

Last week we looked at 1 Peter 3:19-21 in greater depth and particularly whether Christ physically descended into hell and what the reference to the "spirits in prison" at the time of Noah means.

We learned that Jesus didn't descend anywhere in a physical manner but that the Apostles Creed refers to "hell" in a two-fold manner, namely, that it was the state of death in which He was for three days prefigured by Jonah and that the separation from the Father was a hellish torment which Christ suffered so that we should not be separated from the Father forever.

This week we will study the benefits knowing that Christ descended into hell. We will look at this by asking the following two questions, namely, what is the meaning or sense thereof, and what are the fruits thereof.

- I. What is the true sense of this Article of the Creed; or, what does the descent of Christ into hell signify?

What does this descent of Christ into hell signify?

1. It signifies those extreme torments, pains, and anguish, which Christ suffered in His soul. Such sufferings as those who are damned experience, partly in this, and partly in the life to come.
2. It embraces also the greatest and most extreme disgrace, which Christ suffered during the whole period of His passion.

That Christ suffered and did endure these things to the extent put forward and beyond, is also proven by several other Scripture passages.

Isa 53:6-12 All of us like sheep have gone astray, Each of us has turned to his own way; But the LORD has caused the iniquity of us all To fall on Him. <sup>7</sup>He was oppressed and He was afflicted, Yet He did not open His mouth; Like a lamb that is led to slaughter, And like a sheep that is silent before its shearers, So He did not open His mouth. <sup>8</sup>By oppression and judgment He was taken away; And as for His generation, who considered That He was cut off out of the land of the living For the transgression of my people, to whom the stroke was due? <sup>9</sup>His

grave was assigned with wicked men, Yet He was with a rich man in His death, Because He had done no violence, Nor was there any deceit in His mouth. <sup>10</sup>But the LORD was pleased To crush Him, putting Him to grief; If He would render Himself as a guilt offering, He will see His offspring, He will prolong His days, And the good pleasure of the LORD will prosper in His hand. <sup>11</sup>As a result of the anguish of His soul, He will see it and be satisfied; By His knowledge the Righteous One, My Servant, will justify the many, As He will bear their iniquities. <sup>12</sup>Therefore, I will allot Him a portion with the great, And He will divide the booty with the strong; Because He poured out Himself to death, And was numbered with the transgressors; Yet He Himself bore the sin of many, And interceded for the transgressors.

Mat 26:27, 28 And when He had taken a cup and given thanks, He gave it to them, saying, "Drink from it, all of you; <sup>28</sup>for this is My blood of the covenant, which is poured out for many for forgiveness of sins."

Mat 27:46 About the ninth hour Jesus cried out with a loud voice, saying, "ELI, ELI, LAMA SABACHTHANI?" that is, "MY GOD, MY GOD, WHY HAVE YOU FORSAKEN ME?"

Although the descent into hell follows the burial of Christ in the Apostle's Creed, it should not be inferred that His suffering on His soul was accomplished after His burial, but because it is an explanation of what precedes concerning His total suffering.

This is done to prevent something being detracted from these, as if it said, He did not only suffer in body – He did not only die a bodily death and was not only buried, but He also suffered in his soul the most extreme torments, and hellish agonies such as all the ungodly shall forever endure.

The greatest part of Christ's suffering is therefore, correctly placed last, according to the order on the Creed, for it proceeds from the pains of the body to those of the soul, and from the sufferings which are visible to those that are invisible, as it were from the lighter to the heavier.

If we take the meaning of "... He died, was buried, descended into hell" in its proper context, as we have done here in this

study, we find that it is fully supported by Scripture, in full alignment with Christ's declaration on the cross *it is finished*. Christ finished and consummated every part of our redemption upon the cross, after which there was no cause left why He should descend into hell, the place of the damned.

We summarize this discussion with the following points:

1. Christ was to redeem not only our bodies, but also our souls. Therefore it behooved Him to suffer not only in body, but also in soul.
2. It was necessary for Christ to deliver us from the anguish and pains of hell. Therefore it became him to experience these. This he did not after His death. Neither was it in His body alone that He endured these things, for the sufferings of His body were only external. He suffered them in His soul.
3. It is proper that the severe torments and anguish of His soul should be mentioned in our confession after confessing that Christ also suffered the external sufferings of his body.

Scripture clearly supports this Article of the Apostle's Creed in the context described above and this understanding of the passion of Christ should be clear to us all and be so taught to our children. This is the true descent of Christ into hell.

## II. What are the fruits of Christ's descent into hell?

Christ descended into hell so that:

1. We might not descent into hell, and that He might deliver us from the eternal anguish and torments of hell.
2. He might carry us with Himself to heaven.

Therefore, to believe in Christ, who descended into hell, is to believe that He sustained for us, in His own soul, hellish agonies and pains, and that extreme disgrace which awaits the ungodly in hell, that we might never descend there, nor be compelled to suffer the pains and torments, which all the devils and reprobate will forever suffer in hell; but that on the contrary, we

might rather ascend with Him to heaven, and there with Him enjoy the greatest felicity and glory to all eternity.

This is the fruit, and benefit of this article of Christ's descent into hell.

Do those who look for their salvation and security in saints, in themselves, or elsewhere really believe in the only savior Jesus?

Answer is, of course, No. Although they boast of being his, by their deeds they deny the only savior and deliverer, Jesus.

1Co 1:12,13 Now I mean this, that each one of you is saying, "I am of Paul," and "I of Apollos," and "I of Cephas," and "I of Christ." <sup>13</sup>Has Christ been divided? Paul was not crucified for you, was he? Or were you baptized in the name of Paul?

Gal 5:4 You have been severed from Christ, you who are seeking to be justified by law; you have fallen from grace.

Either Jesus is not a perfect savior, or those who in true faith accept this savior have in him all they need for their salvation.

Col 1:19, 20 For it was the Father's good pleasure for all the fullness to dwell in Him, <sup>20</sup>and through Him to reconcile all things to Himself, having made peace through the blood of His cross; through Him, I say, whether things on earth or things in heaven.

Col 2:9, 10 For in Him all the fullness of Deity dwells in bodily form, <sup>10</sup>and in Him you have been made complete, and He is the head over all rule and authority;

1John 1:6, 7 If we say that we have fellowship with Him and yet walk in the darkness, we lie and do not practice the truth; <sup>7</sup>but if we walk in the Light as He Himself is in the Light, we have fellowship with one another, and the blood of Jesus His Son cleanses us from all sin.

After studying the passion of Christ, it is only fitting to make sure that there is understanding what this sacrifice means and

how should we deal with it. In particular we would like to show that there is only one through whom salvation is obtained. Those who glory in the name of Jesus, and yet, seek their salvation either wholly or in part in some other place without him are denying Christ's sacrifice. They seek their salvation in the merit of the saints, the indulgences of the Pope, in their own offerings, works, fastings, prayers, alms, and so on.

We must ask whether these persons believe in Jesus as the only Savior, or not. It is clear that they do not believe in him, but that in every extra deed or belief, they deny him, regardless of their boasting in Christ.

The substance of this answer lies herein: Whoever is perfect, and only Savior, does not confer salvation with others, wholly or in part. Jesus is a complete and only Savior, as we have shown. He does not bestow the power of salvation on anyone else neither does he deliberate the matter, talk it over with others, or take it under advisement. He alone saves -- completely and in the most perfect manner.

We can therefore correctly conclude that all those that seek their salvation wholly or in part somewhere else, in reality deny him to be an only and perfect Savior.

In other words: Those who seek salvation elsewhere than completely and only in Christ, whether in the saints, in themselves, or any other instrument, do not believe in Jesus as their only Savior. The additions to their 'faith' in Jesus exposes that they believe Jesus falls short of complete saving and that they need to fill in the perceived short-comings of their salvation. This is to deny Christ. This is to imagine that being dead in one's transgressions means that a remnant remained alive and sufficiently good to assist Christ in procuring their salvation.

A perfect Savior would not require additional beliefs and rituals, as we have shown.

Objection: God desires and commands us to pray for each other. To attribute a part of our salvation to the intercession of

the saints, does not impeach the office and glory of an only Savior.

Answer: Wrong, it does. There is a great distinction to be made between the intercessions of Christ and those of the living saints. Christ intercedes for us with the Father, by the efficacy of his own special dignity and merit. Christ is heard on account of himself, and obtains what he asks.

The saints pray and intercede mutually for each other in this life, and the good things which they ask and obtain for themselves and others, are not given on account of their own worthiness, but because of the dignity and merit of the mediator.

If one were to imagine that the saints obtain favor with God on account of the worthiness of their own merits, they manifestly derogate from the office and glory of Jesus. They deny that he is the only Savior. Such prayers and beliefs would be equally abominable before God, since these people worship other saviors in addition to His Son whom God alone ordained as Savior.

Next week we will be looking at the degrees of glorification of Christ.