Without attempting to unravel all the complexities of this baffling passage, I want us to deduct from it what we can learn about where Jesus was on Saturday.

In this extremely complex passage, Simon Peter tells us about the death of Jesus. He indicates that His body was indeed dead, but that His spirit was maintained in life beyond its departure from the body. The last statement in verse 18 that says, “He was put to death in the body but made alive by the spirit,” is a reference to this. The translators in both the older version and the New International Version have translated the word, “spirit” as though it was a reference to the Holy Spirit. It is better in this context to understand the word as a reference to the human spirit of Jesus. It is reference to that internal part of Him that allowed Him to relate to God during His incarnation. This part of Him was still alive after they buried His body.

Where was Jesus on Saturday? The Apostle’s Creed that is utilized by much of the Christian world declares, “He descended into hell.” So the answer of the Christian witness historically has been that Jesus “descended into hell” from the cross and remained in hell until Sunday morning. Did Jesus go to hell? Let me see if we can unravel all of this and learn something about the death of Jesus that will encourage and help us.

I. THE SPIRIT OF JESUS WENT TO HADES FROM THE CROSS

When the authors of the Apostle’s Creed declared that Jesus “descended into hell,” they were referring to “Hades.” Hades is just one of the New Testament words that is translated “hell” in our English Bibles. We need to be careful in distinguishing between these words lest we state something that is not true. There is no indication in the

scriptures that Jesus went to the ultimate hell, to “Gehenna.” There is this indication that Jesus did indeed in the spirit go to Hades during that time when He was dead.

1. Hades is the abode of the dead.

Hades in the New Testament translates the word “Sheol” from the Hebrew Old Testament. Both words refer to the place where people go when they die. Some have translated the word simply, “grave.” It is obvious when you study these words in their context that they mean more than the grave. The grave is the place to which the body goes at the time of death. The body of Jesus went to the tomb of Jesus. Hades is the place to which the spirit goes. It is a temporary dwelling place into which all of the dead go at death. So, when we say that Jesus descended into hell all that we mean is that He went to the place where all the dead go when they die.

2. Hades has two compartments.

The parable that Jesus gave in Luke 16 gives us some insight into the nature of Hades, at least Hades as it was before the death of Jesus. The rich man lifted up his eyes in Hades and was in a place of torment. The poor beggar, Lazarus, opened his eyes in Hades and was in a place where he was comforted by Abraham. Both compartments were a part of the realm of the dead, Hades, but there was an uncrossable gulf between the two. We need to keep in mind this particular aspect of Hades as we attempt to understand where Jesus was on Saturday.

You may remember that Jesus said to the thief on the cross, “This day you will be with me in paradise.” Paradise is that part of Hades to which the righteous dead go at the moment of death. Jesus was saying to the thief that He would go with him into the realm of the dead, and into the part of the realm of the dead where the righteous receive comfort from God.

So, without any serious fear of contradiction we can affirm that on Saturday Jesus was in Hades. We mean by this that He was sharing the experience of the dead. His spirit was where the dead of humanity go when they die.

II. JESUS DELIVERED A MESSAGE TO THOSE IN HADES ON SATURDAY.

This seems to be the obvious meaning of this statement by Peter in our text. The questions concerning the text have focused upon when and to whom this proclamation was made. Peter writes “He was put to death in the body but made alive by the spirit, through whom He also went and preached to the spirits in prison who disobeyed long ago when God waited patiently in the days of Noah while the ark was being built.” Doubt Peter intended for this to be a comprehensive statement about what Jesus did on Saturday. He shares this one insight with us because of the way it fits into the theme that He is developing. From this passage and other passages I think that we can safely conclude that indeed that Jesus did bear a message to the realm of the dead when He died. It would seem to be inevitable. If the spirit of Jesus of Nazareth, who was the incarnation of the living God, suddenly made an appearance in the realm of the dead in His disembodied

1. He delivered a message to the fallen angels.

My own understanding of this passage in I Peter is that Jesus took His message to fallen angelic spirits who had participated in the rebellion against God which is recorded Genesis Chapter 6. The “spirits in prison, and my understanding would be these fallen angels who being confined by God because of their transgression in that early day of human history. There is not time enough for us to explorer all of the implications for this, but this declaration to the angels must have been one in which He announced His final and complete victory.

When these angels forsook their privilege position in heaven to join Satan in his rebellion against God, they had as one of their major objectives the task of preventing the deliverer the Messiah of Israel, from coming into the world. When Jesus made His appearance in the prison house of these dammed spirits, it was an occasion for them to know that their plot against the purpose of God had failed. What a moment that must have been when the disembodied spirit of the Son of God who had been obedient to His Father even to the point of death and who had by His death purchased redemption for the fallen family of man, stood in their midst as evidence of the completion of His redeemed mission. There must have been a whale of woe provoked in the prison of the dammed spirits. On that day.

