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The Resurrection Factor

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DID JESUS GO TO HELL?

Many times we Christians hear and accept things without a real investigation, and are often surprised when we learn of their origin. Those of you with a Catholic or Protestant background may have learned the “Apostles Creed.” It spoke of Jesus being born of the virgin Mary, suffering under Pontius Pilate, being crucified, dying, being buried, and on the third day rising again. The “Creed” also states that before He rose, He had to descend into hell to suffer for us. Much controversy has developed because many people have accepted, as fact, that Jesus had to enter into hell and suffer on our behalf.

Some portions of today’s evangelical Protestant Church have gone so far as to corrupt God’s Word and say that Jesus actually had to suffer punishment and be born again to get out of hell and make the atonement perfect. This is definitely false. There is no Biblical text, whatsoever, stating that Jesus went to hell, or had to go to hell to suffer for us and our redemption. You should not be upset by this. It simply is not in the Scriptures. Your faith must rest on the truth and not on something false. The fact that Jesus did not go to hell does not attack the deity of Jesus Christ, the Son of God, the only Redeemer, the Saviour of the world. It does not detract from the important doctrines of Christianity, such as the Second Coming of Christ, the Blood of Christ, or the Resurrection.

You might be interested to know that the belief that Jesus went down into hell to suffer before He rose from the dead, did not even begin until 390 A.D. A man called Rufinus added this to the original Apostles’ Creed at a church in Rome called “The Aquila.” For the first 390 years of the Church, the only creed that was accepted by the whole Church was that Jesus suffered under Pontius Pilate, was crucified, died, was buried, and rose from the dead on the third day. It was not until Rufinus added that Jesus had to go into hell to suffer, that the Nicene or Anastatian Creed was adopted by the Church.

Earlier, in the Alexandrian School of Africa, known as Egypt, today, they had the Septuagint. In it were two Apocryphal books, that are not canonized, called First and Second Maccabees. Even the Jews have not accepted them as the Word of God. In these books, there is a portion describing how someone had to pray for the dead to be released out of a compartment in Sheol. In the Old Testament, Sheol was the same as the New Testament’s Hades, translated “hell,” the grave or a place of torment. If you read some of the mythological stories of the Greeks and Romans, you will see that hell and paradise were believed to be right next to each other in a subterranean region.

Origen and Clement, well-known gnostics of the early Church, also taught that there was a subterranean compartment consisting of a paradise section and a place of torment. Everyone that was bad up here had to go into this place of torment, similar to purgatory, for purification. You may have had to stay in there year after year, but eventually, after you were purified through your suffering, you would be released. As they taught this, they eventually went into further error and claimed that there was going to be a restoration of all things by Jesus Christ. Even Satan himself was to be forgiven as that place was emptied. This teaching did not completely creep into the Christian Church until Markian adopted it. He was not a true Christian, but a gnostic that had Christian beliefs. Markian started teaching this in the Church as truth. It was finally put into the Apostles' Creed by Rufinus in 390 A.D., it was then picked up in Rome, and started circulating in the Church. Even today, some of you have accepted this as fact. It is not even in the Bible. There are some Scriptures that are used in trying to teach this doctrine, but they are misinterpreted and twisted to fit. This has created much confusion regarding the truth.

On the cross, just before He offered up His Spirit, Jesus said, "It is finished." John 19:30. In other words, all that God required to atone for our sin was taken care of at that moment on the cross. It was finished! Nothing else had to be done. If something else had to be done by Jesus after that moment when He offered up His Spirit and gave His life for a sacrifice, then Jesus could not have said, "It is finished," He would have had to say, "It is almost finished; I still have to go down into hell to suffer and release some people from a subterranean cavern called paradise."

What Jesus said in Matthew 12:39-40, has also been misinterpreted. This is one of the Scriptures where this teaching started. The Jews were asking for a sign and Jesus said unto them: "An evil and adulterous generation seeketh after a sign; and there shall no sign be given to it, but the sign of the prophet Jonas: 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." If you study the Greek, you will see this does not refer to hell. It simply means, "the grave that is put into the earth." It is the terminology used for being put in the earth or in the grave, "the heart of the earth."

The gospels remain completely silent pertaining to Jesus going down into hell. Certainly if this were a legitimate doctrine, imperative for Church to know, the Apostle Paul, who was given the mystery of the Church in atonement and salvation, would have touched on it. In his epistles, Paul taught specifically about the resurrection of the body. "Moreover, brethren, I declare unto you the gospel which I preached unto you, which also ye have received, and where in ye stand." 1 Corinthians 15:1. In other words, your faith is firm and strengthened by the gospel "By which also ye are saved, if you keep in memory what I preached unto you, unless ye have believed in vain." Verse 2. Our salvation rests on Jesus Christ being our substitute in favor of the world, dying for our sins, raising Himself from the dead, conquering death for our justification and giving us the promise of the Resurrection and eternal life "For I delivered unto you first of all that

which I also received, how that Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures' and that He was buried." Verses 3, 4. Paul was given every doctrine of the Church including the revelation of the Second Coming and the Rapture of the Church. Certainly, if Jesus went down into hell and it was imperative for doctrine and the atonement, Paul would not leave it out.

An excellent treatise on hell and whether or not Jesus went to hell, is William Shedd's *The Doctrine of Endless Punishment*. It is not a big, heavy, thick, theological book. It is short, concise, simple, right to the point, and excellent for your edification. Not wanting to rely on just this one source, I looked through fifteen or more commentaries. Luther, Augustine, Calvin, Barnhouse, Adam Clark and Matthew Henry all said the same thing. This teaching crept into the Church around the latter part of the fourth century. Before that, Jesus' going to hell was never taught, because it is NOT in the Bible.

1 Peter 3 contains other Scriptures which have been misunderstood. Let's study 1 Peter 3:15 so that we can get the Scripture in context and prevent further confusion. Peter says, "But sanctify the Lord God in your hearts: and be ready always to give an answer to every man that asketh you a reason of the hope that is in you with meekness and fear." It is important to know these things. That is why Paul told Timothy to study the Scriptures and know good doctrine. Do not just grab people on the street, push them in a corner, and force the Bible down their throat trying to get them saved; but be ready to give an answer. If someone approaches you, be ready to give a reason for your hope and faith, in meekness and fear, having a good conscience. You do not have to thump people over their head to get them into heaven. You just live the life and share Christ. Live such a life, that people will notice something about you and question you, "What is it about you? What religion are you? You're different!" You have the answer, "I know Jesus."

"Having a good conscience; that, whereas they speak evil of you, as of evildoers, they may be ashamed that falsely accuse your good conversation in Christ. For it is better, if the will of God be so, that ye suffer for well doing, than for evil doing. For Christ also hath once suffered for sins (that's the cross), the just for the unjust taking our place, He suffered the wrath of God for you and for me, that he might bring us to God, being put to death in the flesh, but quickened by the Spirit." 1 Peter 3:16-18. In other words, His body died on the cross. He gave up the ghost, committed His Spirit into the hands of the Father, and He was quickened by that very same Holy Spirit and brought to life again. The subject here is the Holy Spirit. The text goes from Jesus who died, to the Spirit who quickened Him. Then it says, "By which also he went (He went by the Spirit) and preached unto the spirits in prison." Verse 19.

Aha! He went down there? Is this scriptural proof? He went down somewhere into prison. "By which also he went and preached unto the spirits in prison; which sometime were disobedient, when once the longsuffering of God waited in the days of Noah, while the ark was a preparing, wherein few, that is, eight souls were saved by water." 1 Peter

3:19-20. This is confused by many theologians who say that this is the Scripture which states that Jesus went down into hell, and released all those prisoners that were being purified or resting in that subterranean paradise. They say that when Jesus rose from the dead, He led all those captive people free. That is not so at all. Why would Jesus just go down and speak to the spirits that were disobedient for only 120 years while Noah was building the ark? What about the other 3,080 years? What about all the other spirits from Adam to the end of the age? It is not even logical! Jesus did not go down for just a few souls who rebelled for 120 years. If Jesus went down at all – it would have been for all – from Adam all the way to the very end. The Scripture is saying that the Holy Spirit of God that raised Jesus from the dead, is the very same Holy Spirit that was upon Noah preaching in the Old Testament. The Spirit of God was upon Noah just as He was upon Moses, Abraham, Jacob, Elijah, and all the other Old Testament saints. That is what God's Word is saying.

“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.” 1 Peter 3:18. It is that same Spirit that preached in the Old Testament through Noah, through all the Old Testament saints... “which sometime were disobedient, when once the long suffering of God waited in the days of Noah, while the ark was a preparing, wherein few, that is, eight souls were saved by water.” 1 Peter 3:20. In other words, Noah preached under the anointing of the Spirit of Christ, just like all the other prophets of God. That is all the scripture is saying. It is not implying that Jesus went into some subterranean cavern.

Another passage that is not carefully considered, concerning this topic, is the account in Luke 16 of the rich man and Lazarus, a saved beggar man. We know that this is not a parable because Jesus uses a proper name. Jesus never gave a proper name in a parable. Because Jesus could not lie, this is an account that we can depend upon. “There was a certain rich man, who was clothed in purple and fine linen, and fared sumptuously every day: and there was a certain beggar named Lazarus, which was laid at his gate, full of sores. And desiring to be fed with the crumbs which fell from the rich man's table: moreover the dogs came and licked his sores. And it came to pass, that the beggar died, and was carried by the angels into Abraham's bosom: the rich man also died, and was buried; and in hell he lifts up his eyes.” Luke 16:19-23. Because of traditional teachings, many people believe that the rich man looked “over” and saw that Abraham was doing very well. However, the Greek text of the Bible very clearly states that he looked “up” to paradise, not “across” ... “And in hell he lift up his eyes, being in torments, and seeth Abraham afar off. “verse 23a. Abraham was up and very far away. Paradise is at the right hand of the Father where God dwells. “And he cried and said, Father Abraham, have mercy on me, and send Lazarus, that he may dip the tip of his finger in the water, and cool my tongue; for I am tormented in this flame.” verse 24. This man's spirit and soul had feelings. They hurt even though the body was still in a grave in the earth. This man's spirit and soul were down in hell suffering, but Lazarus and Abraham were far up and away.

The same paradise is found in the Old Testament. In Genesis 5, before the flood judgment, we find Enoch who “walked (communed) with God after he begat Methuselah three hundred years, and begat sons and daughters: and all the days of Enoch were three hundred sixty and five years: and Enoch walked with God: and he was not; for God took him.” Genesis 5:22-24. God took him to actually be with Him.

Where do you think God dwells? God does not dwell in a subterranean compartment next to hell. God dwells in the third heaven, in paradise, or “Abraham’s bosom” as the Old Testament saints referred to it. None of the Old Testament’s saints went down to be with the Lord – they went up! Elijah was also taken to paradise. 2 Kings 2:11 says, “Elijah went up by a whirlwind into heaven.” He did not go down to paradise and wait there for hundreds of years until Jesus went down to release him. He went immediately up to heaven, just like Enoch, to the place where God dwells.

In 2 Corinthians 12:1, 2 Paul relates, “It is not expedient for me doubtless to glory. I will come to visions and revelations of the Lord. I knew a man in Christ above fourteen years ago, (whether in the body, I cannot tell; or whether out of the body, I cannot tell: God knoweth), such a one caught up to the third heaven.” Paul experienced being caught “up” to paradise or to heaven. That is why Paul said in 2 Corinthians 5:8, that he desired greatly to be absent from the body and to be present with Lord.

Where did Jesus go after He died on the cross? Did His Spirit go down into hell to talk to people, to preach to people, to let certain people out? Did His Spirit go into heaven? In Luke 23:39-42, one of the prisoners who was on the cross next to Jesus, “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.”

Remember, the Old Testament account and Luke 16 shows us that the Old Testament saints went “up.” Paradise was “up” in heaven with God. Look at what Jesus said in Luke 23:43 to the man on the cross.” And Jesus said unto him, Verily I say unto thee, Today shalt thou be with me in paradise.” Jesus did not say, “today you will rest in a subterranean cavern with Old Testament saints.

“And it was about the sixth hour, and there was a darkness over all the earth until the ninth hour. And the sun was darkened, and the veil of the temple was rent in the midst. And when Jesus had cried with a loud voice, he said, Father, into thy hands I commend my spirit.” Luke 23:44-46. Literally, Jesus gave His Spirit a command to go up to the Father. The day that Jesus died on the cross, He told the thief; you are going to be with me, not under the earth somewhere, but in paradise with my Father. Then he said, “into thy hands I commend my Spirit.” Jesus’ Spirit and soul did not go up to heaven and back down to hell. His body alone remained in the grave for three days.

If Jesus thought it necessary to suffer in hell and pay that kind of punishment for us after He gave up the ghost on the cross, He would not have been able to say what He said in John 19:30, "It is finished." Nothing more was required or necessary for Him to experience. It was over. The penalty was paid, the sin was canceled, right then and there: "He said, it is finished: and he bowed his head, and gave up the ghost."

In Psalm 16, we find another prophecy concerning the grave. In this Psalm, David is prophesying concerning the resurrection of Christ. Psalm 16:9-10 declares, "Therefore my heart is glad, and my glory rejoiceth: my flesh also rest in hope. For thou wilt not leave my soul in hell; (hell is translated from the Hebrew word "sheol;" here, "sheol" simply means the grave, not a place of torment) neither wilt thou suffer thine Holy One to see corruption." Jesus Christ committed His Spirit to the Father, and was in the Father's presence for three days. David is saying that the body lying in the grave would not deteriorate or be corrupted. In fact, when Jesus rose again, He was in a glorified new body. In Acts 13, Luke uses this same Scripture to clarify what David was speaking of. He was not only speaking of himself, even though he knew there would be a resurrection. In Acts 13:29-33, Luke is speaking of the death of Jesus, "And when they had fulfilled all that was written of him, they took him down from the tree, and laid him in a sepulcher. But God raised him from the dead: And he was seen many days of them which came up with him from Galilee to Jerusalem, who are his witnesses unto the people. 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 are my Son, this day have I begotten thee." This means that He was resurrected; the first begotten from the dead. It is speaking of resurrection, not creation. "Thou are my Son, this day have I begotten thee," not created thee. He was the first to arise from the dead, "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 (Psalm 16:10), Thou shalt not suffer thy Holy One to see corruption. For David, after he had served his own generation by the will of God, fell on sleep, and was laid unto his fathers, and saw corruption." Acts 13:34-36. Jesus' body did not deteriorate or go to hell. It laid in the grave. His Spirit and His soul went up to the Father in paradise.

Not one verse in the Bible speaks about Jesus having to go to hell and suffer for you and me. All He had to do was suffer on the cross and receive the wrath there. Ephesians 4:1-8 is misunderstood by some people who think that Jesus may have descended into hell. Paul writes, "I therefore, the prisoner of the Lord, beseech you that ye walk worthy of the vocation wherewith ye are called, with all lowliness and meekness, with longsuffering, forbearing one another in love; endeavoring to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace. There is one body, and one Spirit, even as ye are called in one hope of your calling; One Lord, one faith, one baptism, One God and Father of all, who is above all, and through all, and in you all. But unto every one of us is given grace according to the measure of the gift of Christ. Wherefore he saith, when he

ascended up on high (speaking of the resurrection), he led captivity captive, and gave gifts unto men.” The prisoners, those who were bound by Satan, bound in sin, Jesus Christ now leads free. He takes captivity captive. “Now that He ascended, what is it but that he also descended first into the lower parts of the earth?” verse 9. This is misunderstood as meaning that Jesus went down into hell. He did not! “He that descended is the same also that ascended up far above all heavens, that he might fill all things.” Verse 10. Truly Paul is saying, He that ascended back into glory descended from the glory into this lower atmosphere, the sinful earth. Jesus left heaven and descended to the earth.

Isaiah 44:23 speaks of the lower parts of the earth, “Sing, O ye heavens; for the Lord hath done it: shout, ye lower parts of the earth.” All through the Psalm it says that the dead cannot praise the Lord. The dead have nothing to say once they die and are in the grave. Isaiah is not prophesying to the people under the earth, in hell. He said, “Shout, ye lower parts of the earth: break forth into singing, ye mountains, O forest (there are no mountains or forests in hell), and every tree therein: for the Lord hath redeemed Jacob, and glorified himself in Israel.” Also King David tells us in Psalm 139:14 and 15 “I will praise thee; for I am fearfully and wonderfully made: marvelous are thy works; and that my soul knoweth right well. My substance was not hid from thee, when I was made in secret, and curiously wrought in the lowest parts of the earth.” I don’t believe that David is saying that God reached down into some subterranean compartment of Sheol to form his life and body as such, but just as Isaiah’s text, he is making reference to the earthly compared to the heavenly. Isaiah says to rejoice because God has sent a redeemer to the living that are still on this earth. There is a deliverer, there is a Messiah, rejoice and shout. He left heaven and came down to the lower parts of this sin-filled earth to walk in our midst. He came down to free us.

“To proclaim liberty to the captives,” in Isaiah 61:1, does not mean that Jesus went to release those spirits under the earth, bound in a subterranean paradise. Isaiah prophesies, “The Spirit of the Lord God is upon me; because the Lord hath anointed me to preach good tidings unto the meek; he hath sent me to bind up the brokenhearted, to proclaim liberty to the captives, and the opening of the prison to them that are bound.” Jesus read this in the temple when His ministry began. He did not go down into hell after He read this, He stayed right on this earth and started preaching the gospel to those who were bound by sin here on the earth. Even today, people are bound by sin; and Jesus Christ is still setting the captives free. He is still freeing the demon-possessed, the lame, the crippled, the diseased, those that are bound by Satan in sin. Jesus has been sent to set these people free. Weren’t you bound at one time? He set you free. Didn’t Satan have control over your life at one time? Wasn’t your marriage nearly destroyed because of sin? The prince of the world had you bound by some habit, some sin; and Jesus Christ has set you free. He led captivity captive.

In Judges, chapter 5, the same terminology is used when Deborah and Barak won a great victory for Israel. Barak was the general of the army and Deborah was the

female judge. God used them to bring a tremendous victory that gave deliverance to the Israelites. "They that are delivered from the noise of archers in the places of drawing water, there shall they rehearse the righteous acts of the Lord, even the righteous acts toward the inhabitants of his villages In Israel: then shall the people of the Lord go down to the gates. Awake, awake, Deborah: awake, awake, utter a song: arise Barak, and lead thy captivity captive, thou son of Abinoam." Judges 5:11-12. In other words, God told Barak to lead all the captives back into their freedom, to deliver them. God wrought a tremendous victory; and Israel, held captive by enemies, was delivered by Deborah, Barak, and the armies of Israel. She cried out, "lead thy captivity captive," lead the captives to freedom. This is what Ephesians 4:8 states. Jesus Christ is your deliverer. He triumphed for you! Do you see anywhere in the Scriptures where Jesus went to hell? It is simply not in the Bible. Yet, it has crept into the Church, just like a lot of other things that people accepted without knowing their origin.

John 20 contains another Scripture that might have confused you. After Jesus Christ rose, the tombstone was rolled away and Mary Magdalene was the first to see Him in His glorified body. In verse 16 "Jesus saith unto her, Mary. She turned herself, and saith unto him, Rabboni; which is to say, Master. Jesus saith unto her, touch me not; for I am not yet ascended to my Father: but go to my brethren, and say unto them, I ascend unto my Father, and your Father; and to my God, and your God." John 20:16-17. It is clear here that He had not ascended unto His Father. How could He go to heaven then? What part of Him went to the Father when Jesus was on the cross? Jesus' Spirit and His soul went immediately to the Father, not His body. Mary was clinging to Him and was not going to let go. His body had been in that grave for three days and three nights, not seeing corruption. His Spirit and soul were in paradise, with every other saint in history, waiting.

On the third day His Spirit and soul were united with His glorified body. This is what Mary saw. He had to return to heaven and take His rightful position at the right hand of the Father where He continually makes intercession for you and me in a glorified body, complete with spirit and soul. The exact same thing will happen to you at the resurrection. Where do you think you go when you are dead? Your body may go into the ground and rot, but that is not the true you. Your body is just a temporary tent that your spirit and soul live in to communicate with other people in this dimension. When this temporary body dies, you instantly go to be present with the Lord in paradise. Paul taught that being absent from the body is to be present with the Lord. There, you will await the resurrection of the body, when your spirit and soul will be united with your glorified body, just as Jesus experienced. When Mary got to the grave, it was not a naked spirit that she saw. It was not the spirit and soul that Jesus had commended to the Father three days earlier. She saw a new body, a glorified body united with a soul and Spirit. She could actually touch it. In fact, in John 20:27, Jesus told Thomas, "Reach hither thy hand and thrust it into my side." Jesus ate with the disciples and said, "A spirit hath not flesh and bones, as ye see me have." Luke 24:39. Jesus will sit down and eat with you. He has a body.

If you really study the Scriptures, you will see that Jesus did not have to go to hell. It is another error that has crept into the Church without being searched out for its origin. It is not even a necessary doctrine for our redemption, because Jesus said, "It is finished" on the cross. It is Greek mythology, a fable. It is just like the Christmas tree, Easter and all the other "traditional" things that have come out of Babylon. It is the mistake that caused Adam and Eve to fall. Eve not only disobeyed, but also added to the Word of God. It is dangerous to blindly accept these things. It could lead you into more error. Remember, the Berean Christians were commended for searching the Scriptures daily to see if these things that Paul taught were so. Acts 17:11.

When Jesus died on the cross, it was finished! Every Old Testament saint was taken by God to be with Him when they died. They went up and into paradise. You may have met someone who has emphatically taught the opposite. I am not suggesting that you should believe me because of what I have written here. You should search the Scriptures and see if these things are so.

It is finished! Jesus did not have to go to hell. The wonderful thing is that because of Jesus' sacrifice and resurrection we do not have to go to hell either. We will have a new, glorified body that is made for heaven and will live eternally. It is glorious; paradise is waiting for us! We have a wonderful Lord who is waiting to greet us any day now.

Bibliography

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