

# ***THE MYSTERY OF THE 3 DAYS AND NIGHTS***

A study of the spiritual side  
of the death, burial and resurrection  
of our Lord Jesus Christ.

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**Forward by George Upton**

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All Scriptures are quoted from the King James Version unless otherwise stated.

## **FORWARD**

It is not surprising that as the Apostle Paul contemplated the whole redemptive work of the Lord Jesus, he should be constrained to exclaim (I Timothy 3:16) "without controversy great is the mystery of godliness; God was manifest in the flesh, justified in the spirit, seen of angels, preached unto the Gentiles, believed on in the world, received up into glory."

To comprehend all that occurred in the life of Jesus, from the time He was arrested in the garden, until His resurrection, is to realize a tremendous activity took place in the spirit world; activity of great importance to all humanity. No one else could secure, for every lost son of Adam, a clear title to eternal and abundant Life.

Greg Bitgood has accomplished a valuable service in setting forth, as he does in this writing, the accomplishments of our Lord, all for us, in the three days of His death. Greg has gathered a massive and convincing body of evidence from thoughtful and godly men confirming the majesty, the passion, and the thoroughness of the redemptive acts, which cost the Son of God His life and insured to every believer, everywhere, full and glorious access to triumphant life in Him.

Rev. George R. Upton

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## **PREFACE**

"The Mystery of the 3 Days and Nights" has been prepared in response to a flurry of controversy in the Body of Christ concerning the Death, Burial and Resurrection of our Lord. It has been my passion in the last seven years to understand what the Word of God has to reveal concerning this mysterious portion of our Saviour's Work.

I do not intend to stir up more controversy through this document. But, rather, I intend to alleviate some of it. A preacher once said, "we must present controversial material in a non-controversial manner." It is my opinion that this very truth has only rarely been given the attention it deserves. It is not rare for a minister to mention his views in a passing comment. Nor is it rare for people to accept a position on this subject with little or no scriptural investigation. In my search of 7 years I have yet to encounter an adequate exegetical presentation of this subject in print and have only met a handful of ministers who have carefully taught it. Yet, it seems to me that this should be one of our central focuses in Christian teaching. Paul preached "Christ, and Him crucified." Peter's first sermon was full of information on what happened in the 3 days and nights. So it is in response to this doctrinal void that I am publishing this paper.

I also want to prepare you for the style in which I am presenting the material. I explain a good portion of the points in an apologetic manner. In a way I am sorry for that. It's a shame that I have to "prove my point" rather than give a simple presentation of the facts, which will probably be sufficient for most of the readers. But because there is such a skepticism about anything that

goes against the traditional grain, a defensive posture, like that of an attorney, is inevitable. Yet, this style can also be a useful tool for the teacher, and it is for this purpose that I use it.

I pray that you don't misinterpret my motive and attitude because of the style. I do not have an axe to grind nor am I excluding those of opposing view-points from Christian fellowship. I do not believe that the truths of Christ's spiritual sufferings are essential to one's salvation. Therefore I would not exclude anyone from Christian fellowship and brotherly love because they believed differently. On the other hand, I will not deny the power and commitment that can be experienced by those who deeply take hold of these precious truths.

One may say, "If it is not essential, why even discuss it, especially when it brings controversy?" Yet, almost anything is controversial with somebody. The Baptism in the Holy Spirit is controversial with millions of Christians, and it is not essential to salvation. But it brings tremendous blessing and benefit into the life of the believer; therefore we must present it, in spite of the controversy. The same is true of the spiritual sufferings of our Messiah. When we see the depths to which Christ went to bring us to God, a consecration, love and gratitude toward God fills the heart. Along with the Apostle Paul, we must proclaim the whole counsel of God!

## ***INTRODUCTION***

Before we go any further it is necessary to state the intention of this paper. It is the goal of this paper to present and examine the scriptural evidence of the spiritual sufferings of Christ in the 3 days and nights, beginning at the cross and ending at the empty tomb. We will attempt to prove beyond all doubt that the Scriptures teach:

1. Jesus was mankind's **total** sin substitute.
2. Jesus was "**made**" to be our sin.
3. Jesus **died** in spirit.
4. Jesus **suffered** in hell.
5. Jesus was **justified** and made **alive** in spirit.
6. Jesus **triumphed** over the devil.

These are the events which are enshrouded in the mystery of the 3 days and nights. **The reason why they are a mystery is our inability to see into the spiritual realm.** We are natural minded people and it requires the spiritual mind to penetrate the veil of the flesh. It is an easy thing to look at the physical sufferings of Jesus and stop there. There is no struggle in accepting the Gospel accounts without going further. But further we must go, for our needs are spiritual and our redemption required more than a physical act. Our punishment was hell and someone had to pay that price for our sin.

Before we go on, there are some fundamental truths that must be clarified. They are the basis for some of our conclusions further on in the study:

### ***1. Man Is A Three-Part Being***

Man is spirit, soul and body [I Thess. 5:23]. It is our understanding that man is essentially a spirit, who possesses a soul and lives in a body. The spirit is that part of us which contacts the spiritual

realm. The soul is comprised of our mind, will, and emotions. The body is that part of us which contacts the physical realm.

This truth of spirit, soul and body is essential in understanding what Christ did for us. We must see where in the being of man our redemption was initiated.

**If our problem was just a physical one, then only a physical substitution would be needed.** If man's problems were confined to the soul, then the events that transpired in all His agony at Gethsemene and Calvary probably would have been sufficient. **But we see that man's problem is deeper, it is spiritual. As a matter of fact, the root of all man's other problems originate in his spirit.** "The heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked, who can know it?" [Jer. 17:9; see also 18:12; Mark 7:21-22; Luke 6:45; Eph. 2:1-3]. Therefore it was necessary for God to do a work that would bring to man a spiritual redemption. And this is what being born again is all about. It is a recreating of a person's spirit. We become a New Creation in Christ and our spirit is joined unto the Lord. And for this to take place there had to be a spiritual substitution.

## **2. The Incarnation**

We need to understand that the Incarnation was a vital part of God's Redemptive Plan.

**HEBREWS 2:14** *Forasmuch then as the children are partakers of flesh and blood, he also himself likewise took part of the same; that through death he might destroy him that had the power of death, that is the devil.*

This is concurrent with the judgment pronounced upon the serpent in Gen. 3:15: "And I will put enmity between thee and the woman, and between thy seed and her seed, it shall bruise thy head, and thou shalt bruise his heel." Jesus came to redeem man from the grip of the devil. This was the declared purpose of His taking on a body. Notice also that it wasn't without cost to Himself: "...and thou shalt bruise his heel."

The Incarnation was necessary for three main reasons:

1) Man was spiritually bankrupt, sold under sin, and had no real approach to God. This was a result of Adam's sin:

**ROMANS 5:12** *Wherefore, as by one man sin entered into the world, and death by sin; and so death passed upon all men, for that all have sinned;*

**DOUAY** *...and so death passed upon all men in whom all had sinned.*

**KNOX [margin]** *'In him (Adam) all had sinned.'*

**BRUCE [margin]** *'That is, all mankind sinned in Adam's sin, because Adam, as his name implies, is the embodiment of all mankind.'*

Adam's sin placed all men under the dominion of death. The Weymouth translation states it clearly in Rom. 5:17: "...Death made use of the one individual to seize the sovereignty..." The devil being the "lord of death" [Heb. 2:14, see above] took control of mankind. We were trapped with no escape, no way or approach to God. **We needed an independent man, one free from this vicious circle of sin and death, to come and free us from our plight.**

2) This man had to be born into the world. Yet, this birth had to bring in a sinless, perfect man. Therefore God had to produce a birth independent of Adam's line of descendants; for all his

descendants were mortal and conceived in sin. Thus, an Incarnation. God placed the seed of His Son within the womb of the woman and brought into earth the second Adam, or the second representative man. Jesus had a perfect human body, like that of Adam before the fall, therefore, it was free from the contamination of Adam's sin. He was the first totally sinless man since Adam.

3) This man had to be the quality of being that would enable Him to be "in all points tempted like as we are, yet without sin" [Heb. 4:15]. Man, in the image of God (speaking of Adam, the son of God, Luke 3:38), was unable to stand the test; he failed. So God took it upon Himself to become a man in order to endure the trials that would qualify Him as our obedient representative.

**ROMANS 5:19** *For as by one man's disobedience many were made sinners, so by the obedience of one shall many be made righteous.*

**WILLIAMS** *For just as by that man's disobedience the whole race of men were constituted sinners, so by this One's obedience the whole race of men may be brought into right standing with God.*

**SANDAY & HEADLAM** *For as through the disobedience of the one man Adam, all mankind were placed in the class and condition of 'sinners,' so through the obedience (shown in His Death upon the Cross) of the one man Christ, the whole multitude of believers shall be placed in the class and condition of 'righteous.'*

Jesus Christ, God the Son from all eternity, was chosen for this task. God the Father provided Him with a body and He became a human being. "God was manifested in the flesh..." [I Tim. 3:16].

Some have voiced a problem with the teachings of Jesus' death in spirit and sufferings in hell because they cannot see how God could die. They are partly right: God, the Giver of all Life, who is called "Life" personified, could not die, for He is God. All else would cease to exist, for He is the sustainer of all life. **It is true that God in Himself could not submit to death, but if He could become a man, a true man, then as such He could experience all that we experience, including spiritual death. If Jesus could not experience sin and death, then Jesus was not a real man but something in between God and man, a spiritual hybrid. And if He wasn't 100% man then He could not qualify as our substitute.** It was a man who sold us into sin and it could only be a man to ransom us out of sin. To think of Jesus as being different in any way from the rest of humanity, (aside from His sinless character) is to do a major injustice to the doctrine of our Redemption. The Archdeacon Wilberforce [1892] in defending this very truth declared:

"The true Doctrine of the Incarnation against all the enemies thereof, Apollinarians, Nestorians, Eutychians, and the like, was generally expressed by declaring the unity of the soul of Christ really present in the grave. The truth of these assertions was virtually involved in the statement which had been received from the beginning, that Christ was truly and in all respects man, even in the Article of His death. For it belongs to man's body to rest in the grave, and his soul to visit the unknown abode of the departed. And such an entrance of Christ into the unseen world had been especially predicted by David, as contemporaneous with the deposition of His body in the grave." [\(1\)](#)

Scriptures declare that Jesus laid aside His privileges as God in order that he could become a man and "become obedient unto death..." [Phil. 2:5-10]. If Jesus wasn't 100% man then He is not our mediator. But the Scriptures declare:

**I TIMOTHY 2:5** *For there is one God, and one mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus.*

The Creator made Himself lower than even His own creation:

**HEBREWS 2:9** *But we see Jesus who was made a little lower than the angels for the suffering of death, crowned with glory and honor that he by the grace of God should taste death for every man;*

**The reason most people have trouble accepting the totality of the Incarnation is their low estimation of man. They fail to see that man is of such quality of being that he can partake of the Divine Nature. He is made just "a little lower than God" [Ps. 8:5 ASV].** God created him in His own image and likeness. The Incarnation necessitated that the Son lay aside His attributes of power in order to become a man [Phil 2:6-7]. But it did not mean that He had to lay aside the Nature of God or Character of God. **The fact that God became a man should not lower our estimation of God, rather it should heighten our estimation of man. Man is of such quality of being that God could become a man and still be God.**

### **3. Jesus' Declared Purpose For Coming**

We must keep in mind what Jesus came to earth to accomplish. Knowing what He came to accomplish will help us see how He accomplished it. Let us consult the Scriptures.

**JOHN 10:10b** *...I am come that they might have life, and that they might have it more abundantly.*

This was the goal of all that He did, to bring us life. Here Jesus is referring to spiritual life. Adam, in the fall, lost this precious spiritual life. The very day he ate the fruit from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil he died spiritually [Gen. 2:17]. This sin brought spiritual death to all humanity [Rom. 5:12]. It was spiritual life that Jesus came to give mankind. The word "life" in this verse is the same word used for Eternal Life.

**VINES EXPOSITORY DICTIONARY** "Zoe (Greek for 'life') is used in the N.T. "of life as a principle, life in the absolute sense, life as God has it, that which the Father has in Himself, and which He gave to the Incarnate Son to have in Himself, John 5:26, and which the Son manifested in the world, I John 1:2. From this life man has become alienated in consequence of the Fall, Eph. 4:18, and of this life men become partakers through faith in the Lord Jesus Christ, John 3:15..." [\[2\]](#)

**BARCLAY'S N.T. WORDS** "...eternal life is nothing less than the life of God himself. ...We shall never enter into the full ideas of eternal life until we rid ourselves of the almost instinctive assumption that eternal life means primarily life which goes on forever." [\[3\]](#)

We must keep in mind that the reason Jesus came was to give us this Life and that His death was only the means to that end.

There were 2 obstacles keeping mankind from receiving this Life. The first was that man's sin had to be dwelt with. God is a God of justice therefore sin had to be penalized and, as we saw before, mankind could not pay the price. He had no approach or standing with God. Jesus came to pay that penalty:

**MATTHEW 20:28** *Even as the Son of man came not to be ministered unto, but to minister, and to give his life a ransom for many.*

Notice that this is another scripture that refers to the purpose of Jesus' coming. The word ransom indicates that Jesus was paying a price for our release as Dean Alford stated in his N. T. Commentary:

"a. a payment as equivalent for a life destroyed; b. the price of the redemption of a slave; c. propitiation for." [\(4\)](#)

The ransom price Jesus paid was the terrible sufferings He endured. He did this to satisfy the Divine Justice which demanded that sin be paid for.

The second obstacle keeping us from Eternal Life was the authority of the devil over our lives. Because of spiritual death we were the devil's possession unable to escape his grip. Jesus plainly stated that the strong man must be bound before his goods could be spoiled [Matt. 12:29]. Satan had a right to keep us in . It was therefore necessary for Jesus to come and break the devil's grip and destroy his work in our lives:

**I JOHN 3:8b** *For this purpose the Son of God was manifested, that he might destroy the works of the devil.*

It is the purpose of this study to see exactly how Jesus paid the penalty for our sin and how He destroyed the one who had the power of death. But we must keep in mind that these events alone without the reception of the New Life would have been worthless. Thank God that Jesus has provided a New Birth for us; this was the goal of all He experienced. Let us never devalue the salvation that He has provided, for He has paid a terrible price to give us Life.

### **JESUS WAS MAN'S TOTAL SUBSTITUTE**

This is where our study of the 3 days and nights must begin. The logical extension of Jesus becoming our substitute is Jesus becoming all that we were and receiving the full blunt of the penalty due us. What do we mean by **substitution**?

**WEBSTER'S COLLEGIATE** "substitute-- a. a person or thing that takes the place of another; b. to take the place of, replace." [\(1\)](#)

**ROGET'S THESAURUS** "substitute-- proxy, alternate, representative, replacement, stand-in, surrogate..." [\(2\)](#)

Jesus took our place at Calvary. He was our **representative**, our **replacement**, our **stand-in**. Again we must point out that in order for Jesus to be an adequate substitute He had to be like unto us. Take the synonym surrogate; in today's usage it is often applied to a woman who bears the child of another woman's husband. She does this on behalf of the wife who is unable to bear children herself. She becomes the substitute child-bearer (This is not a moral statement, I am only using this situation illustratively.) We were unable to redeem ourselves. We needed someone who was worthy enough to come and be our stand-in before the "bar of God". Paul Billheimer in his excellent book Destined For The Throne states in legal terminology our need for a representative:

"Since Adam was Satan's slave and all his progeny had endorsed Adam's rebellion, they were likewise Satan's slaves. A slave has no legal standing and cannot enter court or lawfully participate in litigation. Thus a member of the human race had to be found upon whom Satan had no claim, one who had not endorsed Adam's rebellion, one who could qualify to bring suit to cancel Satan's legal jurisdiction over mankind and the earth." [\(3\)](#)

This member of the human race who was qualified to enter legal contest for man was, of course, Jesus. And this was the purpose of the Incarnation. Billheimer continues:

"To the human mind the situation was hopeless, but God found a way. "When the fullness of time was come, God sent forth His Son, made of a woman, made under the law, to redeem them that were under the law, that we might receive the adoption of sons" (Gal. 4:4). God solved the problem by the Incarnation. Since Jesus was conceived by the Holy Spirit, the divine nature was present in Him. Because He was sinless, Satan had no claim upon Him. But because He was "made of a woman," He was an authentic human being and could therefore qualify as a bona-fide member of the human race to enter the legal fight to claim Adam's lost estate." [\[4\]](#)

The entire purpose of the Incarnation was to give mankind an adequate representative. **Any misunderstanding of the Incarnation will automatically result in a misunderstanding of substitution** (this was covered in the Introduction). We must settle on the fact that God became a man. And as a man He stepped into the arena of mankind's struggle to attain redemption, thus becoming his representative.

The Scripture abounds in passages that refer to Christ's death as a substitution. When we encounter the word "for" in reference to "Christ's death for us" the passage indicates substitution and can be translated "on our behalf" or "for our sakes" in most cases. Kenneth Wuest in his commentary on Romans 5:6-7 points this out:

"Paul now speaks of a demonstration of God's love for mankind in that Christ died for the ungodly. When sinners were in the condition in which they were powerless for good, He died for (huper) them. The preposition huper means "for the sake of, in behalf of, instead of." In John 11:50, we have, "It is expedient for you that one man should die (huper) instead of the people and not that the whole nation perish", and in Galatians 3:13, "Christ has redeemed us from the curse of the law, having become a curse (huper) instead of us." Dana and Mantey in their Manual Grammar of the Greek New Testament say, "In both of these passages the context clearly indicates that substitution is meant." Thus our Lord died instead of us, taking our penalty, and in behalf of us, in that His death was in our interest." [\[5\]](#)

Let's examine some of the more striking substitutionary passages:

**ROMANS 5:8** *But God commendeth His love toward us, in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us.*

**20TH CENTURY** *But God puts his love for us beyond doubt by the fact that Christ died on our behalf,...*

**RICHERT** *God demonstrates to man His own brand of love, His Son died in our place, while we were virtually criminals.*

**II CORINTHIANS 5:21** *For he hath made him to be sin for us, who knew no sin; that we might be made the righteousness of God in him.*

**PHILLIPS** *For God caused Christ, who himself knew nothing of sin, actually to be sin for our sakes,...*

**GALATIANS 3:13** *Christ hath redeemed us from the curse of the law, being made a curse for us: for it is written, Cursed is everyone that hangeth on a tree.*

**N.T. FOR THE DEAF** *The law put a curse on us. But Christ took away that curse. He changed places with us. Christ put himself under that curse...*

**JORDON** *Christ liberated us from the damning effects of the customs by letting them fall on him instead of on us,...*

**HEBREWS 2:9** *But we see Jesus, who was made a little lower than the angels for the suffering of death, crowned with glory and honour; that he by the grace of God should taste death for every man.*

**ROTHERHAM** *...to the end that by the favour of God in behalf of everyone he might taste of death.*

**ISAIAH 53:5** *But he was wounded for our transgressions, he was bruised for our iniquities: the chastisement of our peace was upon him; and with his stripes we are healed.*

There are literally dozens more of these substitutionary Scriptures; space does not permit us to quote them all.

**Modern theology** has moved away from the idea of substitution because implied in it is the necessity of "punishment" for sins and the "satisfaction" of the justice of God. They have preferred to look at the atonement as an example of Christ's martyr-like self in the hands of a vengeful God against sin. Isaiah 53 uses almost frightful terms to describe the atonement: vs. 5 "...on him the punishment fell that brought us peace..." [Knox], vs. 8 "...Be sure it was for my people's guilt I have smitten him" [Knox], vs. 10 "Yet it pleased the Lord to bruise him...", vs. 11 **"He shall see the travail of his soul, and shall be satisfied..."** We can see in these passages a definite punishment being applied for our sins and a suffering in order to satisfy the justice of God. There is another principle in Scripture that brings these ideas out: Christ became the ransom price to buy us back.

**MATTHEW 20:28** *Even as the Son of Man came not to be ministered unto, but to minister, and to give his life a ransom for many.*

Some have taught that God paid this ransom price to the devil, and others, to an impersonal power such as death or evil. These ideas of ransom are nowhere near the idea of substitution. Vine's Expository Dictionary of N.T. Words is helpful here:

"That Christ gave up His life in expiatory sacrifice under God's judgement upon sin and thus provided a ransom whereby those who receive Him on this ground obtain deliverance from the penalty due to sin, is what the Scripture teaches." [\(6\)](#)

William Barclay in his Study of New Testament Words said:

"Jesus Christ by His life and death released man from an obligation, a liability and a debt which otherwise we would have been bound to pay, and delivered him from a of slavery, by paying the purchased price of freedom which he himself could never have paid." [\(7\)](#)

The ransom Jesus paid was not to the devil or any other force; it was paid to God. It was God's justice that had to be vindicated. He could not overlook man's sin; the price has to be paid! Billy Graham in his book Peace With God addresses the problem: [Amen I agree 100%]

"The question remains 'How can God be just -- that is, true to Himself in nature and true to Himself in holiness, and yet justify the sinner?' Because each man had to bear his own sins, all mankind was excluded from helping, since each was contaminated with the same disease. The only solution was for an innocent party to volunteer to die physically and spiritually as a substitution before God. This innocent party would have to take man's judgement, penalty, and

death. But where was such an individual? Certainly there was none on earth, for the Bible says, 'All have sinned.' There was only one possibility. God's own Son was the only personality in the universe who had the capacity to bear in His own body the sins of the world." (8)

There is one more principle involved in understanding substitution and that is identification. For Christ to become our sin substitute He had to identify with us. To identify means "to cause to become identical, to conceive united" [Webster]. To be identical means "the very same; exactly alike" [Scribner]. Jesus had to become what we were in order for God to treat Him as if He were us. Whatever our sins were, He became, in order that we could become like Him. He was made sin so that we could be made righteous [II Cor. 5:21]. He was made sick that we might be healed [Is. 53:5]. He was made poor that we might be made rich [II Cor. 8:9]. He was made a curse that we might be given the blessing [Gal. 3:13-14]. He became our old man that we might become a new man [Rom. 6:6, Gal. 2:20, Gal. 6:14-15]. Christ literally became all that we were in the old creation (Adam's race) so that God could do away with what we were. Martin Luther in his letter entitled "The Freedom of a Christian" eloquently stated this principle:

"Christ is full of grace, life, and salvation. The soul is full of sins, death, and damnation. Now let faith come between them and sins, death, and damnation will be Christ's, while grace, life, and salvation will be the soul's; for if Christ is a bridegroom, he must take upon himself the things which are his bride's and bestow upon her the things that are his. If he gives her his body and very self, how shall he not give her all that is his? And if he takes the body of the bride, how shall he not take all that is hers? Here we have a most pleasing vision not only of communion but of a blessed struggle and victory and salvation and redemption. Christ is God and man in one person. He has neither sinned nor died, and is not condemned, and he cannot sin, die, or be condemned; his righteousness, life, and salvation are unconquerable, eternal, omnipotent. By the wedding ring of faith he shares in the sins, death, and pains of hell which are his bride's. As a matter of fact, he makes them his own and acts as if they were his own and as if he himself had sinned; he suffered, died, and descended into hell that he might overcome them all." [This quote was taken from John Dillenberger's edition, Martin Luther, selections From His Writings where he comments: "If one were to single out one short document representing the content and spirit of Luther's faith, "The Freedom of a Christian" would undoubtedly be at the top."] (9)

Finally, we come to the logical conclusion that total and complete substitution meant that Christ would suffer and die the death that was due us. James Denny in his Book Christian Doctrine Of Reconciliation in speaking of those who take the strict legal idea of satisfaction pertaining to the atonement states: [**The** Martin Luther said this...]

"Few things in the history of Christian thinking are more extraordinary than the progeny of this ambiguous idea of satisfaction: **'that every sin must be punished.'** Many theologians in applying it to Christ took it as a strict legal sense. **He made satisfaction for sin by enduring the penalty which was due for it to mean. But this penalty was eternal death or the pains of hell. Could anybody say that Christ endured this?** Luther said so, **'...in His tender innocent heart He had to feel God's wrath and judgment against sin, to taste for us eternal death and damnation, and in a word to suffer everything which a condemned sinner has merited and must suffer eternally.'** And 'Look at Christ, who for thy sake has gone to hell and been abandoned by God as one damned forever.' This is his interpretation of 'My God, my God, why hast Thou forsaken me?' Calvin with all his constitutional caution is almost equally emphatic. He makes much of the descent into hell saying, **'...that invisible and incomprehensible judgment which he underwent at the bar of God; that we might know that not only was the body of Christ given up as the price of our redemption, but that there was another greater and more excellent price -- namely, that He endured in His soul the dreadful torments of a condemned and lost man.'** One might conceive a man driven to this by the logic of legal satisfaction and contemplating it with awe. There is no trace of such emotion in the statement of it by John Owens, which cannot be read without a shudder. **The punishment due to our sin and the chastisement of our peace was upon Him, which that, it was the pains of hell and their nature and being, in**

**their weight pressure, though not intendance and continuance, in being impossible that He should be detained by death.** Who can deny and not be injurious to the justice of God which will inevitably inflict those pains through eternity upon sinners.' It (that Christ should go to hell and suffer) is really given in the very conception of satisfaction if taken in the legal sense." [\[10\]](#)

[Please remember who made the above statement...*not Copeland...Luther*]

Denny himself does not believe in the legal concept of satisfaction but he states it plainly for those of us who do. I John 2:3 declares that Christ was not the propitiation for our sins only but for the sins of the entire world. It is our belief that Christ did pay the price for every sin. Jesus was our substitute, which means He became what we were and suffered the penalty that was our due.

### **JESUS WAS "MADE" TO BE SIN**

Now we are about to see what took place in the spirit of the Master. We have three main passages that confirm to us that Jesus not only carried our sins but that God actually made Him our sin and its consequences.

#### **1. II Corinthians 5:21**

This is the Scripture that starts us down the path that unveils "The Mystery of the 3 Days and Nights." We have seen that Jesus became mankind's sin substitute. This very scripture reveals substitution. Christ being "made sin" is the logical extension of substitution. For God to treat Jesus as if He were us, Jesus would have to become what we were.

The all inclusive word that best describes humanity is "sin." Ephesians 2:2 calls us "the children of disobedience," the Amplified Bible says "the sons of disobedience-- the careless, the rebellious and the unbelieving, who go against the purposes of God." C. I. Scofield's commentary on Romans 3:23 gives us a clear definition of what sin is:

"Sin may be summarized as threefold: An act, the violation of, or want of obedience to the revealed will of God; a state, absence of righteousness; a nature, enmity toward God." [\[1\]](#)

Whatever sin was in us is what Christ was made. Sin was in us as a state and nature. Jesus not only bore that sin, He was made sin.

**II CORINTHIANS 5:21** *For he hath made him to be sin for us, who knew no sin: that we might be made the righteousness of God in him.*

**NEW ENGLISH** *Christ was innocent of sin, and yet for our sake God made him one with the sinfulness of men...*

**A.S. WAY** *Jesus knew not sin; yet God made Him to be the world's sin, for our sakes, that we, whose sin He had thus assumed, might become, by our union with Him, the very righteousness of God.*

**BLACKWELDER** *Although Christ never experienced any sin whatsoever, in our behalf God identified him with everything in the whole realm of sin...*

**LIVING** *For God took the sinless Christ and poured into him our sins. Then in exchange he poured God's goodness into us!*

**JERUSALEM** *For our sake God made the sinless one into sin...*

Some have suggested that the word "sin" be translated sin-offering [William's N.T., NIV (margin), Marshall's N.T., RV (1881)]. I have consulted over 70 translations of this verse and have found only a handful take this position. Most commentaries reject that translation of the word sin [including Wuest, Alford, Vincent, Translator's N.T. and others]. Ellicott's commentary gives us a clear understanding:

"And then there comes what we may call the paradox of redemption. He, God, made the sinless One to be 'sin.' The word cannot mean, as has been said sometimes, a 'sin offering.' That meaning is foreign to the New Testament, and it is questionable whether it is found in the Old, Lev. 5:9 being the nearest approach to it. The train of thought is that God dealt with Christ, not as though He were a sinner, like other men, but as though He were sin itself, absolutely identified with it. So, in Gal. 3:13, he speaks of Christ as made 'a curse for us,' and in Rom. 8:3 as 'being made in the likeness of sinful flesh.' " [\(2\)](#)

A.S. Worrell's marginal notes in his translation is very graphic:

"the Father laid on Jesus Christ the iniquity of us all (Isa. 53:6), and treated Him as a sinner; delivering Him up to death as a vicarious Sufferer. Jesus died because of our sins, and we died in the person of our Substitute." [\(3\)](#)

This verse is a contrast of our sins and God's righteousness. We see a definite "exchange" [Living Bible] taking place: our sins for God's righteousness. The righteousness that God provided for us is a legal and vital righteousness. We are not "sinners whom God in his mercy considers righteous." No, we have an actual righteousness. Notice that the Apostle said that we were "made the righteousness of God." Whatever kind of righteousness God has we have. In contrast, Jesus was not just "considered to be sin, without really becoming sin;" He was literally made our sin. To the degree that we are made righteous, Jesus was made sin. We are righteous with the same righteousness that is in God, therefore Jesus was made sin with the same sin that was in us.

Some have thought of this scripture in the sense that Jesus was carrying our sins [I Pet. 2:24] and not truly becoming our sin. Jesus carrying our sin is a scriptural concept, but it is not intended in this verse. Aside from the fact that the word "made" (Gr. poieo, to make, [Thayer]) cannot be translated carry or bear, it is still clear that a deeper meaning is meant here. We do not carry the righteousness of God in our body, like a sack. We are literally made the righteousness of God in Christ. This is a present spiritual reality [Rom. 1:16-17; 3:21-28; 8:30; 10:10; Gal. 2:16; Eph. 4:24; etc.]. The righteousness we have received is so real that it enables us to receive the Life and Nature of God [Rom. 5:21, II Pet. 1:1-4]. Jesus was literally made to be our sin, because we have literally been made the righteousness of God. Billheimer continues this theme:

**"He became the very essence of sin by dying as a sin offering. He suffered the pollution of sin as if he had actually run the entire gamut of human transgression.** He was adjudged guilty of the cumulative sin of mankind, and condemned to pay the full price and completely satisfy the demands of justice against the combined sin of the world." [\(4\)](#)

**Martin Luther**, the father of the Reformation, had much to say about Christ becoming our sin. Space would not permit to quote all he said, but here are some passages from his writings:

"And this, no doubt, all the prophets did foresee **in spirit, that Christ should become the greatest transgressor, murderer, adulterer, thief, rebel, blasphemer, &c. that ever was or could be in all the world.** For he being made a sacrifice for the sins of the whole world, is not now an innocent person and without sins, is not now the Son of God born of the Virgin Mary; but a sinner, which hath and carrieth the sin of Paul, who was a blasphemer, an oppressor and a persecutor; of Peter, which denied Christ; of David, which was an adulterer, a murderer, and

caused the Gentiles to blaspheme the name of the Lord; and briefly, which hath and beareth all the sins of all men in his body, that he might make satisfaction for them with his own blood.... **But some man will say: it is very absurd and slanderous to call the Son of God a cursed sinner. I answer: if thou wilt deny him to be a sinner and accursed, deny also that he suffered, was crucified and died. For it is no less absurd to say, that the Son of God (as our faith confesseth and pleadeth) was crucified and suffered the pains of sin and death, than to say that he is a sinner and accursed.** But if it be not absurd to confess and believe that Christ was crucified between two thieves, then it is not absurd to say also that he was made a curse for us; 'God made Christ which knew no sin, to become sin for us, that we in him might be made the righteousness of God' 2 Corinthians 5:21." [\[5\]](#)

In the book The Father And His Family, E.W. Kenyon graphically defines the event of Christ becoming our sin:

"He has taken Man's place, and the whole human race is now represented in Him, and as He hangs there under judgment on the accursed tree, God takes your sin and mine, yes, the sin of the whole world and lets it fall upon the sensitive spirit until the sin of a world has entered into His very Being and He has become the outcast from Heaven, until God turns His back upon Him and He cries out, 'My God, My God, why hast Thou forsaken Me.' " [\[6\]](#)

Surely II Corinthians 5:21 is the pivotal scripture that unlocks the mystery of the 3 days and nights.

## **2. Isaiah 53**

It was this terrifying but necessary event which Isaiah the prophet foretold in Chapter 53. His language is strikingly similar to that of the Apostle in his description of what Christ endured:

**ISAIAH 53:4** *Surely he hath borne our griefs, and carried our sorrows; yet we did esteem him stricken, smitten of God, and afflicted.*

**BASIC ENGLISH** *But it was our pain he took, and our diseases were put on him: while to us he seemed as one diseased, on whom God's punishment had come.*

**ISAIAH 53:5** *But he was wounded for our transgressions, he was bruised for our iniquities: the chastisement of our peace was upon him; and with his stripes we are healed.*

**NEW AMERICAN STANDARD** *But He was pierced through for our transgressions, He was crushed for our iniquities; the chastising for our well-being fell on him, and by His scourging we are healed.*

**BYINGTON** *But he was being stabbed by our crimes, felled by our guilt...*

**ISAIAH 53:6** *All we like sheep have gone astray; we have turned every one to his own way; and the Lord hath laid on him the iniquity of us all.*

**GOOD NEWS** *...But the Lord made the punishment fall on him, the punishment all of us deserved.*

**ISAIAH 53:12** *Therefore will I divide him a portion with the great, and he shall divide the spoil with the strong; because he hath poured out his soul unto death; and he was numbered with the transgressors; and he bare the sins of many, and made intercession for the transgressors.*

**MOFFATT** *Therefore shall he win victory, he shall succeed triumphantly, since he has shed his lifeblood, and let himself be numbered among rebels, bearing the great world's sins, and interposing for rebellious men.*

**BASIC ENGLISH** *...because He gave up His life and was numbered with the evil doers; taking on himself the sins of the people.*

**JERUSALEM** *...for surrendering himself to death and letting himself be taken for a sinner.*

**FENTON** *...and was branded with crime.*

**LAMSA** *...and died the death of transgressors.*

The language is clear, Jesus took our sins upon Himself that He might die our death. **Robert Jamieson, D.D.**, comments on this chapter: **[A Dr. of Divinity Said this]**

"The causes of his sufferings were to be found in his being the substitute of sinful men, and bearing the penalties of their transgressions. 'Griefs and Sorrows' i.e. diseases, infirmities and pains are called sins, because they are considered as the punishment of sin. ...a deeper meaning is attached to the "iniquity" that was laid upon Christ than the Bearing of its punishment. The Spirit of God, speaking by Isaiah, as if to take away all ground or risk of the language being treated figuratively, employs a number of synonymous expressions in confirmation of the leading idea which pervades this passage -- **that Christ as bearing the sins of mankind should be regarded as the greatest transgressor that ever was, or can be in the world.** It might as well be denied that he suffered on the cross, as that he was accursed as a sinner." [\(7\)](#)

Again we consult **Luther**:

"Isaiah speaketh thus of Christ: 'God,' saith **he, 'laid the iniquity of us all upon him' Is. 53:6. We must not make these words less than they are, but leave them in their own proper signification.** For God dallieth not in the words of the prophet, but speaketh earnestly and of great love; to wit, that Christ, this Lamb of God should bear the iniquities of us all. But what is it to bear? The sophisters answer: to be punished. Very well. But wherefore is Christ punished? Is it not because he hath sin and beareth sin? ...For this testimony is not the voice of an innocent, but of a suffering Christ, which took upon him to bear the person of all sinners, and therefore was made guilty of the sins of the whole world." [\(8\)](#)

Luther uses strong language to describe the Saviour, but it rings with truth. Jesus was made to be our sin so that God could treat Him as a sinner. Billy Graham gives us an insight into why this was necessary:

"On the cross He was made sin. He was God- forsaken. Because He knew no sin there is a value beyond comprehension in the penalty He bore, a penalty that He did not need for Himself. If in bearing sin in His own body He created a value that He did not need for Himself, for whom was the value created?" [\(9\)](#)

The answer is: for mankind.

### **3. Galatians 3:13**

This scripture takes us one step further than II Corinthians 5:21. In II Corinthians we saw that God, in fact, made Christ our sin. Here in Galatians we see that God has made Christ to be, not just our sins, but the very consequences of our sins:

**GALATIANS 3:13** *Christ hath redeemed us from the curse of the law, being made a curse for us: for it is written, Cursed is everyone that hangeth on a tree:*

**NEW ENGLISH** *Christ bought us freedom from the curse of the law by becoming for our sake an accursed thing...*

**N.T. FOR THE DEAF** *The law put a curse on us. But Christ took away that curse. He changed places with us. Christ put himself under that curse....*

**JOHNSON** *...He liberated us by accepting that condemnation for us, and experiencing it on the cross.*

Notice here again that Jesus actually became the thing he was delivering us from. **Jesus became the curse. He changed places with us and became an accursed thing.** The language here is absolutely striking and if it did not come from the Bible we would scream, "blasphemy!" Can this be the reason why Isaiah spoke of the crucified man in such shocking terms:

**ISAIAH 52:14** *As many were astonished at thee; his visage was so marred more than any man, and his form more than the sons of men:*

**JERUSALEM** *As the crowds were appalled on seeing him -- so disfigured did he look that he seemed no longer human...*

We find a description of this horrible curse in Deuteronomy 28:15-68. It describes every type of calamity, sickness and destruction that one could imagine. All of which comes upon us because we "do not hearken unto the voice of the Lord thy God, to observe to do all his commandments..." vs. 15. The curse was the result of our sin, our disobedience to the revealed will of God. Jesus not only became our sin, he became the thing that our sin produced -- the curse of the law. C.S. Lovett's commentary of this verse is revealing:

"Paul has mentioned two curses in connection with the Law: (1) upon all failing to fulfill the Law's conditions, (2) upon those hung upon a tree. This second curse does not refer to hanging, for the Jewish method was stoning. It refers rather, to the Jew's custom of hanging an executed malefactor's corpse on a tree to brand him publicly as a lawbreaker. While Jesus did not break the Law Himself, He did accept the total guilt of us all as Lawbreakers, for 'the Lord hath laid on Him the iniquity of us all' (Isa. 53:6b). Thus both curses fell on Christ: the first, which bespeaks the GUILT of sin and the second, which bespeaks the PUNISHMENT of sin." [\(10\)](#)

**Is it any more to say that Jesus died spiritually than it is to say that He became an accursed thing?** And wouldn't it stand to reason that if God made Jesus the curse of the law, which was a result of our sin, that he would also cause Him to take spiritual death, also the result of our sin?

We will close this chapter with the words of Martin Luther from his commentary of this verse:

"Wherefore, Christ was not only crucified and died, but sin also (through the love of the Divine Majesty) was laid upon him. When sin was laid upon him, then cometh the law and saith: Every sinner must die. Therefore, O Christ, if thou wilt answer, become guilty, and suffer punishment for sinners, thou must also bear sin and malediction. Paul therefore doth very allege this general law out of Moses as concerning Christ: "Everyone that hangeth upon the tree is the accursed of God." Christ hath hanged upon the tree, therefore Christ is the accursed of God." [\(11\)](#)

## **JESUS DIED IN SPIRIT**

This is the point in our study of the 3 days and nights where many have stopped and said "I can't go further, what might people think?" But further we must go that we might see into the mystery of these 3 days and nights. We must lay aside every fear of man or the unfamiliar and by the guidance of the Holy Spirit see into the precious work of our Saviour. It is these very fears that have kept men from taking God's Word at face value.

We have five major reasons for coming to the conclusion that Jesus died spiritually.

### **1. The Agony in the Garden**

In the garden of Gethsemane we see the most difficult moment in the Master's life. Jesus utters words here that are almost unbelievable. We look back on that experience in retrospect and still we find that what Jesus said was almost out of character. Let's take a look at what took place.

**MATTHEW 26:36-38** *Then cometh Jesus with them unto a place called Gethsemane, and saith unto the disciples, Sit ye here, while I go and pray yonder. And he took with him Peter and the two sons of Zebedee, and began to be sorrowful and very heavy. Then saith he unto them, My soul is exceeding sorrowful, even unto death, tarry ye here, and watch with me.*

**NEW ENGLISH** *vs 37 ...anguish and dismay came over him.*

**NORLIE** *vs 37 ...he became sad and deeply depressed.*

**KNOX** *vs 38 ...my soul is ready to die with sorrow...*

**WEYMOUTH** *vs 38 "My soul is crushed with anguish, even to the point of death."*

**LUKE 22:44** *And being in an agony he prayed more earnestly: and his sweat was as it were great drops of blood falling down to the ground.*

**WEYMOUTH** *an agony of distress having come upon Him -- prayed all the more with intense earnestness, and His sweat became like clots of blood dropping on the ground.*

**NEW ENGLISH** *in anguish of spirit..*

These are strange words to be uttered from the lips of the God-man. And consider His prayer, "Father, if thou be willing, remove this cup from me...." **We know that the things He was about to experience were the entire reason for His coming, and yet He is now asking God if there is any other way to do it. What would cause such incredible agony and anguish in the Master? Could it be that He was about to experience something so horrible, so hideous, that He was considering backing out?**

Certainly it couldn't just have been the beatings, nails and crucifixion that He was fearing. Don't get me wrong, crucifixion was a horrible way to die. But men have died worse deaths than that in a nobler fashion and for a lot less than what Jesus was dying for. A day and a half of intense physical suffering and it would all be over. As a matter of fact, Jesus didn't undergo the full torture of crucifixion for in most cases the criminal would hang there for days. Jesus hung on the cross for no more than six hours.

Please bear with me, I am not trying in any way to diminish the intense physical sufferings of our Lord. It is a horrible thing when you consider that those wicked men were putting to death the Lord of Glory. But when we see the expression of agony in the Garden of Gethsemane, there had to be more than just a day and a half of physical suffering to be followed by instant triumph immediately after death! The agony and distress was not over the physical sufferings but the spiritual sufferings. Rev. Robert Jamieson, D.D., in his commentary of the Bible carried this theme:

"Without considering the death of Christ as a substitutionary sacrifice, how mysterious, how unaccountable the manner in which he underwent it! Martyrs have not only stood calm, serene, and unmoved, but often have kindled into raptures when fastened to the stake -- even amid the blaze of the s, or the gloom of the grave, have exulted as if already treading the confines of heaven, and breathing the air of immortality. They were poor, weak, sinful men; but Jesus had never sinned -- he was totally separate from sinners. Moreover, he was the object of the Father's infinite, complacent love; thrice the Divine pleasure in him was proclaimed from heaven. He knew, also, that his sufferings were but momentary, and that eternal glories awaited him; and yet when we hear the accents of agony that broke the stillness of Gethsemane, and see the "great drops of blood" bursting from every pore of his body we can believe, though we cannot fathom the depth of the mystery, that he was making atonement for the sins of all the redeemed, from Adam to the latest believer in his name and merits." [\(1\)](#)

Jesus was God come to earth. The High and Holy God who despised all sin and what it produced, the God who destroyed the entire human race save eight people because of sin, the man who walked in purity and holiness for 33 years, who resisted every temptation come His way, was about to become the very thing He loathed. Jesus was about to be literally made the sin of the human race. This is what he was desperately asking God to keep him from. Billheimer comments on this moment in the Master's life:

"It was not the prospect of physical suffering which brought the agony in the Garden. That was nothing compared to the torture of His spirit. It was the anguish of a pure soul who knew no sin, facing the injustice of being "made sin" (2 Cor. 5:21), of being so completely identified with sin as not only to forfeit the fellowship of His Father, but to become the object of the Father's loathing. This was no mere legal imputation of sin. HE WAS MADE SIN." [Emphasis is his.] [\(2\)](#)

I am not presenting what happened in the Garden as the only proof that Jesus died in spirit or went to hell. But it certainly is an indication that the sufferings Christ endured were more than physical.

## ***2. The Spiritual Sacrifice***

We must realize that Jesus Christ came to provide a spiritual redemption for mankind. We have seen that Jesus came to give us Life, spiritual Life. And this Life is received in the New Birth [John 5:24; I John 5:11-12; Col. 2:13; etc.]. We have also seen the principle of exchange in Christ's redemptive act. ***Jesus was made sin in order to give us righteousness, made sick to give us healing, made poor to give us wealth, and on and on.*** To say that He died physically to give us spiritual life is a contradictory statement. Mankind's basic need was a spiritual salvation, therefore it required a spiritual sacrifice.

**HEBREWS 9:14** *How much more shall the blood of Christ, who through the eternal Spirit, offered himself without spot to God, purge your conscience from dead works to serve the living God.*

**BARCLAY** *Who offered Himself to God as a victim without blemish in a spiritual and eternal sacrifice...*

**AMPLIFIED** *How much more surely shall the blood of Christ who by virtue of [His] eternal Spirit [His own pre-existent divine personality] has offered Himself an unblemished sacrifice to God...*

**NEW ENGLISH** *How much greater is the power of the blood of Christ, he offered himself without blemish to God, a spiritual and eternal sacrifice...*

**JORDAN** *How much more will Christ's supreme sacrifice, which he made in a spiritual way by offering himself to God without reservation...*

**STEVENS** *How much more shall the perfect spiritual sacrifice of the spotless Christ accomplish the real purification of the inner life.*

As we can see, these translations point out that the subject of "the eternal Spirit" [KJV] is not the Holy Spirit, but rather, Christ's own spirit. This position is supported by many N.T. scholars including: Alford, A.T. Robertson, Ellicott, Wuest, Wescott, Dummelow, Weymouth and others. Vincent seems to express it clearly:

"Not the Holy Spirit, who is never so designated, but Christ's own human spirit: the higher element of Christ's being in his human life, which was charged with the eternal principle of divine life. ...This is the key to the doctrine of Christ's sacrifice. The significance and value of his atonement lie in the personal quality and motive of Christ himself which are back of the sacrificial act. The offering was the offering of Christ's deepest self -- his inmost personality. Therein consists the attraction of the cross; not to the shedding of blood but to Christ himself. ...Atonement is eternal in virtue of the eternal spirit of Christ through which he offered himself to God." [\(3\)](#)

**C.S Lovett** in his commentary of Hebrews is even more pointed: [*This isn't Copeland or Hagin who wrote this...others believe this NOT just the WOF.*]

"If we limit the author to saying that Jesus offered Himself in the Spirit's power, we miss a bigger truth. The writer is contrasting the fleshly offerings of the Jewish priests with the spiritual offering of Jesus. The animal sacrifices were physical and outward, His was spiritual and unseen. The shedding of Jesus' blood made possible His transition from the physical world into the spiritual sanctuary. **But His physical blood DID NOT atone for our sins. Sin is a spiritual matter.** The wages of sin is eternal separation from God. When God laid 'on Him the iniquity of us all,' was it on Jesus' body or His soul? **Sin cannot be laid on a body because sin is spiritual and the body physical. It was the sinless SOUL of Christ that was the real sacrifice at Calvary, NOT his body.** He offered HIMSELF to God. He was IN a body at the time, but it was Jesus Himself Who bore our sins in that body. This is why the offering is so priceless." [Emphasis is his.] [\(4\)](#)

*Some have felt that those who believe in the spiritual death of our Lord do an injustice to the blood of Christ being poured out. Let me say that the efficacy of the blood of Christ should never be diminished! For it is through His blood that we have redemption [Eph. 1:7]. But let us consider the meaning behind the statement "without the shedding of blood is no remission" [Heb. 9:22]. Does it not represent death? As one fellow so aptly put it, "I'm sure Jesus cut Himself once or twice in the carpenter's shop." **When the Scriptures refer to the blood of Christ it is referring to the offering of our Lord and His death.** This is the power of the blood; it represents the sacrificial work of our Lord and all we receive from it. "The interest of the N.T. is not in the material blood of Christ, but in His shed blood as the life violently taken from Him. Like 'the cross' the 'blood of Christ' is simply another and even more graphic phrase for the death of Christ in its soteriological (saving) significance." [Kittel's Theological Dictionary].*

**But we cannot stop at the physical sacrifice, real as it was; we must go on and see also the spiritual sacrifice. Billy Graham in his presentation of the sacrifice of the Lord in Peace with God declares:**

"But the physical suffering of Jesus Christ **was not the real suffering**. Many men before Him had died. Many men had become martyrs. **The awful suffering of Jesus Christ was His spiritual death.** He reached the final issue of sin, fathomed the deepest sorrow, when God turned His back and hid His face so that He cried, 'My God, why hast Thou forsaken me?' " [Emphasis is mine.] [\[5\]](#) [*Billy Graham said this..*]

He quotes the cry of our Master upon the cross:

**MATTHEW 27:46** *And about the ninth hour Jesus cried with a loud voice, saying Eli, Eli, lama sabachthani? that is to say, My God, My God, why hast thou forsaken me?*

**JERUSALEM** *...My God, My God, why have you deserted me?*

**BYINGTON** *...Jesus shrieked out loudly, My God, my God, why hast thou abandoned me?*

What else can this statement mean, except that Jesus was enduring intense spiritual sufferings. Only a man in deep spiritual agony could make that cry. Jesus was literally abandoned by God on the cross. This is the testimony of a lost man and if it were anyone but Jesus on the cross we would say he was a spiritually dead sinner. Why must we insist that Christ was any different?

We have seen the suffering in the Garden of Gethsemane. We have seen that it was Christ's spirit that was offered up. We have heard the cry of the Master "My God, My God, why hast thou forsaken me?" Can it not mean that Jesus drank death's bitter cup to the full, that the Lord Jesus Christ died spiritually in order that we might live spiritually?

### **3. The Logical Extension of Being Made Sin**

We have seen clearly in the last Chapter that Jesus Christ was literally "made" our sin [II Cor. 5:21], **that He became a transgressor on the Cross (not that He sinned, but God made Him sin)** [Is. 53], that God caused our Lord to "become an accursed thing," and that God caused Him to become the consequences of our sin [Gal. 3:13].

One basic principle we see throughout the Scripture is that **the consequence of sin is death both physical and spiritual.**

**ROMANS 6:23** *For the wages of sin is death; but the gift of God is eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord.*

**PHILLIPS** *Sin pays its servants: the wage is death...*

**EPHESIANS 2:1** *And you hath he quickened, who were dead in trespasses and sins;*

**PHILLIPS** *You were spiritually dead through your sins and failures,*

**A.S. WAY** *...for dead you were, slain by your trespasses and sins,*

As we can see in both these scriptures, death is the consequence of our sin. It is also clear that the death these passages are talking about is spiritual and not physical. In Romans 6:23, death is

contrasted with eternal life which is spiritual, therefore "death" has to be spiritual also. In Ephesians 2:1 we see that though we were alive physically we were dead spiritually, slain by our sin.

Sin produced spiritual death in the first man that sinned. God gave Adam the warning "...in the day that thou eatest thereof thou shalt surely die" [Gen. 2:17]. But we see according to Genesis 5:5 that Adam lived physically 930 years after the fall. Therefore, the death Adam died that day was spiritual.

At the risk of being repetitive let me quote C.I. Scofield's definition of sin again:

"Sin may be summarized as threefold: An act, the violation of, or want of obedience to the revealed will of God; a state, absence of righteousness; a nature, enmity toward God." [\[6\]](#)

Notice that sin is more than an act, it is also a state and a nature. The spiritual nature of sin is death. There is no way around it. If Jesus was made all that is implied by the word sin, then Jesus received spiritual death. His spiritual nature underwent a change. At the point on the cross when God poured into Christ all of the world's hideous sinfulness, Christ passed from spiritual Life into spiritual Death. Isaiah describes this horrifying event:

**ISAIAH 53:8** *He was taken from prison and from judgment and who shall declare his generation? for he was cut off out of the land of the living; for the transgression of my people was he stricken.*

**JERUSALEM** *By force and by law he was taken, would anyone plead his cause? Yes, he was torn away from the land of the living; for our faults struck down in death.*

Jesus was cut off from the land of those who have spiritual Life. He was torn away from the realm of Life. This happened to Him because He was made our sin and all that it entailed.

The reason some people reject this truth is because of our understanding of spiritual death. We realize that the spiritual nature of Sin and Death has its origin in the devil for the Scriptures call him the Lord of Death [Heb. 2:14]. Does the Bible indicate that Jesus underwent such a change as this? [Not to demon possessed person but to someone lost in OUR sin]

**JOHN 3:14** *And as Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, even so must the Son of Man be lifted up:*

Jesus was identifying Himself as the Old Testament type in Numbers 21:6-9. This was the event where the children of Israel had sinned and received the judgment of poisonous snakes attacking them. *God instructed Moses to fix a brass serpent on a pole and all that would gaze upon it would be healed. Jesus likened Himself to be that serpent on the pole and as we gaze upon Him we also are healed from the attack of the devil. All throughout Scripture we see that the serpent represents Satan and sin [Gen. 3:1; Ps. 58:4; Rev. 12:9; etc.]. But Jesus didn't become the serpent on the pole because of Satan.* It was because mankind had united with Satan's spiritual nature that Christ had to undergo such a hideous thing. Paul put it plainly in Romans 3:13: "Their throat is an open sepulchre; with their tongues they have used deceit; the poison of asps is under their lips." The Old Testament also reveals man's serpent-like nature:

**PSALM 22:6** *But I am a worm, and no man; a reproach of men, and despised of the people.*

**JOB 25:6** *How much less man, that is a worm? and the son of man which is a worm.*

Psalm 22 is where we find a detailed description of a crucified man, it opens with "My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?" It is a prophetic portrayal of the Lord Jesus' crucifixion. C.I. Scofield brings this out in his notes on this Psalm:

"Psalm 22. is a graphic picture of death by crucifixion. The bones out of joint (vs.14); the profuse perspiration caused by intense suffering (vs.14); the action of the heart affected (vs. 14); strength exhausted, and extreme thirst (vs.15); the hands and feet pierced (vs.16); partial with the hurt to modesty (vs.17), are all incidental to that mode of death. The accompanying circumstances are precisely those fulfilled in the crucifixion of Christ. The desolate cry of verse 1 (Mt.27:46); the periods of light and darkness of verse 2 (Mt.27:45); the contumely of verses 6-8, 12, 13 (Mt.27:39-43); the casting lots of verse 18 (Mt.27:35), all were literally fulfilled. When it is remembered that crucifixion was a Roman, not Jewish, form of execution, the proof of inspiration is irresistible." [\(7\)](#)

Jesus called Himself a worm in Psalm 22:6 (some have said that Christ uttered the entire Psalm while hanging on the cross), why? It was because man was a worm, as pointed out in Job 25:6, therefore the Son of Man had to become a worm in order to bring mankind redemption.

The only conclusion acceptable is: if Christ truly became man's sin [II Cor. 5:21] then Jesus died spiritually in order to pay the entire sin debt. Billheimer explains:

"Sin is basically a spiritual thing, a thing of the spirit, and therefore must be dealt with in the spirit realm. If Jesus paid the full penalty of sin on the cross only, that is by His physical death alone, then sin is wholly a physical act. If sin is wholly a physical act, then every man could pay for his own sin by his own death. Because sin is basically or primarily in the spirit realm and of the spirit, therefore Jesus' work was not finished when he yielded up His physical life on the cross. It was not completed until He descended into hell, paid once and for all the eternal consequences of the aggregate sin of the world, completely despoiled Satan and all the hosts of evil, arose triumphantly from the dead, and carried His blood into the heavenly Holy of Holies and sprinkled it upon the Mercy Seat there. Hallelujah!" [\(8\)](#)

#### **4. Direct Scriptural Evidence**

Here is the acid test of any Biblical Doctrine. We may be able to reason it through, even elude to it time and time again. **But if there is no direct scriptural evidence then we should never expect others to whole-heartedly accept it.** This is not the case concerning this truth, though some have said that there is no direct scriptural evidence, I believe that they haven't looked close enough. In fact there are a number of clear passages that indicate Jesus died spiritually.

**ISAIAH 53:9** *And he made his grave with the wicked, and with the rich in his death; because he had done no violence, neither was any deceit in his mouth.*

According to The Englishman's Hebrew and Chaldee Concordance compiled by G.V. Wigram, the Hebrew word used here for "death" is actually plural, and he gives an alternative rendering of "deaths." This would indicate that Jesus (the subject of Isaiah 53) died **two** deaths. The context itself also reveals the two-fold principle. We see a description of the two types of individuals that Christ was buried with: the wicked and the rich. The Gospels tell us clearly with whom He was buried. Luke 23:50-53 tell us that Jesus was buried in the tomb of Joseph of Arimathaea. It also tells us that he was a good man and a just man. In Matthew 27:57 we see that Joseph was a rich man. In Mark, he is said to be an honourable counselor. In all the passages it is pointed out that this was a new tomb in which no man had ever been laid. Therefore we see that Joseph fulfills the burial of Jesus with the rich. There is absolutely no grounds here that Joseph was a wicked man. On the contrary, everything indicates the opposite about Joseph of Arimathaea.

It is also significant that Jesus was laid in a tomb where no man was ever laid, indicating that the physical burial could not in any way be with the wicked. How then was Christ buried with the wicked? The passage in Isaiah gave us the answer in the plural word for death; Jesus died a two-fold death. He died physically and was buried in Joseph's tomb among the rich, but also He died spiritually and was buried with the wicked in hell. E.W. Kenyon speaks of the plural deaths:

"This word 'Death' is in the plural in the original. It is a very remarkable fact that this is the only time that the word "deaths" is used in the entire Old Testament Scriptures, except when it speaks of Satan's being cast out of Heaven, that he "died the deaths" [Ez.28:10]. It is used here, because the Prophet saw that our sin Substitute when He went on the Cross died spiritually as well as physically; so it says 'in His deaths.' " [\[9\]](#)

**C.S. Lovett** in his commentary of Hebrews 2:9, "Jesus would taste death on behalf of every man," expounds on the two deaths:

"He did experience death, and more. He died TWICE! That is, He died physically and spiritually. While Jesus was on the cross He suffered SPIRITUAL death, the true wages of sin (Rom. 6:23). Yes, He died physically, as the result of His obedience. But it was spiritual death that He tasted for every man. His physical death was not substitutionary, for we all die physically. Every man goes through physical death for himself. However "taste" is an accurate word. Jesus experienced spiritual death for only a short time. He didn't remain spiritually dead. While we don't understand HOW He did it, we do know WHEN. His words from the cross tell us. At noon on the day of crucifixion, the sky became darkened. Then at 3 p.m., He gave that awful cry... 'My God! My God! Why hast Thou forsaken Me!' (Matt. 27:46). In that moment our sins were laid on Him and "He became sin for us..." (2 Cor. 5:21). Since sin separates men from God, the MAN Christ Jesus suffered spiritual death that instant." [All emphasis is his.] [\[10\]](#)

We will see this "two-fold principle" occur in all the aspects of the Death, Burial and Resurrection because of the physical and spiritual aspect in each phase of the redemptive work.

In our next scripture we find that a proper understanding to this verse demands more than a superficial look. Let us look carefully at the statement made in the very first Christian message:

**ACTS 2:24** *Whom God hath raised up, having loosed the pangs of death: because it was not possible that he should be holden of it.*

**NEW ENGLISH** *...setting him free from the pangs of death, because it could not be that death should keep him in its grip.*

**BARCLAY** *But God loosed the pangs of death, and brought him back to life again, for it was impossible that he should remain under death's control.*

**GOODSPEED** *But God set aside the pain of death and raised him up...*

**AMPLIFIED** *...seeing that it was not possible for Him to continue to be controlled or retained by it.*

We see three significant statements in this verse. First, the topic and context of the entire verse is the resurrection. And everything that is said after it in this verse should be regarded as part of the resurrection. This will become more important as we go on and look at the other statements.

Secondly, we must look at the statement "loosed the pangs of death." The word "pains" has an interesting definition:

**VINES EXPOSITORY DICTIONARY:** "ODIN-- a birth pang, travail-pain, is rendered "travail," metaphorically, in Matt. 24:8 and Mark 13:8, R.V. (A.V. "sorrows"); by way of comparison, in I Thess. 5:3; translated 'pains' (of death) Acts 2:24 (R.V. "pangs")." [{11}](#)

**ELLICOTT'S COMMENTARY** "The word for 'pains' is the same for 'sorrows' in Matt. 24:8, literally, travail-pains. The phrase was not uncommon in the LXX (Septuagint) version, but was apparently a mistranslation of the Hebrew for 'cords,' or 'bands,' of death. If we take the Greek word in its full meaning, the Resurrection is thought of as a new birth as from the womb of the grave." [{12}](#)

Other scholars lean toward the rendering "pains" rather than "birth-pangs" although the latter seems to be more substantiated by the classical Greek and Biblical usage. Nevertheless both renderings still bring out one very important fact. The "pains" being discussed here had to be referring to the pains of spiritual death. We understood that the context of this verse was the resurrection and it was God raising Him from the dead that loosed Him from those pains. It is impossible that this statement is referring to the pains of physical death, for Jesus, like every other person that has died before Him and after Him, was loosed from the pains of physical death the moment He died and left His body! Rigormortis does not inflict pain after death.

Finally, we see the statement "it was not possible that he should be holden of it." The description Peter gives us here of the nature of Jesus' death indicates that "birth-pangs" can be an acceptable rendering. For the travail of a woman means that it is impossible to contain the child any longer. Bishop Ellicott is helpful here:

"Because it was not possible... -- The moral impossibility was, we may say, two-fold. The work of the Son of Man could not have ended in a failure and death which would have given the lie to all that He had asserted of Himself. Its issue could not run counter to the prophecies which had implied with more or less clearness a victory over death." [{13}](#)

The last statement in our verse also indicates one more important fact. The Amplified Version said "...it was not possible for Him to continue to be controlled or retained by it." This obviously means there was a point in time that Jesus was controlled and retained by death. Since we saw that death in this passage is referring to spiritual death rather than physical, we have to conclude that in the 3 days and nights Jesus was under spiritual death's control. We will find this same reasoning applicable in our next scripture.

**ROMANS 6:9** *Knowing that Christ being raised from the dead dieth no more; death hath no more dominion over him.*

**PHILLIPS** *We can be sure that the risen Christ never dies again -- death's power to master him is finished.*

**A.S. WAY** *...death can never more claim lordship over Him.*

**SIMPLE ENGLISH** *...death does not rule over him anymore!*

The point here is, death cannot rule over Christ any longer but there was a time when death did rule over Him. Alford's commentary explains:

"...death hath dominion over him no more, as implying that Death had dominion over Christ, which we know it had not: see John 10:17,18; 2:19; Acts 2:24. But this vanishes, when we remember that our Lord, by submitting to Death, virtually, and in the act of death, surrendered

Himself into the power of Death. Death could not hold Him, and had no power over Him further than by his own sufferance: but power over Him it had, inasmuch as He died." [\[14\]](#)

It is clear that this passage speaks of a definite period of subjection to death. The key here to determining what type of death is implied is in the word translated "dominion" [KJV]. The word is used in other passages referring to the exercising of Lordship [Lk.22:25; Rom.14:9; I Tim.6:15]. Then it is also used of powers that rule over the human life: the Law [Rom.7:1], Sin [Rom.6:14] and in Romans 6:9, death. Kittel's Theological Dictionary has this to add:

"Behind the use of 'kuriuo' [Gr. for dominion] in all these different connections is a human and secular understanding which does not view man as a free lord over himself but as subject to some lordship, whether to salvation or perdition." [\[15\]](#)

*Is it correct to think of physical death as a force that exercises lordship over us? It seems that a clearer way to think of death as a master or a ruler would be in the spiritual sense. Hebrews 2:14 speaks of Christ entering into death that He might "abolish him who has the dominion of death, that is the Devil" [Fenton]; or as C.S. Lovett translates: "that He could cancel the power of the devil, who rules the realm of death." W.E. Vine points out that this word "kuriuo" is akin to "kuriotees" [Gr. for dominions] which is used of angelic authorities [Eph.1:21; Col.1:16; Jude 8]. This also includes the fallen angels, i.e., the devil.*

One cannot be dogmatic concerning this particular verse in saying that it is a direct reference to Christ's spiritual death. Nevertheless the context and language seems to indicate a deeper meaning than only physical death having dominion over our Lord.

**ROMANS 6:6** *Knowing this, that our old man is crucified with him, that the body of sin might be destroyed, that henceforth we should not serve sin.*

\*Stop printing here\*

**BARCLAY** for we are well aware that the person we were in our pre-Christian days has been crucified with him...

**WUEST** ...that our old [unregenerate] self was crucified **once for all** with Him ...

Here we see the principle of identification. Jesus identified so totally with us on the cross that in the mind of God we were the ones being crucified. Passage after passage speaks of this principle: of our union with our Lord to the point that He became us. We repeat the precious words of **Luther**:

"By the wedding ring of faith he shares in the sins, death, and pains of hell which are his bride's. As a matter of fact, he makes them his own and acts as if they were his own and as if he himself had sinned; he suffered, **died, and descended into hell** that he might overcome them all." [\[16\]](#)

God was not dealing with Christ on the cross, **He was dealing with us**. It was our sins, our evil nature, our old man. But for Christ to receive our guilt and punishment to the full, He had to become what we were. This is why the Apostle speaks of our old man being crucified with Christ. Jesus became what we were so that God could deal with Him as if He were us. We weren't personally present there on the cross for we had no existence. God was dealing with Christ as the Representative of everything we were in our unregenerate life!

If we were to sum up, in one statement, our unregenerate man, **the man we were before we became Christians**, we would have to say we were *spiritually dead*. If Christ's crucifixion was representing the death of our old man, then Jesus died spiritually in order to represent what we were in our old man.

All of the "identification" scriptures ("with Christ") indicate the spiritual aspects of the Lord's work. This is because they refer to our spiritual experience. We were "buried with Christ," i.e., our old spiritual nature was buried with Christ [Rom.6:4]; we were "made alive with Christ," i.e., our spirit received life with Christ [Col. 2:13]; we were "raised with Christ," i.e., we have been exalted in spirit to a position of sonship with Christ [Eph. 2:6]. We will examine these verses later on.

### **5. It Was the Necessary Step**

The necessity of Jesus dying spiritually was only a means to an end. For Christ to receive the full blunt of our punishment, He **had to** enter into our state and condition of being.

Before we consider this we must realize a very important aspect about the death of Christ. **Could Jesus die physically without dying spiritually first?** Jesus indicated that no one could take His life except Himself.

**JOHN 10:18** *No man taketh it (my life) from me, but I lay it down of myself....*

Jesus is called "the second Adam" [1 Cor.15:45 -47]. He was similar to Adam in two respects: 1. He was a representative man, His actions affected the entire human race; 2. He received His birth directly from God, therefore His body was perfect. We know that Jesus was not a mortal man in His earth walk. Mortality was passed down from generation to generation through the contamination of Adam's blood line. Jesus received His blood from a different source, He was fathered by God. M.R. DeHann, M.D., in his book The Chemistry of the Blood, gives us some enlightening scientific facts:

**"It is now definitely known that the blood which flows in an unborn baby's arteries and veins is not derived from the mother but is produced within the body of the fetus. Yet it is**

**only after the sperm has entered the ovum and a fetus begins to develop that blood appears. ...God provided a way whereby that man (Jesus) would have a human body derived from Adam but have blood from a separate source."** [\(17\)](#)

And we know that source was the Holy Spirit. Jesus' body was exactly like that of Adam's *before he sinned in the garden of Eden*. We must ask: what was Adam's body like? One thing is for sure, Adam would have lived forever had he not eaten from the tree of knowledge of good and evil. God told him that the day he ate from it, he would die. We know that to mean Adam would die spiritually. But spiritual death also meant that Adam was excluded from eating from the tree of Life and thus he would not live forever in his body [Gen. 3:22]. Therefore we can say that mortality in Adam's case was a direct result of his spiritual death. This was not the case in respect to Adam's offspring; they died physically because mortality was passed down through the blood stream; their bodies came directly from his mortal body, therefore they were mortal. This dilemma was true of every man, except Jesus who was the second Adam. He had a sinless, perfect body, a body that would live forever. But the events of the Cross changed everything. We see Jesus being made the sin of the world, and with sin, receiving our nature, which was spiritual death. Then, and only then, could Jesus be considered mortal. Then, and only then, could Jesus die physically.

We will present in the following chapter that Jesus went to Hell and suffered. I would not expect anyone to accept that statement unless it was substantiated by the Scripture. Nevertheless, for the sake of the point under discussion, let us consider what would precede such an experience.

The Hebrew word for Hell is "Sheol;" it meant the place of departed spirits. Most commentators agree that the Greek word "Hades" is identical. (We will dispute this in the next chapter.) Whether they are the same or not is not the point here; what is important is that this is where the dead went. Even the righteous dead (those who believed in and lived for God) were sent to a place called Abraham's Bosom, which was located some place near Hell [Luke 16:19-30]. We must ask the question: why did the dead go to the underworld rather than to heaven? This is easily answered in the case of the wicked, they went to Hell because of their sins and because they were spiritually dead. But what of the righteous dead? The answer is the same: because of their sins and because they were spiritually dead. The only difference was they sought to serve God to the best of their ability and they placed faith in God to eventually send a Redeemer to forgive their sins. They could not go to heaven **because they were spiritually dead** and God couldn't give them spiritual life until their sins had been dealt with.

Now if Jesus made His grave with the wicked in His death [Is. 53:9], then He would have gone to the place of suffering where the wicked dead go. And for Jesus to suffer in that place he would have to die spiritually first. To think that Jesus could go to the place of suffering to endure our punishment without entering our spiritual condition is like saying we can go to heaven without entering His spiritual condition (alive unto God). Jesus had to die spiritually in order to bear the full brunt of our guilt. And because that meant we must go to Hell, it meant Christ also must go to Hell and become answerable for our sins. We will attempt to substantiate this position in the next chapter and if you are convinced that there is enough scriptural evidence to say that Jesus suffered in Hell, the only conclusion possible is that Jesus died spiritually first.

## **6. Conclusion:**

The evidence in this chapter is still not the final picture. The facts contained in the two-fold resurrection will also reveal the spiritual death of Jesus. **Statements as "made alive in spirit," "first-born from the dead," etc., refer to the spiritual impartation of Life to our Lord in the heart of the earth.** Therefore we will be referring back to this topic though we are leaving the chapter. This is necessary to maintain the chronological flow of the 3 days and nights.

When we take any of the many evidences that we have presented here alone one might have room to speculate. But when we add them all up, there seems to be overwhelming evidence that Jesus did, in fact, die spiritually.

## **JESUS SUFFERED IN HELL**

"He descended into hell;" proclaims the Apostles' Creed, which is recited by millions on Sundays all over the world in the main-line denominational churches. Probably, most do not understand the implication of such a statement. Nevertheless it is uttered time and time again. Let us ask the Holy Spirit to open the eyes of our hearts and reveal the depths to which our precious Redeemer went to bring us such a glorious salvation!

Up until now we have been laying a foundation for the truth we are about to examine. We have seen scriptural evidence on three main pillars that lead to this point. **1. Jesus was mankind's total sin substitute; He took our place on the cross so that He could bear our guilt and our punishment.** This can only mean that Jesus went into the place of the damned and suffered our penalty for sin. **2. Jesus was made to be our sin; He did not just carry our sins, God caused Him to become our sin. This also meant that Jesus bore the consequences of our sins.** He became an accursed thing, forsaken of God and ultimately went to hell, the place where sinners go. **3. Jesus died in spirit; He became what we were in our old man. He took upon Himself not only our sins but also the sinner. Therefore He made His grave with the wicked in His "deaths."** Pastor Leon Stump, a noted Bible teacher on this very topic, clearly states the point:

"The evidence that Jesus went to hell and suffered the penalty our sins deserved after He died physically is three-fold. **First**, it is the logical extension of the fact that Christ was our substitute. Since He was taking our place, suffering in our stead, the logical extension of this fact would be that He went where we should have gone as sinners. And if He didn't, we may wonder how God could say the penalty for sin has been paid, because that penalty was more than physical death -- it was hell. And if the penalty has not been paid, we may wonder how God can really make the sinner righteous. ...**Secondly**, Christ's going to Hell is the logical extension of His actually being made sin for us and dying spiritually. If He became what we were in spirit, He would have gone where we would have gone. And if He didn't become what we were, we may wonder how we have been freed from what we were (not just forgiven of what we did), and how Paul could say our 'old man was crucified with Him.' [Romans 6:6]. Thirdly, there is definite scriptural evidence that Christ went to Hell." [\(1\)](#)

Pastor Stump then proceeds to present the scriptural evidence which we are about to do.

### **1. The Heart of the Earth**

It is always a good idea, when you begin any study, to see what Jesus Himself has to say about it. If anyone would know what the 3 days and nights were like it would be Jesus. After the Resurrection, Jesus appeared to two of His disciples on the road to Emmaus and had some enlightening things to say to them.

**LUKE 24:25-27** *Then he said unto them, O fools, and slow of heart to believe all that the prophets have spoken: **Ought not Christ to have suffered these things**, and to enter into his glory? And beginning at Moses and all the prophets, he expounded unto them in all the scriptures the things concerning himself.*

This being the case, we should expect to find some information in the Old Testament concerning the suffering of Christ. Jesus gave us more help in Matthew and actually pointed the way.

**MATTHEW 12:40** *For as Jonas was three days and three nights in the whale's belly; so shall the Son of man be three days and three nights in the heart of the earth.*

**GOOD NEWS** *In the same way that Jonah spent three days and nights in the belly of the big fish, so will the Son of Man spend three days and three nights in the depths of the earth.*

**NEW ENGLISH** *...in the bowels of the earth.*

Bishop Ellicott's commentary gives insight into the phrase "the heart of the earth":

"...that 'the heart of the earth,' standing parallel as it does to 'the heart of the seas,' **the 'belly of hell'** -- i.e., Sheol and Hades -- in Jonah 2:2,3, means more than the rock-hewn sepulchre, and implies the descent into Hades, the world of the dead, which was popularly believed to be far below the surface of the earth; that the parable has left its mark on Christian art, partly in the constant use of Jonah as a type of our Lord's resurrection, and partly in that of the jaws of the great whale-like monster as the symbol of Hades." [\[2\]](#)

We cannot discount what the Lord Jesus was saying about His stay in the heart of the earth. He likened His experience to Jonah's in the words "in the same way" [Good News]. I don't imagine anyone could say that 3 days in the belly of a whale would be a comforting experience. Imagine if you can, the stomach acids, the lack of oxygen, the constant tossing about, the cramped area, and one could go on and on about the discomforts.

Even deeper than the natural illustration that Jesus was giving us, was the prophetic interpretation of Jonah's experience. Jonah was a prophet. We see many examples in the Old Testament where a prophet would experience hardships and articulate what he was going through. Then the Spirit of God would come upon him and he would prophesy of the sufferings Christ was to endure. I Peter 1:10-11 brings this point out: "Searching what, or what manner of time the Spirit of Christ which was in them did signify, when it testified beforehand the sufferings of Christ..." (eg. Psalm 22). Thus Jesus refers us to Jonah and as we look at what happened to him we can see the prophetic picture of Christ in hell.

**JONAH 2:1-2** *Then Jonah prayed unto the Lord his God out of the fish's belly, and said, I cried by reason of mine affliction unto the Lord, and he heard me; out of the belly of hell cried I, and thou heardest my voice.*

**REVISED BERKELEY** *...I called to the Lord out of my anguish, and He answered me. From the innermost part of Sheol I cried for help...*

**BYINGTON** *...out of the heart of the realm of death I shouted...*

**NEW AMERICAN** *...From the midst of the nether world I cried for help...*

**BASIC ENGLISH** *...out of the deepest underworld I sent up a cry...*

It is apparent that Jonah was speaking of "sheol." Scofield gives us this definition:

"Scripture reveals sheol as a place of sorrow (2 Sam.22:6; Psa.18:5; 116:3), into which the wicked are turned (Psa.9:17), and where they are fully conscious (Isa.14:9-17; Ez.32:21; see, especially, Jon. 2:2; what the belly of the great fish was to Jonah that sheol is to those who are therein). The sheol of the O.T. and hades of the N.T. ...are identical." [\[3\]](#)

It is obvious that Jonah did not go to hell although his experience was similar. Was it not the Spirit of Christ forshadowing the descent into hell?

**JONAH 2:3** *For thou hadst cast me into the deep, in the midst of the seas; and the floods compassed me about: all thy billows and thy waves passed over me.*

**BYINGTON** *And you threw me in the ooze in ocean's abyss...*

**DUFF** *Thou threwest me into the abyss, in the heart of the sea...*

These translators saw fit to translate "the deep" as "the abyss." We will encounter this word in Psalm 88 and in Romans 10, both of which refer directly to Christ's sufferings.

**JONAH 2:4** *Then I said, I am cast out of thy sight; yet I will look again toward thy holy temple.*

**NEW AMERICAN STANDARD** *"So I said, 'I have been expelled from Thy sight....'"*

**LIVING** *Then I said, "O Lord, you have rejected me and cast me away...."*

**JONAH 2:5** *The waters compassed me about, even to the soul; the depth closed me round about, the weeds were wrapped about my head.*

**JONAH 2:6** *I went down to the bottoms of the mountains; the earth with her bars was about me for ever: yet hast thou brought up my life from corruption, O Lord my God.*

**NEW AMERICAN** *Down I went to the roots of the mountains; the bars of the nether world were closing behind me forever, But you brought up my life from the pit, O Lord, my God.*

**DUFF** *Where the streams all end I sank down, into the land that is closed fast with bolts; Then, O Yahweh, thou dreuest out my life from the pit.*

**NEW ENGLISH** *in the troughs of the mountains, I was sinking into a world whose bars would hold me fast for ever. But thou didst bring me up alive from the pit, O Lord my God.*

The language of this passage is absolutely striking when we remember that Jesus brought us here from Matthew 12:40: "The bars of the nether world," "the land closed fast with bolts," "a world whose bars would hold me fast for ever."

Let us look at the definition of our King James word "corruption:"

**WILSON'S O.T. WORD STUDIES** *"corruption; a pit; a pitfall, to entrap wild beasts." [14](#)*

**STRONG'S CONCORDANCE** *"a pit (especially as a trap); figuratively destruction: corruption, destruction, ditch, grave, **pit**." [15](#)*

Again we must emphasize that Jonah was in the belly of a great fish; **he wasn't in the place of eternal incarceration. The only conclusion possible is that this was the Spirit of Christ revealing the death and resurrection of our Lord. For truly God did bring up Christ's "life from the pit!"**

The language here in Jonah is not the only place where we hear such a cry of desperation. It leads us to Psalm 88 where we see some very similar language being used to describe the

intense suffering of a lost man. A.F. Kirkpatrick, D.D. in his work on the Psalms, indicates that this passage has been referred by others before us to Christ:

"The Psalm is appointed as a Proper Psalm for Good Friday, doubtless because the Ancient Fathers interpreted it, like **Ps. 22**, as the utterance of the suffering Christ." [\[6\]](#)

It is clear that this Psalm uses the language of a man in sheol and it is plainly the saddest Psalm in the entire Psalter.

**PSALM 88:1-3** *O Lord God of my salvation, I have cried day and night before thee: Let my prayer come before thee: incline thine ear unto my cry; For my soul is full of troubles: and my life draweth nigh unto the grave.*

**AMPLIFIED** *...For I am full of troubles, and **my life draws near to (Sheol) the place of the dead.***

**NEW AMERICAN** *...For my soul is surfeited with troubles and my life draws near to the netherworld.*

**BYINGTON** *...Because my soul has its fill of evils...*

This passage could easily be speaking of Christ being made sin and preparing to enter into the spiritual sufferings awaiting Him. Notice above the word "sheol."

**PSALM 88:4** *I am counted with them that go down into the pit: I am as a man that hath no strength:*

The word for "pit" is also translated in other places in the O.T. as "**dungeon**." Notice also "I am counted **with** them that go down" reminds us of Isaiah 53:12 "...and he was numbered with the transgressors."

**PSALM 88:5** *Free among the dead, like the slain that lie in the grave, whom thou rememberest no more: and they are cut off from thy hand.*

**GOOD NEWS** *I am abandoned among the dead; I am like the slain lying in their graves, those you have forgotten completely, who are beyond your help.*

**PSALM 88:14** *Lord, why castest thou off my soul? why hidest thou thy face from me?*

Compare these statements with Matthew 27:46: "My God, My God, why hast thou forsaken me?"

**PSALM 88:6** *Thou hast laid me in the lowest pit, in darkness in the deeps.*

**GOOD NEWS** *You have thrown me into the depths of the tomb, into the darkest and deepest pit.*

**REVISED BERKELEY** *Thou hast put me in the pit of the lowest, in dark places, in deep regions.*

**BYINGTON** *You have laid me in the bottom of the Pit, in the depths of darkness and abysses of ooze.*

Here we see the same Hebrew word "pit," but now it is accompanied with the adjectives: "lowest" or "deepest" pit. Many believe that when Jesus went into hell, He only went as far as Abraham's Bosom (Luke 16; we will discuss this perspective later). But if He went into the deepest and lowest pit, then Jesus went to the place of torment where sinners go. The prayer in this Psalm is directed toward God and it was God who placed our sin and judgment on Him instead of on us.

**PSALM 88:7** *Thy wrath lieth hard upon me, and thou hast afflicted me with all thy waves. Selah.*

**KNOX** *heavily thy anger weighs down on me, and thou dost overwhelm me with its full flood.*

**LIVING** *Your wrath lies heavy on me; wave after wave engulfs me.*

**PSALM 88:16-17** *Thy fierce wrath goeth over me: thy terrors have cut me off. They came round about me daily like water; they compassed me about together.*

**BYINGTON** *Your blasts of anger have swept over me, your overwhelmings have annihilated me, they have swept around me like water all day, united to hem me in.*

The awful reality of this entire ordeal was not our sin nor Him sharing our nature, but God pouring out His full wrath and fury upon His beloved Son. **Billheimer** comments on this passage:

"The agonies which Christ endured in that dark prison are believed to be described in Psalm 88: ...No finite mind can ever comprehend the depth of anguish He endured during that seeming eternity in the nether abyss. It is probably best described in the words of the prophet, "He hath poured out his soul unto death" (Isa. 53:12). He suffered in our stead, until, in the mind of God, **the claims of eternal justice were fully met**, as confirmed in Isaiah 53:11: "He shall see of the travail of his soul, and shall be satisfied." ... Eternal judgment against sin could not be satisfied by merely turning His Son over to the insufferable tortures of Satan. **Justice required that the full fury of the Father's own wrath against the cumulative sin of the human race be poured out upon Him** unto the uttermost without stint or reservation -- see again Psalm 88." [\(7\)](#)

Psalm 88 is probably the most graphic picture we have of what it would be like to suffer judgment at the hands of God. Whether or not this passage is specifically speaking of Christ does not matter, for as we have seen and will continue to see, Jesus suffered the penalty that was our due. Psalm 88 is a perfect picture of what that penalty encompassed.

## **2. Jesus In Hades**

It has always been remarkable to me that the very first Christian message contained several references to Christ in hell. In our previous chapter we had a detailed look at Acts 2:24. We will look at it briefly here for the sake of context.

**ACTS 2:24** *Whom God hath raised up, having loosed the pains of death: because it was not possible that he should be holden of it.*

As we saw in the last chapter these pains **were not** physical death, for pain ceases as soon as one leaves his body. The pains spoken of here **are spiritual**. Notice also that Jesus wasn't loosed from those pains until the resurrection, which indicates that Christ was undergoing intense spiritual suffering until He was resurrected. This is the context of the entire passage. Peter is preaching the resurrection (proven in vs. 32). He is declaring his witness of this event. It is important to understand this when examining verses 24, 27, and 31. Peter regresses from the resurrection in these verses only to reveal what Christ was raised from.

**ACTS 2:27** *Because thou wilt not leave my soul in hell, neither wilt thou suffer thine Holy One to see corruption.*

**AMPLIFIED** *For You will not abandon My soul, leaving it helpless **in Hades** [the state of departed spirits], nor let your Holy One know decay or see destruction [of the body after death].*

The word "leave" here is significant. It is the Greek word "enkatalipo" which means -- to leave behind, **abandon**, and **forsake**. It is used in Matthew 27:46; "My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?" One could turn this scripture around to say that Christ didn't go to the place where the forsaken and abandoned go, because it says that God didn't leave Him there. But Peter in verse 31 gives us his personal commentary, which reveals in what context we should interpret verse 27.

**ACTS 2:31** *He seeing this before, spake of the resurrection of Christ, that his soul was not left in hell, neither his flesh did see corruption.*

Peter tells us that when Christ was raised from the dead He was not forsaken or abandoned. We can carry this thought to the physical death of Christ also. His body was not going to see destruction or decay. But certainly Christ's body began to undergo the normal process of decay while His body was dead. **If it did not then we could question if Christ really died.** Jesus' body was decaying, but God did not permit it to continue; and Jesus was abandoned in hell, but God did not permit that to continue either.

The word "hades" in our passage deserves some very careful study. Most Bible scholars have no problem with Jesus going into hades; this is because they include in their definition of hades the place where both the righteous and unrighteous dead went before the resurrection. Thus they teach that Christ went into Abraham's Bosom (the place of the righteous dead). We intend to show that this is not the biblical usage of the word, but rather hades refers only to the place where the unrighteous go.

There are 3 reasons why scholars believe hades includes the place of the righteous, as well as the unrighteous dead.

**1. Most scholars equate hades to be identical with sheol** (see Scofield's definition under Jonah 2:2). Peter also translates sheol [Psalm 16] into hades [Acts 2:27]. Nevertheless, we must be careful not to make hades mean all that is included in sheol. The definition of sheol includes not only the place of the unrighteous dead but also the righteous dead [Job 14:13; 17:13], and the physical grave [I Kings 2:6; Eccl. 9:10]. We will see that hades can never mean the physical grave by the way it is used in the New Testament. We should also be careful not to include the place of the righteous dead in hades just because sheol does. hades is not a perfect translation of sheol.

**2. Some include the righteous dead because of the literal definition of hades.** Vine's: "It has been thought by some that the word etymologically meant 'the unseen' (from a, negative, and eido, to see), but this derivation is questionable; a more probable derivation is from hado, signifying 'all-receiving'." If we were to take the first definition, "the unseen," we could not include everything in the unseen realm for this would also include heaven. We would still have to limit hades to a specific place or region determined by how the N.T. uses it. The second rendering, "all-receiving," must also be clarified because not everything and everyone goes into hell; angels don't go to hell. Therefore we have to decide what would be included in "all-receiving ." Could it be the place that receives only the unrighteous dead?

**3. The most common reason is a misinterpretation of Luke 23:43.** This is where the King James version renders Christ's response to the repentant thief beside Him: "Today shalt thou be

with me in paradise." (We will do an exegesis on this verse in the section called "Objections.") The most common interpretation of this verse is that Jesus was going to meet with the thief in paradise that very day after they died on their crosses. They equate paradise to mean Abraham's Bosom. No informed scholar would doubt the authentic declaration of Acts 2, that Jesus **descended into hades**. It is therefore necessary that they reconcile the belief that Jesus went to paradise (Abraham's Bosom in their thinking) with the fact that Jesus went into hades. They do this by including the abode of the righteous dead within the parameters of hades. It is commonly taught that hades includes both the abode of the unrighteous dead and the righteous dead before the resurrection. *Nevertheless, we will see later that Luke 23:43 does not support this perspective.*

The purest and most direct way in which we can understand the meaning of any given word, is to see exactly how it is used in all parts of the Bible. So let us look at the list of the 9 other references where the word hades appears in the New Testament (the other 2 references are Acts 2:27 and 31):

**Matthew 11:23** *And thou, Capernaum, which art exalted unto heaven, shalt be brought down to hell...*

**Matthew 16:18** *...I will build my church; and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it.*

**Luke 10:15** *And thou, Capernaum, which art exalted to heaven, shalt be thrust down to hell.*

**Luke 16:23** *And in hell he lifted up his eyes, being in torments...*

**I Corinthians 15:55** *O death, where is thy sting? O grave where is thy victory. (margin: hell)*

**Revelation 1:18** *...I am alive for evermore, Amen; and have the keys of hell and death.*

**Revelation 6:8** *And I looked, and behold a pale horse: and his name that sat on him was Death, and Hell followed with him.*

**Revelation 20:13-14** *...and death and hell delivered up the dead which were in them: and they were judged every man according to their works. And death and hell were cast into the lake of fire. This is the second death.*

Notice that the word in all nine references **never means a place of comfort, rather hades refers to a place of judgment and torment or to an enemy of Christ**. Even if hades is used by the secular writers of that day we cannot let the ancient literature determine its fullest meaning. *We must derive our definition from the biblical context*; and we find that in all eleven passages in the New Testament, hades refers to the abode of the unrighteous dead, and nothing else.

One final point about hades: Luke 16:19-31 is probably the most revealing passage in the Bible about the state of the dead before the resurrection of Christ. We can glean several facts from this passage. 1. *There is a great gulf between hades and Abraham's Bosom and there is no passage between the two places [vs.26].* 2. *The angels of God had to carry Lazarus to Abraham's Bosom but the rich man found himself in hades immediately after death [vs.22-23].* 3. *Abraham's Bosom is a place of **comfort**; hades is a place of torment [vs.23, 25].* 4. *There is no reason whatsoever why we would consider Abraham's Bosom, and hades to be incorporated as one place.* In fact, if we came to this passage without any preconceived ideas, we would assume that they are two completely different places with two distinct names: Abraham's Bosom and hades.

We must learn to derive our understanding of New Testament words from the New Testament. Too often we bring our preconcieved ideas and definitions to bear upon a particular word and therefore make the Scriptures say more or less than is intended. We must also be careful that we don't try to make our doctrines and ideas fit the Scriptures, but rather we should let the Scriptures create our doctrines and ideas. By a thorough study of our word hades we can come to only one conclusion: hades is always referred to as the abode of the unrighteous dead and is a place of extreme suffering and torment. It is this place that Peter, in the first Christian message, declared Jesus went into after He died, and was loosed from in the resurrection.

### **3. The Two-fold Burial**

One thing we neglected to look at in our last section was the two-fold principle. Let's look at our scripture one more time:

**ACTS 2:31** *He seeing this before spake of the resurrection of Christ, that his soul was not left **in hell**, neither his flesh did see corruption.*

Christ's spirit and soul went into hell while His body stayed in the tomb of Joseph of Arimathaea.

**ISAIAH 53:9** *And He made His grave with the wicked, and with the rich in his death(s); because he had done no violence, neither was any deceit in his mouth.*

We would refer you to the exposition of this verse in the last chapter. We saw that Joseph of Arimathaea was a good and just man. We concluded that this fulfilled only half of the prophecy concerning our Lord. The other aspect of His grave was when Christ was buried in the heart of the earth and suffered for our sins. We can see the two-fold burial in the statement made by the great reformer, John Calvin, as he speaks of Christ's burial:

"...that invisible and **incomprehensible judgment** which he underwent at the bar of God; that we might know that not only was the body of Christ given up as the price of our redemption, but that there was another greater and more excellent price -- namely, that He endured in His soul the **dreadful torments** of a condemned man." [\[8\]](#)

### **4. Jesus In the Abyss**

The passage we are going to examine is rarely used, yet it is probably the most striking scripture on this topic. It actually declares that Jesus came up from the abyss:

**ROMANS 10:6-7** *But the righteousness which is of faith speaketh on this wise, Say not in thine heart, Who shall ascend into heaven? (that is to bring Christ down from above:) Or, Who shall descend into the deep? (that is, to **bring up Christ again from the dead.**)*

**NEW AMERICAN STANDARD** *...who shall descend **into the abyss?**...*

**JERUSALEM** *...who will go down to the underworld?*

**F.F. BRUCE** *...who will go down to the nethermost deep?*

As you can see the word "deep" is a weak translation of the Greek word "abussos." Let's look at some definitions:

**VINE'S EXPOSITORY DICTIONARY** "It describes an immeasurable depth, the underworld, the lower regions, the abyss of Sheol. In Rom. 10:7; quoted from Duet. 30:13, the abyss (the abode

of the lost dead), is substituted for the sea (the change in the quotation is due to the facts of the Death and Resurrection of Christ); the A.V. has "deep" here and in Luke 8:31; the reference is to the lower regions as the abode of demons, out of which they can be loosed Rev. 11:7, 17:18; it is found seven times in the Apocalypse, 9:1,2,11; 11:7; 17:8; 20:1,3; in 9:1,2 the R.V. has 'the pit of the abyss.' " [\[9\]](#)

**WUEST** "The word 'deep' is in the Greek text *abussos*, from which we get our word 'abyss' The Greek word means ' , unbounded,' and is here used of that portion of the unseen world that is the common abode of the dead. It is called Hades (Hell, A.V. Luke 16:23). Robertson suggests that Paul's thought was as follows. It is not necessary to bring Christ down from Heaven nor up from the regions of the dead, since the Incarnation and the Resurrection are facts." [\[10\]](#)

W.E. Vine gives us the 9 references of "abyss." In Luke 8:31 we have the passage where Jesus cast the demons out of the mad man of Gadara. The demons begged the Lord that He cast them **not into "the deep."** The word for "deep" here is "abussos." This place is so terrible that even demons don't want to go there. All the other references are in the book of Revelation. In chapter nine we see a picture of the most hideous creatures coming forth from the " pit" ("abussos," the margin has "shaft of the abyss") and the king over this place is called "Abaddon" in the Hebrew or "Apollyon" in the Greek which means "the destroyer." (It is interesting to note that the word "Abaddon" is found in Psalm 88:11.) In Revelation 11:7, the abyss is the place up from which the beast comes. In Revelation 20:1,3, we see that the devil is thrown into the abyss for the 1000 years of the millennium.

*It is clear that the abyss is not a place of comfort, nor does there seem to be a place within the abyss itself where God would send the righteous dead.* This is proven in Luke 8:31 where the demons desperately pleaded with Jesus that He not send them to the abyss. We must remember this was before the resurrection, which means that Abraham's Bosom was still a part of sheol. The abyss was then, and still is today, the most horrible place of torment. It is the prison within the prison. It is from this place, the Apostle Paul tells us, that Jesus was resurrected. It was here that He suffered the "pains of death" [Acts 2:24]. **Billheimer** speaks of the extremity to which Christ went to bear our punishment:

**"His spirit must not only descend into hell, but into the lowest hell. The extreme penalty had to be paid. He must 'taste death for every man' (Heb. 2:9). There could be no adequate substitution unless Christ actually paid, once and for all, the eternal consequences of the aggregate sin of the world. That means that He endured all that combined humanity could suffer. T.H. Nelson** said, 'If Christ in spirit did not thus 'descend into hell,' then we have no legal ground of assurance that we may escape that horrid prison.' The Father turned Him over, not only to the agony and death of Calvary, but to the satanic tortures of His pure spirit as part of the just desert of the sin of all the race. As long as Christ was 'the essence of sin,' He was at Satan's mercy in that place of torment where all finally impenitent sinners are imprisoned upon leaving this life (Luke 16:19-31), which seems to be the headquarters from which Satan operates (Rev. 9:1,2,11)." [\[11\]](#) [Many more than the WOF believe this...this is traditional *orthodoxy*]

**Martin Luther** also speaks of this horrible torment in the abyss:

"...in His tender innocent heart He had to feel God's wrath and judgment against sin, to taste for us **eternal death and damnation**, and in a word *to suffer everything which a condemned sinner has merited and must suffer eternally.* ... Look at Christ, who for thy sake has gone to hell and been abandoned by God as one damned forever." [\[12\]](#)

**Billy Graham** also speaks of Christ's experience in hell as torment rather than comfort:

"How it was accomplished in the depth of darkness man will never know. I know only one thing, He bore my sins in His body upon the tree. He stood where I should have stood. The pains of hell that were my portion were heaped on Him, and I am able to go to heaven and merit that which is not my own, but is His every right." [\[13\]](#)

We have seen from scripture after scripture that Christ endured more in the 3 days and nights than mere comfort and a long sojourn in the heart of the earth. Instead we have seen the intense spiritual torment in hades and even deeper, the abyss of hades. Jesus underwent what awaited us in our sinful condition. He endured what sinners will endure if they fail to hear and receive the gospel. It is only because He did this that we will never have to endure the torment. I am sorry that Christ had to do what He did, but I will be eternally grateful that He did die and go to hell in my place!

## 5. The Objections

*Any doctrine that has power to make the Christian live a better life in Christ will be controversial with someone, and the truth that Jesus went to hell to suffer in our place is no exception.* Controversy comes from varying beliefs of the Scriptures; all doctrines will stand or fall by how they pass the test of the other perspectives and interpretations of the Word. If we are honest with the Word of God we will run to these passages that seem to say something different than what we believe. As one fellow put it, "Sometimes our best friends are those who oppose us." As we study the passages in question, one of two things will happen: our doctrine will not be able to be fully vindicated, and if we are to go on with a broader perspective of the scripture we must change or modify our belief; or, through a closer look at the passages we will find that they are not saying what our opposition is declaring them to say, or they are not relevant to the doctrine in question. These passages will therefore strengthen our faith in the doctrine we are questioning. We believe the latter to be the case concerning our teaching of Christ in hell.

One thing we've found with some who oppose this perspective of Christ's death **is their lack of scriptural evidence for their opposition**. They base most of their argument on sentiment, rather than scripture. They say, "*How could you say such a horrible thing as Jesus died spiritually and went to hell?*" They declare it is a hideous doctrine that robs Christ of His glory and deity and thus are robbing redemption of its power. **Some have gone as far as to declare those who preach such things are heretics who deserve to be branded as such! Nevertheless, we must take the Scriptures as our guide, even if it seems to be declaring something very contrary to our perspective**. At least we should give room to those with other viewpoints when they are using the Scriptures to arrive at their conclusions. As one minister said, while trying to come to a conclusion on this teaching, "I'll say one thing, those who are opposed to this teaching **do so mostly on an emotional basis rather than a scriptural one.**" Again, not all ministers do so on this basis. Probably most are sincere in their approach to the Word and honestly feel that the Scriptures teach otherwise. It is to these teachable men of God that we are writing.

There are two perspectives which are worth considering. (There are others, but space would not permit us to address every viewpoint.) The first is that Jesus went directly to heaven after He died on the cross. The second is that Jesus went as a victor into Abraham's Bosom to declare His triumph.

Those who take the view that Jesus returned to heaven after His death cite the following scripture:

**LUKE 23:46** *And when Jesus had cried with a loud voice, he said, Father, into thy hands I commend my spirit: and having said thus, he gave up the ghost.*

It is important that we don't make the passage say more than what is intended. There is no mention of heaven and Jesus is obviously in a desperate state. Notice that He shouted with a loud voice. It is also important to understand everything that took place prior to this cry.

We find help as we examine the other Gospel accounts of this scenario. As we compare this passage to the others, we find that Luke is the only book that doesn't include "My God, why hast thou forsaken me?" Yet in the other passages, this is the statement that comes just before Jesus "cried again with a loud voice and yielded up his spirit" [Matt.27:50]. It is clear that this loud cry was His supplication in Luke (quoted above). **Therefore it is seen as a cry of desperation rather than a prayer. John's Gospel records something entirely different for the Master's last words:** "It is finished: and he bowed his head, and gave up his spirit" [John 19:30]. Many have interpreted this statement as meaning redemption was finished; others say Christ was declaring the Old Covenant was finished. But when we compare it with the other Gospels, we see it is located in the same place as "Jesus cried with a loud voice, and yielded up his spirit" and "into thy hands I commend my spirit: and having said thus he gave up the ghost." This is an occurrence of different wording in the different Gospels for the same statement. It is not uncommon for different Gospel writers to say the same thing, but with different words. It is not necessarily the exact words used by Jesus that are important, but rather the meaning behind the words. It is my opinion that Jesus was saying, "My life is finished, I yield up my spirit."

One thing is for sure, the passage is not clear as to exactly what is being said, therefore, we should be careful what conclusions we arrive at. It is important that we are not dogmatic with unclear passages.

As far as Jesus going directly to heaven after He died, **we have definite evidence that this could not be so. Jesus was very clear when He spoke to Mary immediately after He returned into His body:**

**JOHN 20:17** *Jesus saith to her, **Touch Me not; for I have not yet ascended unto the Father:** but go unto my brethren, and say to them, I ascend unto my Father and your Father, and my God and your God.*

Jesus had yet to ascend into heaven and, as we have seen clearly in previous passages, our Lord descended into the abyss of hell.

**EPHESIANS 4:9-10** *(Now that he ascended, what is it but that **he also descended first into the lower parts of the earth?** He that descended is the same also that ascended up far above all heavens, that he might fill all things.)*

The lower parts of the earth is a direct reference to sheol [Ps.63:9; Is.44:23]. It is clear that Jesus went to hell **before** He went to heaven!

Our second opposing viewpoint also comes from the book of Luke. It is probably the most commonly accepted position on our Lord's sojourn in the heart of the earth. At least with this perspective people are trying to be honest with the other references to our Lord in hell. The doctrine basically teaches that our Lord won the victory on the cross through His physical death; He then descended into "paradise" (Abraham's Bosom) and preached to the spirits in prison and imparted to them the work of redemption; Jesus then took from Satan the keys of hell and death. The passage of scripture, which this teaching originates from, needs to be carefully studied:

**LUKE 23:39-43** *And one of the malefactors which were hanged railed on him, saying, If thou be Christ, save thyself and us. But the other answering rebuked him, saying, Dost not thou fear God, seeing thou art in the same condemnation? And we indeed justly: for we receive the due reward of our deeds: but this man hath done nothing amiss. And he said unto Jesus, Lord, remember me*

*when thou comest into thy kingdom. And Jesus said unto him, Verily I say unto thee, To day shalt thou be with me in paradise.*

At first glance, it is obvious why most people have come to the conclusion that Jesus went to Abraham's Bosom. We know Jesus died that very day and it seems as though Jesus promised to meet this thief in the place called paradise. We know from other passages that Jesus went to hades, therefore one could conclude (without looking deeper) that Christ went to Abraham's Bosom, because this is where the Old Testament saints were comforted. This would have to be paradise; no other place in hades would qualify.

There are three reasons why we can question this interpretation of Luke 23:43. The first is our previous study of hades which revealed that the word hades included only suffering within its parameters and the Scriptures are clear that Christ went to hades. There are also other passages that indicate Jesus suffered in the abyss of hades [Matt.12:40; Rom.10:7]. If this is true, then Jesus did not go to the place of comfort that very day.

The second reason is the sentence structure and punctuation of verse 43. **The entire meaning of Jesus' words is determined by where the translators saw fit to put the comma, as there was none in the original Greek. As we can see, most translations put the comma before the word "Today" but if they were to put it after, we would have a completely different statement from our Lord: "Verily I say unto thee today, you shall be with me in paradise." As you can see it is extremely important to know where to place the punctuation.** Bullinger's Critical Lexicon has helpful evidence to prove that the comma **is in the wrong place in most of our versions:**

" 'Semeron' (the Greek word for 'today') when it comes after a verb, belongs to that verb, unless it is separated from it and thrown into the next clause by the presence of 'oti' (the Greek word for 'that')." [\[14\]](#)

In other words, when there are two verbs in a sentence and the word "semeron" (today) is found between the verbs, the presence of "oti" determines that the word "semeron" **belongs to the second verb; therefore, when it is translated, we should put the comma before "semeron."** If "oti" is not present, then we should put the comma after "semeron." Here are some examples of verses without the presence of "oti," which means that "semeron" (today) belongs to the verb that it follows:

**Matthew 21:28** *...Son, go work today in my vineyard.*

**Luke 22:34** *...the cock shall not crow this day, before that thou shalt thrice deny that thou knowest me.*

**Matthew 16:3** *...It will be foul weather today: for the sky is red and lowering....*

Here are some examples of sentences with "oti" in them:

**Luke 19:9** *And Jesus said unto him, (oti) This day is salvation come...*

**Luke 4:21** *And he began to say unto them, (oti) this day is this scripture fulfilled...*

**Mark 14:30** *... Verily I say unto thee, That this day, even in this night, before the cock crows twice, thou shalt deny me thrice.*

In our verse, Luke 23:43, we have the first situation, for the word "oti" **is not used**. So the comma should follow the word "today" because it belongs to the first verb "say" rather than the second, "be with." The Emphasized Bible, translated by **J.B. Rotherham**, who specializes in punctuation and word emphasis, gives us this translation:

**ROTHERHAM** *And he said unto him -- Verily I say unto thee this day: with me shalt thou be in Paradise.*

When we place the comma after "today," we see that Jesus was not telling the thief that He was going to see him that day, but rather Jesus was emphasizing His statement. One might ask, "Why would Jesus say, 'I tell you today'? It seems that He would be wasting His words." This is a good question. It would be useless to apply this lengthy argument if the translation didn't make sense in its context. We need to examine the question put to our Lord. The thief said, "Lord, remember me when thou comest into thy kingdom." Notice that he was looking for a future promise: "When you get there don't forget me." He was a thief who deserved to be punished; he admitted this himself. Therefore, Jesus gave to him a promise that he could immediately put faith in, rather than giving him something for future hope. Pastor Leon Stump paraphrases the verse this way:

"I'll do more than remember you at some future time; I give you my word this very day that you will be with me in my kingdom." [\(15\)](#)

The third reason why we can question the Abraham's Bosom interpretation is found in the word "paradise." The basic meaning of this word "paradise" is "a park" [Strong's]. Again we have a situation where we must determine what is meant by the word from the different biblical contexts where it is used. "Paradise" is used three times in the entire Bible: here in Luke, and in the following two passages:

**II CORINTHIANS 12:2,4** *I knew a man in Christ ...such an one caught up to the third heaven. ...How that he was caught up into paradise, and heard unspeakable words, which it is not lawful for a man to utter.*

**REVELATION 2:7** *He that hath an ear, let him hear what the Spirit saith unto the churches; To him that overcometh will I give to eat of the tree of life, which is in the midst of the paradise of God.*

As we can see, neither of these passages can refer to Abraham's Bosom, for that place was in the underworld, or at least someplace close enough to hell that they could communicate back and forth [see Luke 16]. The place this man in Christ was caught up to was in the third heaven, and it is extremely doubtful that the tree of life was in Abraham's Bosom. This tree is something that Christian overcomers can partake of and certainly their destination is heaven.

We see that paradise is referred to as a place in heaven 2 out of 3 times it is used. Yet, because of the punctuation problems in Luke 23:43, we have referred to it as Abraham's Bosom. (It is interesting to note that Luke 16 is the only reference that calls the place of the dead Abraham's Bosom.)

We have one more indication that Jesus was not referring to Abraham's Bosom. This is found again in the thief's question "Lord, remember me when thou comest into thy kingdom." The thief was asking Jesus about His kingdom. One could hardly think of the different compartments in the underworld as part of the kingdom of God. As a matter of fact, we find the phrases "kingdom of God" and "kingdom of heaven" used synonymously in the different Gospels. **It doesn't make sense that Jesus would address the thief about Abraham's Bosom, when he was asking Him about His coming kingdom. We can only conclude that Jesus was promising the thief that He would see him in heaven at some future date.**

It is unfortunate that the translation of this verse has been so misleading. Through careful study we have seen that this verse does not provide the foundation for the doctrines that have come out of it. Yet many still refuse to investigate *with an open mind* all the other evidence of Jesus' suffering in the abyss of hades.

## **6. Conclusion**

As we weigh all of the evidence, we see passage after passage dealing with this issue: Jesus in the abyss of hades. It is important that we do as James Denny suggested for those who take such a position; "contemplate it with awe." Again I must ask your forgiveness for the apologetic way in which I felt necessary to present this most precious truth. If you have found that you can embrace this truth, I appeal to you to go back through the various passages in a prayerful, meditative fashion. It is looking into the Scriptures with the aid of the Holy Spirit that will give us the revelation power necessary to transform our understanding of our Lord Jesus Christ and what He accomplished.

As we go on in our study of the 3 days and nights, we will see that the passages which refer to the resurrection further prove that Christ died spiritually and suffered in hell.

### **JESUS WAS JUSTIFIED AND MADE ALIVE**

We have seen in the past chapters the reality of Christ being "made" our sin. He became for us the cursed of God; God forsook our Lord upon the cross. Jesus died in spirit and descended into the abyss of hell to pay the full penalty of our sins. Scripture after scripture declare these things to be the plan and purpose of our Lord. But the Bible is clear that Jesus did not stay in that awful place; God did not abandon His Son to hades.

From this point in our study we will be on the positive side of our Saviour's work. But, as we pointed out in our previous chapters, the positive aspects of what Christ did serve to further confirm the negative aspects. If the Scriptures reveal that Christ had to be justified, we can conclude that He was literally made to be our sin. If Christ had to be made alive in spirit, then it is obvious that He died in spirit.

The truths concerning the sufferings of Christ are extremely important, but as one minister said, "We must carry the death of Christ right through to the resurrection." If we were to concentrate only on the negative aspects of our Lord's death, we would miss the entire point of His coming. Christ came to defeat sin, death, the devil, and all of hell itself; and He came to give us righteousness, life, freedom and heaven. His death and all that it entailed were only the means to the end; Jesus went through death in order that He might destroy it and all that sprang from it!

As you may recall, we have spoken of the two-fold principle throughout our study. If Jesus underwent a two-fold death and a two-fold burial, then it only stands to reason that there is a two-fold resurrection. Jesus underwent a physical resurrection and a spiritual resurrection. As we study the mystery of the 3 days and nights we will concern ourselves with the spiritual resurrection, for once the physical had taken place we are no longer in the realm of mystery. We do not want to take away from the physical resurrection in any way; our salvation is utterly dependent upon our adherence to this great reality. But it is important to realize that a great event took place in the underworld before the defeat of the physical grave. This event was the raising to life again of the spirit of our Lord. We have four great statements made by the Apostles that lead us to this conclusion.

#### **1. Jesus was Justified**

There are four distinct passages which speak of our Lord being justified or declared righteous. Certainly, **Jesus was always entirely righteous in Himself**. Scripture has declared: "Christ, who never knew sin..." [II Cor. 5:21]. But we must follow through on this verse: "...yet, for our sakes God made Him to become our sin..." We have seen in past chapters that Jesus became what we were (and we were unrighteous), but again the verse continues: "...that we might be made the righteousness of God."

**I CORINTHIANS 1:30** *But of Him are ye in Christ Jesus, who of God is made unto us wisdom, and righteousness, and sanctification, and redemption.*

In order that we might receive the righteousness of God, Jesus became our sin. Then when sin was paid for, God made Him our righteousness. Notice above: Christ is made unto us the righteousness of God. Again we must emphasize that Jesus was always righteous in Himself; He would never need to be made righteous for He had never sinned. But in order for Christ to be made unto us righteousness, He first took our sin and paid the full penalty for it. He was then made righteous in the heart of the earth.

**I TIMOTHY 3:16** *And without controversy great is the mystery of godliness: God was manifested in the flesh, justified in the Spirit, seen of angels, preached unto the Gentiles, believed on in the world, received up into glory.*

**BECK** *...became righteous in spirit...*

**ROTHERHAM** *...was declared righteous in spirit...*

**KNOX** *...justification won in the realm of the spirit...*

**WEEKES** *...was made righteous in spirit...*

**Pastor Leon Stump** is helpful in his commentary on this verse:

" 'Manifested in the flesh' would include His birth to His actual physical death when He no longer was in the flesh. 'Justified (made righteous) in spirit, seen of angels, preached unto the Gentiles' would all have to be in the spirit before He was raised from the dead physically because the Gentiles were not preached to in His earthly ministry -- only the lost sheep of the house of Israel. 'Believed on in the world' refers to His post-resurrection appearances; 'received up into glory' is the Ascension. He was made righteous in spirit after He had first been made sin in spirit and died physically." [\(1\)](#)

Most commentators agree that this was a popular Christian hymn that Paul was referring to. They also point out the semblance of a chronological order to the hymn; Dean Alford: "The Apostle is following the historical order of events during the manifestation of our Lord on earth." Yet commentators have trouble applying this idea to everything in the text. It is my opinion that the chronological interpretation is correct, but the commentators fail to identify "justified in spirit" to our Lord in the underworld.

The first statement, "manifest in the flesh," refers to the incarnation [Ellicott, Vincent, Wuest, etc.]. It is the second line in the hymn that stirs doubt in the chronological order, but if we see that "justified in spirit" is referring to Jesus in the heart of the earth being declared righteous from the sins of all humanity, we can continue the order of events. The next statement, "seen of angels," can refer to the fallen angels viewing the justification and enlivening of our Lord, thus becoming their conqueror. Or, it could refer to the angels of God viewing this event, for there seems to be the indication that they had access to Abraham's Bosom [Luke 16:22], from which they could view

the place of torment. The next statement, "preached unto the Gentiles," also produces problems for commentators for it is prior to the ascension, yet the gospel didn't come to the Gentiles until Acts 10 in our Bibles. But when we see that Jesus was justified in the heart of the earth, then we can cross reference this verse with I Peter 3:18-20 which declares that Jesus was "made alive in the spirit in which also He went and made proclamation to the spirits now in prison," [NAS] referring to the people of Noah's day. Then we have, "believed on in the world," which refers to Christ's appearance to His disciples after His physical resurrection. After this we have, "received up into glory," which most commentators agree is speaking of the ascension of our Lord from the Mount of Olives. E.W. Kenyon comments on this verse:

"In I Timothy 3:16 Paul tells us that He was justified in spirit. He could not be Justified until He was first condemned, and we know that He was not Justified until the claims of Justice had been fully satisfied; then the edict comes from the Throne of God, and our Substitute stands legally acquitted in the presence of the demons in Hell." [\[2\]](#)

I realize that when we speak of our Lord needing to be justified, we are often bringing a new concept to people. **But we must keep in the fore-front of our minds that it was our sin from which Jesus was justified.** How glorious a truth this becomes when we realize that when Christ was being justified in spirit, it was really us being justified in spirit! Isaiah was very bold in declaring this nearly 1000 years before it occurred:

**ISAIAH 53:11** *He shall see the travail of his soul, and shall be satisfied: by his knowledge shall my righteous servant justify many; for he shall bear their iniquities.*

When God saw the travail of our Lord Jesus, He was satisfied. Christ suffered for our sins in order to satisfy the claims of God's justice against us. When the last sin was dealt with, God was satisfied. Leon Stump comments on this very truth:

"God saw the travail of Jesus' soul in hell. He had gone there with our sin as our Substitute. The penalty for sin was hell and Jesus paid that penalty. The debt being paid in full, God's Holy Justice was satisfied. The sinner could now be declared righteous. Jesus had so literally been made sin that He Himself had to be made righteous again before He could be raised from Death."

We can link Isaiah 53:11 to the resurrection because of the word travail. If you recall this was the same word used in Acts 2:24: a birth pang, travail-pain [W.E. Vine]. Jesus was in soul travail when He was in hell.

Our final scripture in this section is clearly the most powerful and the most convincing when we seek to understand what was needed to take place before our Lord was raised from the dead.

**ROMANS 4:25** *Who was delivered for our offences, and was raised again for our justification.*

The King James uses the word "for," yet we see that in the two separate statements being made in the verse, the preposition "for" would need to mean two entirely different things. Weymouth's translational notes shed light on this passage:

"The majority of translators into English, including the A.V and the R.V., render 'for... for.' Yet it is obvious that in that case the 'for' is used in two widely different senses -- 'delivered up because of our transgressions, raised again with a view to our justification.' But it appears highly improbable that Paul would have employed the same preposition with the same construction in two parallel and closely connected clauses to convey entirely different meanings, and it is also doubtful whether this form of expression is capable of conveying the latter of the two senses." [\[4\]](#)

Let's look at some better translations of this verse and we'll see what Weymouth is talking about:

**NEW AMERICAN STANDARD** *Him who was delivered up because of our transgressions, and was raised because of our justification.*

**ROTHERHAM** *Who was delivered up on account of our offences, and was raised on account of the declaring us righteous.*

**WEYMOUTH** *who was surrendered to death because of the offences we had committed, and was raised to life because of the acquittal secured for us.*

This clarifies the verse because we understand that it wasn't the resurrection that secured our justification, as the statement "...and was raised again for our justification" implies. **Rather, it was Christ's sufferings that secured our justification which was followed by His resurrection.**

The statement by Paul is clear: Jesus was raised when our justification was secured. Once He obtained the acquittal for our sins there was nothing else to keep Him in the state and condition He was in. And if Jesus didn't pay the full penalty for our sins, He would have never been raised, because the resurrection was dependent upon the satisfaction of God's judgment of our sins. The fact that Jesus did rise proves that every sin has been dealt with!

The fact that the Scriptures speak of Jesus needing to be made righteous is one more piece of evidence that there was more going on in the heart of the earth than a mere comforting experience for our Lord. It also shows forth the extent to which God went to bring us salvation. Jesus was so literally "made to be sin" that He had to be "declared righteous" before He could rise from death's grip.

This was the first phase of the resurrection. What happened next to our Lord Jesus was exactly what happens to us the moment we receive the righteousness of God: **He was made alive in spirit.**

## ***2. Jesus was Made Alive in Spirit***

This is one of the most dynamic truths of the entire 3 days and nights. As we will study, Jesus was not receiving the life of God just for Himself, it was for you and me that He was receiving life. First, let us study one of the strongest and most direct passages that deals with the 3 days and nights.

**I PETER 3:18** *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**: [made alive again]*

Here again we encounter the same problem with the King James translation as with Romans 4:25. The translators are giving us two different meanings in the statements, "in the flesh" and "by the Spirit," when the same meaning of "in" should be applied to both. Also it is necessary to understand that it is not the Holy Spirit which Peter is speaking about, but rather Christ's own human spirit. **Wuest** has a lengthy but worthwhile explanation of this verse:

"In the same way, the words 'flesh' and 'Spirit' are contrasted and are logical opposites. The word translated 'Spirit,' pneumati, is in the same case and classification as the word for 'flesh,' sarki. **But the Holy Spirit is not a logical contrast to the human body of our Lord.** It is *the human spirit of our Lord* that is set over against His human body. It is true that our Lord was raised from the dead by the power of the Holy Spirit, and that is taught by Paul in Romans 8:11. But Peter is not teaching that truth here. He maintains the perfect contrast between our Lord's human body

and His human spirit. The translators of the A.V. have capitalized the word 'spirit,' making it refer to the Holy Spirit. ...The word 'spirit' in I Peter 3:18 is not capitalized in Nestle's text [one of the best Greek manuscripts], which indicates that he thought that the word referred, not to the Holy Spirit but to the human spirit of the Lord Jesus. But this again is a *textual critic's interpretation*. All of which goes to say that the present writer has a perfect right to write the word 'spirit' in the passage in question without capitalization if he thinks that a careful exegesis of its context, based upon the rules of Greek grammar, warrants him in doing so. The problem is therefore purely one of interpretation and not at all of textual evidence. The translation reads, "**having in fact been put to death with respect to the flesh, but made alive with respect to the spirit**" That preserves the balance in which the apostle contrasts the physical death of our Lord with the fact that His human spirit was made alive. But how are we to understand this latter? **To make alive Christ's human spirit presupposes the death of that human spirit**. Our Lord on Calvary's Cross cried, 'My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?' (Matt.27:46). The Greek word translated 'forsaken' means 'to abandon, desert, leave in straits, leave helpless, leave destitute, leave in the lurch, let one down.' " [\[5\]](#)

He then goes on to give his explanation of the spiritual death of our Lord. Other translators confirm his interpretation of "with respect to His flesh" and "with respect to His spirit."

**PHILLIPS** ...*That meant the death of his body, but he was brought to life again in the spirit*

**NEW ENGLISH** ...*In the body he was put to death; in the spirit he was brought to life.*

**TRANSLATOR'S N.T.** ...*He was put to death physically but was brought to life spiritually.*

**20TH CENTURY** ...*His body died, but his spirit rose to new Life.*

**NEW AMERICAN** ...*He was put to death insofar as fleshly existence goes, but was given life in the realm of the spirit.*

Notice the last translation: "...given life in the realm of the spirit." This is exactly what happened. Jesus' spirit was dead; our sin killed Him. He then went into hell after His physical death and suffered for our sins. When the penalty for the last sin had been paid, Christ was righteous before the Father. Then in that deep abode in the spiritual realm, Jesus was made alive in spirit in the same way any person who receives God's righteousness is made alive spiritually. This fact of our being made alive spiritually in the same way as Christ was made alive spiritually is confirmed by the Apostle Paul in Ephesians. [*Penalty for sin was not physical death...sin is spiritual...penalty for sin was spiritual death and punishment upon "SIN" itself.*]

**EPHESIANS 2:5** *Even when we were dead in sins, hath quickened us together with Christ, (by grace ye are saved;)*

**GOOD NEWS** *that while we were spiritually dead in our disobedience he brought us to life with Christ.*

**KNOX** *Our sins had made dead men of us, and he, in giving life to Christ, gave life to us too...*

**A.S. WAY** *Even when in trespasses we lay dead, Thrilled us with the same new life wherewith He quickened our Messiah...*

**20TH CENTURY** ...*gave Life to us in giving Life to Christ,...*

**AMPLIFIED** ...He gave us the very life of Christ Himself, the same new life with which He quickened Him....

We receive this spiritual life in the new birth. It is the same life which God imparted to Christ in the resurrection. The following verse brings out the timing of when Christ received this life: "and hath raised us up together..." This is when Jesus was made alive in spirit. We must keep in mind that we were spiritually dead, and the reason why we are said to be raised with Christ is because we have received spiritual life. So also was Jesus spiritually dead because His experience and our experience are said to be the same. Jesus received "the same new life" as we did. We received spiritual life, therefore, He received spiritual life. We needed this life because we were "spiritually dead in our disobedience," so, too, Jesus was "spiritually dead in our disobedience." **David C. Cooke** in his study What Happened from the Cross to the Throne boldly expounds on this truth:

"The life of God was provided for spiritually dead man through **his legal identification** in the resurrection of Jesus Christ. It was **in the name of man** that Christ received this "new dynamic life" in His resurrection. When Christ was made alive in spirit it was **man's** spirit legally made alive in Christ. ...By His resurrection He acquired new life in the spirit which He communicates to believers. Now Eph. 2:5 connects us directly with this glorious event. (Jordan) -- 'God in His overflowing sympathy and great love breathed the same new life into us as into Christ.' We were **legally** identified in Christ's spiritual quickening! What happened legally in Christ 2,000 years ago is made our vital experience through faith. Faith is the way to transfer the legal accomplishments into personal vital experience. The new birth is a divine happening; it is explosive! The recreation of your spirit was a vital re-enactment of Christ's resurrection." [\[6\]](#)

### **3. Jesus was Restored to Sonship**

Here is a dynamic truth that is overlooked even by some who preach the spiritual aspects of Christ's sufferings. **Jesus lost His place of Sonship.** This is shown in the fact that the Scripture declare: **Christ had to be born into Sonship again.** We find the evidence in the teachings of the Apostle Paul:

**ACTS 13:32-33** *And we declare unto you glad tidings, how that the promise which was made unto the fathers, God hath fulfilled the same unto us their children, in that he hath raised up Jesus again; as it is also written in the second psalm, Thou art my Son, this day have I begotten thee.*

**20TH CENTURY** ...*This day **thou hast been born to me.***

**WEYMOUTH** ...*To-day I have become Thy Father.*

**Bishop Ellicott** helps to identify the timing of this event:

"So, in the higher fulfillment which St. Paul finds in Christ, he refers the words, not primarily to the Eternal Generation of the Son of God, 'begotten before all worlds,' nor to the Incarnation, but to the day of victory over rulers and priests, over principalities and powers, over death and Hades."

The timing of our statement is crucial in our understanding. Jesus was said to be **born of God** on the day of the resurrection: "This day thou hast been born to me." This is a direct reference to what Christ received in the resurrection. Jesus received a restoration of His Sonship. Because He was forsaken of God, He had to be restored to His previous position in God, and because this took place on the day of His resurrection, we must assume that just prior to that day Jesus was not in the position of Sonship. This is clearly understandable when we realize that Jesus became what we were on the cross, and continued in our state while He was in the heart of the earth. We had lost our place of sonship with the Father because we were spiritually dead, and when we are "made alive," we enter into a new place of sonship with God [John 1:12]. We were made alive

with the same new life that Jesus received [Eph.2:5], therefore our experience and His experience are similar. When Jesus was "made alive in spirit" He was being restored to His place of Sonship. Again we must emphasize that it was on our behalf that Jesus gave up this standing before the Father because He took into Himself our sin and death.

As we continue investigating Paul's discourse we find it even more revealing:

**ACTS 13:34-35** *And as concerning that he raised him up from the dead, now no more to return to corruption, he said on this wise, I will give you the sure mercies of David. Wherefore he saith also in another psalm, Thou shalt not suffer thine Holy One to see corruption.*

The two-fold principle again stands out in this passage. Just as Peter brought out the two-fold aspects of the work of Christ in Acts 2:31, so now Paul does the same while quoting the identical scripture. First we see that Jesus is begotten or given a birth in the resurrection, then we are referred to the physical aspects of that event. First Jesus received **a spiritual rebirth** to His place of Sonship, **then His body was delivered from corruption unto immortality**. Peter referred to the resurrection from hades and then Christ's deliverance from physical corruption. In both cases, the same event is being proclaimed. Paul saw the resurrection from hades as the rebirth of Christ's Sonship. He quoted the same passage [Ps 16:8] as Peter did on the day of Pentecost.

One might think that the statement, "this day have I begotten thee," refers to the physical resurrection. Some have even quoted Romans 1:4, "And declared to be the Son of God with power, according to the spirit of holiness, by the resurrection from the dead," believing that Acts 13:33-35 is declaring that Christ was proven to be God's Son because of the resurrection. They are correct in the statement that the resurrection proves Christ to be who He said He was, but this is not what Acts 13:33 is addressing. Paul in his sermon had already dealt with that aspect in the previous verses 28 through 30. If this were the case in verse 33, we would see the word "proven" or "declared" being used instead of "begotten." **Jesus was born on the day of His resurrection.**

Birth implies more than just physical resurrection. When we are born again we become the children of God [Gal.3:26; 4:5-7; Rom.8:14; John 1:12]. Physical resurrection is not what makes us sons of God; it is receiving the life of God that makes us His children. God is a spirit and declares Himself to be the Father of our spirits [John 4:24, Heb.12:9]. We received the same new life as Jesus which gives us sonship. Our life and sonship is spiritual therefore Christ's reception of life and Sonship was spiritual. [Stop emphasizing the physical and see into the spirit of the thing].

#### **4. Jesus is the Firstborn From the Dead**

Here we have one of the most revealing titles for our Lord Jesus Christ. He is called the "**firstborn from the dead**" in two different references by two different apostles:

**COLOSSIANS 1:18** *And he is the head of the body, the church: who is the beginning, the firstborn from the dead; that in all things he might have the preeminence.*

**KNOX** *He too is that head whose body is the Church; it begins with him, since his was the first birth out of death...*

**BECK** *...He is the Beginning, the first among the dead to become alive that He may be the first in everything.*

**20TH CENTURY** *...Being the first to be born again from the dead, he is the source of its life, that he in all things might stand first.*

**REVELATION 1:5** *And from Jesus Christ, who is the faithful witness, and the first-begotten of the dead, and the prince of the kings of the earth. Unto him that loved us, and washed us from our sins in his own blood,*

**WEYMOUTH** *...the first of the dead to be born to Life...*

**WADE** *...the First of the dead to be born into renewed Life...*

**20TH CENTURY** *...the First of the dead to be born again...*

The striking words "born again" from death are rarely used for the work of our Saviour. Again we are reminded of Ephesians 2:5: God "gave Life to us in giving Life to Christ" [20th Century]. Jesus was the first one to experience this birth from death into life just as the title confirms in Colossians 1:18: "who is the beginning." Jesus is the first of a multitude who would pass from death to life. It is clear the scripture is saying **He was the first of many** who would have this experience. Nevertheless only Christ has received physical resurrection (with the possible exception of some of the Old Testament saints -- Matt.27:52-53), and yet we are said to be made alive with Him and raised with Him [Eph. 2:5-6; Col.2:13; 3:1]. We have also passed from spiritual death into spiritual life [John 5:24; Eph. 2:1]. The point is this, if Christ was "the first born out of death" then we can expect to see others follow. The Scriptures declare that we have also received a new birth from spiritual death into spiritual life. Would not it seem plain that His experience was similar to ours seeing that it preceded ours, and that ours was a direct result of His resurrection? Kenneth Wuest is helpful here:

"**He is the 'beginning.'** The word is arche, 'the origin, the beginning,' this in relation to the Church. The word arche here involves priority in time; our Lord was the first-fruits from among the dead; and originating power; He was also the source of life (Lightfoot). In the words, 'the firstborn of the dead,' Paul shows how Christ is the beginning of the new spiritual life in the Church, by His resurrection. 'He comes forth from among the dead as the first-born issues from the womb. Compare Acts 2:24, 'having loosed the pains of death' where the Greek is odinas, 'birth throes' (Vincent)." [\[8\]](#)

Jesus was **the first to be born again from death** and we follow Him in this marvelous experience. It was our sin and our spiritual condition that He was born out of and it is His new life and glory that we are born into.

Another indication that "the first born from the dead" is speaking of Christ's spiritual resurrection from spiritual death is the fact that Jesus was not the first person to be physically resurrected. We have recorded accounts of Jesus raising people from the dead on three different occasions. In the Old Testament there are accounts of people being raised from death. Jesus was not the first to be raised from physical death, therefore one could only conclude that it was being raised from spiritual death that He had preeminence. [Wow...this is good stuff Manored]

**Billheimer** comments on Christ's rebirth: [Notice these quotes are not coming from the modern Faith Teachers...this proves that these ideas were considered "orthodox" by others]

"When **the claims of eternal justice were fully discharged** Christ was 'justified in the spirit' (I Tim.3:16 ASV). He then was 'made alive in the spirit' (I Peter 3:18 ASV). His spirit was not annihilated. It only died spiritually like any sinful human spirit. It was **completely cut off** and **separated from God**. Thus, in order to be made alive unto God and restored to fellowship with His Father, **He had to be reborn** -- for He had become the very essence of sin. Since sin had totally alienated Him from the Father, the only way He could be restored to fellowship with the Father was through a new birth to new life. This is the meaning of Revelation 1:5: 'Jesus Christ

who is the first begotten from among the dead' " (margin). [19](#) [Reader...*did you get what this man said?*]

## 5. Conclusion

Understanding that Christ was made to be our sin and took upon Himself our spiritual death, gives us a clear comprehension of these statements made of our Lord's resurrection. Not having this perspective has caused commentators and Bible teachers to take less than the literal interpretation in these references to our Lord. Yet a clear understanding of these verses comes forth if we take this perspective. I realize that speaking of our Lord's need to be justified and made alive in spirit **are new concepts to most**, but if we can see that **it is not just a few isolated teachers** that bring this forth, but the sacred Scriptures of our God, then we must devote prayerful consideration to them. If Jesus was actually made sin, then there had to be a specific moment that He was "justified" of that sin. If Jesus actually took our old nature of spiritual death within Himself, then there had to be a specific moment when He was "made alive in spirit." These passages in this chapter reveal that specific moment. It took place in the spiritual resurrection of our sin substitute in the heart of the earth when He had completely satisfied the claims of our guilt before God. What a glorious moment! It was this experience that gave Him victory over every one of our spiritual enemies, as we will see in the next chapter. [*That's what I have been emphasizing*]

## JESUS TRIUMPHED OVER THE DEVIL

In the last chapter we saw several scriptures that revealed Christ's victory over sin and spiritual death. Jesus was "declared righteous" **after God's justice was satisfied with the penalty** He received. Jesus was then "made alive in spirit" with the glorious substance of eternal life. This life did the same thing in Him as it does in the spirit of a believer today. It dispelled death and destroyed the old sinful nature, the old man. Jesus was restored to His place of Sonship and became the first man to be "born again from the dead."

The victory of our Lord was the climax of the 3 days and nights. It was for this purpose that He endured all the horrible torments of sin, death and hell. We will study two aspects of this glorious moment.

### 1. Life Conquerors Death

As we begin to study His triumph, we must be careful that we don't disconnect this event from Jesus having been "declared righteous" and "made alive in spirit" because in reality, they are the same event. When God restored to Jesus His righteousness, He did not wait before He gave Him life; it was instantaneous. Life comes immediately upon the reception of righteousness. When we as believers receive God's righteousness, **we are immediately made alive**; so it was with Christ. Then, upon the reception of eternal life came the triumph of Christ. Eternal life was the element that gave Christ the victory. The moment Christ's spirit was made alive, **He became the conqueror**. Some have suggested a long, knock-down, drag-out fight between the devil and Jesus, but this picture does not come from scripture.

When we study the life of Christ in His earth walk, we see constant victory over sin, death and the devil. This was because Jesus operated as a man full of God's life and power. In the book of Acts He is called the "Prince of life" [Acts 3:15]. Life always conquerors death.

**JOHN 1:4-5** *In him was life; and the life was the light of men. And the light shineth in darkness; and the darkness comprehendeth it not.*

**REVISED STANDARD** *...and the darkness has not overcome it.*

**AMPLIFIED** ...for the darkness has never overpowered it -- put it out, or has not absorbed it, has not appropriated it, and is unreceptive to it.

**LIVING** ...His life is the light that shines through the darkness and the darkness can never extinguish it.

The only reason there seemed to be any defeat at all of Jesus was because He voluntarily submitted Himself to spiritual death. But the motive of this submission is clearly explained by the author of Hebrews:

**HEBREWS 2:14** *For as much as the children are partakers of flesh and blood, he also himself likewise took part of the same; that through death he might destroy him that had the power of death, that is, the devil;*

**PHILLIPS** ...so that by going through death as a man he might destroy him who had the power of death, that is the devil.

Jesus went **completely** through death. It was coming out the other side of this experience that brought destruction to our enemy. Jesus was the first man ever to enter into spiritual death and come out of it. We must never forget that it was a man that defeated the devil. It was a man that broke the of spiritual death. Other translations bring out the meaning of "destroy him that had the power of death:"

**NEW ENGLISH** ...so that through death he might break the power of him who had death at his command, that is the devil;

**GOODSPEED** ...in order that by his death he might dethrone the lord of death, the devil,

**MOFFATT** ...so that by dying he might crush him who wields the power of death (that is to say, the devil).

**FENTON** ...so that through death He might abolish him who has the dominion of death...

**ROTHERHAM** ...He might paralyse him that held the dominion of death...

**KNOX** ...By his death he would dispose the prince of death...

**20TH CENTURY** ...he might render powerless him whose power lies in death...

**A.S. WAY** ...and by His death might annihilate the power of him who sways the scepter of death's terrors...

**WADE** ...He might reduce to impotence him who has in Death the instrument of his sway...

**LOVETT** ...For it was only by dying as a MAN that He could cancel the power of the devil, who rules the realm of death.

**Billheimer** speaks of this moment of conquering in the heart of the earth:

*"As long as He was identified with sin, He was in the clutches of Satan and the hosts of hell, just like any lost sinner. But when He was justified and made alive, adjudged and declared righteous in the Supreme Court of the universe, the tables were turned. The battle in that cavern of despair*

is described by Peter in Acts 2:24 'Whom God hath raised up, having loosed the pains of death, because it was not possible that he should be held by it' (NS). This implies a tremendous effort on the part of hell. When He, as an authentic man, had completely disarmed and dethroned the arch foe of God and man, He burst forth triumphantly from that age-old prison of the dead." [\(1\)](#)

Hebrews 2:15 tells us that Jesus went through death that He would also deliver those who were in to the fear of this death. Jesus received this victory by simply entering into the grip of the devil and then bursting out of his grasp by being made alive. He also made it possible for any man, anywhere, to do the same by receiving exactly the same life that Jesus received. It is the reception of spiritual life that releases us from the kingdom of the spiritually dead. Jesus broke a hole into His kingdom so that anyone who passes through that portal will be instantly liberated from the power of the devil. The only reason why the devil has a grip on any man is his right as the "lord of death" to rule over the spiritually dead. Jesus, by going through death, made it possible for any man to receive His life and thus be released from that spiritual dominion. By doing this Jesus truly rendered the devil impotent.

The Scriptures declare that the same power that raised Him up from death **is now in us**. The word in the following verse for power in the Greek is "dunamis" which means "dynamic energy," from which we get our English word dynamite. That power spoken of is eternal life. When this life contacted the Lord Jesus in hell, a tremendous explosion took place. This is what Paul declared in the book of Ephesians: [*Dynamic energy is what many call the "force of faith"*]

**EPHESIANS 1:19-21** *And what is the exceeding greatness of his power to usward who believe, according to the working of his mighty power, which he wrought in Christ, when he raised him from the dead, and set him at his own right hand in the heavenly places, Far above all principality, and power, and might, and dominion, and every name that is named, not only in this world, but also in that which is to come:*

**PHILLIPS** *and how tremendous is the power available to us who believe in God. That power is the same divine energy which was demonstrated in Christ...*

**TRANSLATOR'S N.T.** *and the limitless scope of his power at work in us once we believe in him. This is that same stupendous power which he exerted when he raised Christ...*

**JORDAN** *May you experience the incredible outburst of his power in us who rely on his might and his abundant energy. **This same energy working in Christ** raised him from the dead and gave him spiritual victory and authority.*

**GOOD NEWS** *...this power in us is the same as the mighty strength which he used when he raised Christ from death...*

Again we must reiterate that the power that raised Christ from the dead **was spiritual life**. It is this same **life that is in us**. It is this life that Jesus came to give us [John 10:10]. Jesus did exactly what John declared: "the reason the son of God was manifest, made visible, was to undo, destroy, loosen and dissolve, the works the devil has done" [I John 3:8, Amplified]. He did this by giving to us eternal life.

## **2. Stripping Off the Demonic Forces**

The following passage is one commentators have great difficulty agreeing on. Unfortunately only a handful take the position that Christ won His victory in the heart of the earth, and because of the absence of this perspective, they distort the valuable truth being presented. Let us examine this verse in some detail:

**COLOSSIANS 2:15** *And having spoiled principalities and powers, he made a shew of them openly, triumphing over them in it.*

The first item of difficulty is the last statement in the King James version "in it." Many translations go as far as to render it "in the cross" or "by the cross" [Williams, Moffatt, Bruce, etc.]. Their reason is the context of verse 14. The cross is spoken of in that verse and they carry the context into verse 15. On the other hand there are an equal number of translators who take the position that "en auto" (the Greek transliteration) should be translated "**in Him**." There are two reasons why I believe the latter interpretation is correct. First, the context of the entire passage from verse 5 to verse 15 speaks about Christ and what God was doing in Him. The phrase "in Him" occurs four times and each one of these references is a translation of the Greek phrase "en auto," therefore we should be consistent in our translation making verse 15 read "in Him" also. The second reason is that God is the subject throughout the context. God raised Christ from the dead (vs. 12); God made us alive with Him (vs. 13); God blotted out the handwriting in the ordinances against us (vs. 14); and God stripped the principalities and powers and triumphed over them in Christ.

*Even if we accepted the translation of "in it" meaning "the cross," we would still have no major problem with where this event took place.* Paul used the term "the cross" as an all-inclusive term meaning more than just the physical event. He spoke of "the preaching of the cross" in I Corinthians 1:18, but certainly he meant more than the crucifixion, for in chapter 15 of the same letter he declares that if we have no faith in the resurrection we are still in our sins. The term "the cross" is similar to such terms as "the faith," "the way" and "the gospel," and means the entire death, burial and resurrection of Christ. **Bullinger's** comments on this are helpful:

"In like manner 'the Cross' is put first for the crucifixion as an act, or for Him who was crucified thereon: and then this is put for the resulting merits of His atonements procured thereby I Cor. 1:17,18, 'The preaching of the cross.' Paul did not preach the cross, nor did he speak merely of the crucifixion (ii. 2), but of all the blessed results, not only of that death, but of the resurrection also Gal. 4:14, 'God forbid that I should glory, save in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ': i.e., not the wooden instrument of death, nor the act of crucifixion; but he gloried in all that this meant for him, all the precious merits of Christ's atonement and the blessings resulting from it." [\[2\]](#)

The cross is said to be a place of victory and if taken the way Paul used it in the above examples, it certainly was. But in reality **had there been no resurrection**, we would grimly say the cross was the place of **supreme defeat**, for it has power only in light of the resurrection. We know from previous verses studied that the reception of resurrection life is what caused our Saviour to rise a glorious conqueror! Thus the rendering of "in Him" is more suitable for "en auto" in this verse.

The next statement that produces some difficulty in the King James version is "**spoiled principalities and powers**." It is reasonably obvious that the principalities and powers spoken of here are those mentioned in Ephesians 6:12, those demonic spiritual forces which we constantly wrestle with in this life. It is the word "spoiled" that is unclear. Thayer's Greek-English Lexicon gives us this definition: "**wholly to put off from one's self** ('apo' denoting separation from what is put off)." The Translator's N.T. also tells us that this is something that you can do or someone else does for you. This would carry through the thought that God was the one who stripped off these forces from Christ in His resurrection. W.E. Vine gives an excellent exposition on this truth in his dictionary:

"There is no doubt that Satan and his hosts gathered together to attack the soul of Christ, while He was enduring, in propitiatory sacrifice, the judgment due to our sins, and fulfilling the great work of redemption. There is an intimation of this in Psa. 22:21, 'Save Me from the lions mouth; yea, from the horns of wild oxen.' Doubtless the powers of darkness gathered against the Lord at that time, **fiercely assaulting Him to the utmost of their power.** He Himself had said, 'This is

your hour, and the power of darkness' (Luke 22:53). The metaphor of putting off from Himself these powers need not be pressed to the extent of regarding them as a garment clinging about Him. It seems to stand simply as a vivid description of His repulsion of their attack and of the power by which He completely overthrew them." [\[3\]](#)

Finally we have the phrase "He made a shew of them openly, triumphing over them." What a marvelous picture this is of the victory of our Lord Jesus. **William Barclay** in his Daily Study Bible gives us a graphic explanation of what is meant here:

"He put them to open shame and led them captive in his triumphant train. The picture is that of the triumph of a Roman general. When a Roman general had won a really notable victory, he was allowed to march his victorious armies through the streets of Rome and behind him followed the kings and the leaders and the peoples he had vanquished. They were openly branded as his spoils. Paul thinks of Jesus as a conqueror enjoying a kind of cosmic triumph, and in his triumphal procession are the powers of evil, beaten for ever, for every one to see." [\[4\]](#)

Let's examine some various renderings of this magnificent verse, Colossians 2:15:

**BECK** *He stripped the rulers and powers of their armor and made a public show of them as He triumphed over them in Christ.*

**TRANSLATOR'S N.T.** *There Christ stripped the demonic rulers and authorities of their power over him, and in his own triumph made a public show of them.*

**PHILLIPS** *And then, having drawn the sting of all the powers and authorities ranged against us, he exposed them, shattered, empty and defeated, in his own triumphant victory!*

**CONYBEARE** *And he disarmed the principalities and powers which fought against him, and put them to open shame, leading them captive in his triumph, which he won in Christ.*

**LAUBACH** *And He tore the swords from the hands of all the spirit rulers and the powers in the spirit world....*

**LOVETT** *...He openly displayed Jesus' triumph over Satan, disarming him and his entire band of spirits down to the last demon.*

E.W. Kenyon is worth quoting as He expounds on this glorious moment in universal history:

"Here is a picture of Christ in Hell, with the whole host of demons attempting to keep Him there, but when the penalty of our sin had been fully met, Satan had no power to hold Him longer. ...The very moment the sin problem was settled, that moment Jesus Christ was legally justified, was made alive in spirit once more, and assumed His wonderful dominion, authority, and power. Hurling back the hosts of demons, He became the Master of Hell; putting them off from Himself, He hurled them hopeless and powerless back into the dark abyss. ...The matchless mighty Christ had gone into the strong room, the very citadel of Hell, into the crown room of the Black Prince and Ruler of death; He had conquered him in honorable combat; He had taken from him his authority, his dominion; He brings it back and offers it to fallen man through His matchless name and grace." [\[5\]](#)

**Martin Luther** also declared:

"To be brief, all the enemies **which did** before **torment** and **oppress** me, Christ Jesus hath brought to nought: he hath spoiled them and made a show of them openly, triumphing by himself

over them [Col. 2:15], in such sort, that they now rule and reign no more over me, but are constrained to serve me." [\[6\]](#)

**John G. Lake**, whom God used mightily as a missionary to Africa and in an astounding healing ministry in the U.S. unparalleled in modern times, said this about Christ's triumph:

"The triumph of Jesus, as we see it outlined in the Scriptures, has always been one of the splendid inspirations of my own soul. No one can have the highest appreciation of the real Christian life and the consciousness that real Christianity brings, **unless he can see the triumph of the Christ.**" [\[7\]](#)

Although the explanation of this verse was lengthy, I believe we can get a glimpse from it into that moment in the eternal realm when Christ was made alive. When the substance of eternal life penetrated His spirit there was an outburst of such power that every , every demon, every sin was stripped away and hurled back from our Lord Jesus Christ. Jesus then, in bold fashion, displayed His victory in a triumphal parade. Whether or not a parade is what actually took place in the dark region does not matter, for now through the church He is parading His glorious victory every time the gospel is preached and someone is saved.

### **3. An Extra Note**

What happened directly after the triumph is not very clear, for the Scriptures give only a few facts. One minister, while discussing the spiritual side of redemption, said that it is best to not get tangled up in speculation of things that don't directly affect us. This is certainly wise counsel and we will not give any lengthy dogmatic explanation of the events following our Lord's quickening. But to satisfy some possible curiosity we will mention a few possibilities:

1. Peter mentioned in his first epistle part of the events that took place immediately after He was made alive: "...having been put to death in the flesh, but made alive in the spirit; in which also He went and made proclamation to the spirits (now) in prison, who once were disobedient, when the patience of God kept waiting in the days of Noah, during the construction of the ark..." [I Pet. 3:18-20, NAS]. Exactly why He went to preach to these people is unclear; all that is said is that Christ preached to them. Ideas and interpretations abound and we suggest that one is cautious in their study of other's opinions. It is clear that the ones who were preached to were "once disobedient." We can probably conclude that this is not a reference to those in Abraham's Bosom because of the mention of disobedience and also the mention of those of Noah's day.

2. One event that is often mentioned is Jesus going to those who were kept in Abraham's Bosom and imparting the effects of His redemption to them. There is no direct reference to this event, though some have cited Ephesians 4:8 "When he ascended up on high, he led captivity captive," and we submit this as a possible interpretation. Although there is no direct reference, one could conclude that Jesus did do something with the Old Testament saints; the reason they were kept in a place separate from the presence of God was because the penalty for their sins hadn't been dealt with. One would only assume that when the penalty was carried out, they would be released. There is one reference that some **definite activity** took place after the resurrection: an earthquake shook open several graves. Then this statement is made: "and the tombs were opened; and many bodies of the saints who had fallen asleep were raised; and coming out of the tombs after His resurrection they entered the holy city and appeared to many." [Matt. 27:52-53].

As I said before, we are wise not to build too much on these events, for the material at hand is controversial enough without bringing disputable ideas into the picture. Let us just say that Jesus took care of everything He needed to when He was in that dark region. He left nothing undone!

### **CONCLUSION**

We have come to the end of our study. Let us re-examine the purpose of this study stated at the beginning: it was intended to give an exegetical explanation of this particular doctrinal position on the 3 days and nights of our Lord's sojourn in the heart of the earth. I hope that there was enough content to fulfill this task, though I'm sure there is much more room for scholarly study. **Nevertheless, I attempted to be as thorough as possible, even with the risk of being redundant. I endeavored to be brutally honest with the Word and felt compelled to give other opinions on scriptures even if they didn't fit my particular interpretation. I hope that you have seen this. It is my prayer that you will at least be able to understand the doctrinal position presented in this paper. Not that you embrace it wholeheartedly, unless you are convinced that this is evidently the truth, but that you would accept the fact that there is a reasonable amount of scriptural evidence leading towards this perspective. I only ask that on the basis of such evidence, you could tolerate those who take this perspective and accept it as another possible viewpoint.** The word "heresy" has no place with a doctrinal perspective, such as the one presented here, when there is such an amount of scriptural content to be reckoned with. Remember, also, if you are to ostracize those who believe and teach this doctrine, you will have to also exclude men of such caliber as Martin Luther, John Calvin, John Owens, Billy Graham and Paul Billheimer. This is not some teaching that has just emerged in one of the popular movements of our day, it has been spoken of throughout the history of the church. [Amen...this was considered orthodox years before the WOF preached it]

To those of you that have accepted this position in the past or have come to believe it as a result of this study, I would appeal to you not to make this teaching any more controversial than it already is.

Do not take this truth in a light manner. As with any doctrine, there are those who take them lightly. I am reminded of a young man, who when he was taught this very doctrine, went out and had a tee-shirt printed with the words, "Jesus went to HELL for me." Certainly this could have been a stumbling block and an offence to many. We must treat this truth with reverence and not with contempt. Let us realize what we are saying; **Jesus went into hell as a spiritually dead man and suffered the torments of that God-forsaken realm.** This is not something that should be splattered all over tee-shirts. We must remember that this is a new concept to most people and should be presented in an atmosphere of holy awe and reverence.

We must be very careful in the way in which we present it to others. On several occasions I have heard ministers refer to "Jesus going to hell" without any explanation being given. They assume that everyone understands exactly what they mean, when in reality many don't and are offended deeply. **It is a concept that many find very difficult and we should be gracious enough to give them the benefit of hearing this taught in its context.** As one minister said, "we must present controversial truth in a non-controversial manner." If we are going to include this doctrine in our teaching, let's give our hearers the benefit of hearing it in its proper setting and context. We should also be careful not to over- dramatize this teaching. It is my opinion that we must present the material and leave it at that. We should let the Holy Spirit do whatever dramatization is necessary.

**One final note:** it is my belief that the truths presented in this study are extremely important to our **grasp of the redemption provided for us.** If we are to understand them in the way the Apostles presented them in the first century, we will require the aid of the Holy Spirit. I appeal to you to pray the prayer in Ephesians 1:17-23 on a regular basis. Also, we must search the Scripture for ourselves. **I have encountered many who "believe" these truths, yet the effects of them haven't brought much transformation into their lives. I must admit that I, too, fall short in exemplifying all the results of this mighty redemption.** Nevertheless, the Holy Spirit has brought a tremendous liberty in my understanding of Christ and what He has done for me through this perspective. I can see in my life the beginnings of what Paul spoke about in II Corinthians 5:14-15: "For the love of Christ overmasters us, the conclusion at which we have arrived being this -- that One having died for all, His death was their death, and that He died for

all in order that the living may no longer live to themselves, but to Him who died for them and rose again" [Weymouth]. The last and final test with any doctrine is: does it make you love Jesus more? I can tell you honestly, embracing these precious truths has done nothing but enhance my love and appreciation for our Lord Jesus Christ, because I see the depth to which He went to bring me to God. It does not lower my estimation of Him, it exalts it!

I invite you to write to me with your comments or questions at:

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***APPENDIX***

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\*\*I have a closing comment to make. I have added some emphasis to Gregg Bitgood's writing to point important concepts out to the reader. I have also put some of my own comments into [ ]'ed areas. Greg Bitgood has done an excellent job at presenting what the true orthodox teaching on this subject was. People like Hanegraaff, McConnell...have no clue what true orthodoxy really are. This is why I have opposed their positions and their version of "systematic theology." It is time for the Body of Christ to rise up and cast off the interpretations of men like Hanegraaff and McConnell. Greg Bitgood has thoroughly document this case over and over again in his article...the choice to accept it or reject it is yours. *I pray that you may have spiritual eyes and hears to see and hear what the Spirit of God is saying.*