

Did Jesus Descend into Hell?

Don Ruhl • Savage Street, Grants Pass, Oregon • April 15, In the year of our Lord, 2015

I. Why do some people believe Jesus went to hell?

II. They read Acts 2 in the Old King James Version,

A. when Peter quoted Psalm 16

B. about the soul of Jesus being left somewhere,

27 "Because thou wilt not leave my soul in hell, neither wilt thou suffer thine Holy One to see corruption" (Acts 2.27).

C. No other version translates that passage in that manner.

1. All other versions have "Hades."

2. Except the NIV which has "grave," a truly unfortunate translation.

D. Here is the thing,

1. what did the English word "hell," mean in early 17th century England?

2. One of the definitions of "hell," in 17th century England was

a) "The place of the dead," or

b) "The place of souls after death."

3. "Hell" in 1611 also had the meaning that we ascribe to it.

4. Thus, even in the KJV, the context determines.

III. Most people interpret First Peter 3 as proof

A. that Jesus went to hell and

B. that it shows what He did there,

18 For Christ also hath once suffered for sins, the just for the unjust, that he might bring us to God, being put to death in the flesh, but quickened by the Spirit: 19 By which also he went and preached unto the spirits in prison; 20 Which sometime were disobedient, when once the longsuffering of God waited in the days of Noah, while the ark was a preparing, wherein few, that

is, eight souls were saved by water (1Pe 3.18–20).

C. They believe that First Peter 4 confirms this truth,

6 For for this cause was the gospel preached also to them that are dead, that they might be judged according to men in the flesh, but live according to God in the spirit (1Pe 4.6).

IV. Why would Jesus preach to the souls in hell?

A. First Peter 4 indicates

1. that the preaching made them live according to God in the spirit.
2. Can the dead can change their destiny?
 - a) Nowhere does the Bible teach such a thing.
 - b) Also, Jesus showed a conversation between
 - (1) Abraham in Paradise and a rich man in Torment, and
 - (2) Abraham will declare that people cannot change places,

26 “And beside all this, between us and you there is a great gulf fixed: so that they which would pass from hence to you cannot; neither can they pass to us, that would come from thence” (Luke 16.26).

B. Also, why would Jesus only preach to the lost souls of Noah’s day?

1. First Peter 3 makes the point
2. that the preaching that was done
 - a) was to those from or during Noah’s day.
 - b) Why only that generation?

V. What does First Peter 3.18–20 mean?

A. The context begins in verse 8.

1. Peter addressed the issue of suffering, or more specifically persecution.
2. Then in verse 17, he assured us

- a) it is better to suffer for doing good
 - b) rather than for doing evil.
- B. To support the contention that it is okay to suffer for doing good,
- 1. Peter in verse 18 reminds us of the work of Christ,
 - 2. the Just One who suffered for us unjust people.
 - a) Peter says that Jesus suffered in the flesh, that is,
 - b) He died, but
 - (1) what did Peter say made Jesus alive again?
 - (2) Jesus was made alive by the Spirit.
- C. So then in verse 19, by whom did Jesus preach to the spirits in prison?
- 1. By the Spirit Jesus preached.
 - 2. That means Jesus did not do it Himself, but
 - a) through the Spirit,
 - b) Jesus preached to the spirits in prison.
- D. Who were these spirits to whom Jesus preached by the Spirit?
- 1. Those who were disobedient.
 - 2. However, Peter had in mind some spirits at a particular time.
 - a) What time in history?
 - b) It was when the Divine longsuffering waited in the days of Noah.
 - (1) Second Peter 2.5 refers to Noah as a preacher of righteousness.
 - (2) Why does Peter bring up the disobedient of Noah's time?
 - (a) It was a time when God suffered long.
 - (b) Peter also wanted to show
 - i) that Noah's family was saved by water,
 - ii) even as we are saved by water in baptism.
- E. Therefore, Jesus preached by means of the Spirit

1. to the souls of Noah's day.
2. Why does Peter refer to them as "spirits in prison"?
 - a) He either referred to their spirits as inhabiting their bodies, or
 - b) those souls at the present time are in prison.

VI. Jesus and the Thief on the Cross

A. Where did Jesus indicate He was going that day?

43 And Jesus said to him, "Assuredly, I say to you, today you will be with Me in Paradise" (Luke 23.43).

B. Do you think of hell as paradise?