

## Where Was Jesus Between Death and Resurrection?

A number of questions and postulations have been forwarded concerning Jesus and where He was during the time between His death on the cross and His resurrection to life from the tomb. This is a simple question and the scriptures are quite clear about where Jesus was. Let's begin with the words of Jesus Himself.

Luke 23:43

And He said to him, "Truly I say to you, today you shall be **with Me in Paradise.**"

Luke 23:46

And Jesus, crying out with a loud voice, said, "Father, INTO **YOUR HANDS I COMMIT MY SPIRIT.**" Having said this, He breathed His last.

Any confusion should end right here. But with all these critics of the bible running loose, many disguising themselves as believers, the simple truth is never simple enough. Jesus was very clearly in Paradise and in the Father's hands. Jesus had no confusion as to where He would be at the moment of His death. He was also equally clear where the thief on the cross would be at the instant of his death. This is an important scripture which also addresses other side issues that I'll mention here, but not develop. Salvation is in Jesus, and Jesus alone is sufficient for Salvation. The deathbed confession saves a soul from eternal separation from God. No water baptism is required for salvation. The spirit exists separately from the body. Although the thief and Jesus would be in Paradise, their *bodies* would remain on the cross or in the grave. There is an immediate separation at death and there is no intermediate *location* (purgatory) that a soul goes to, but there is an *intermediate state*. You are immediately in Hades or Paradise.

We should also note that the Holy Spirit was not yet made available to believers, (John 7:39) yet they were saved by "faith" in Jesus as Messiah God. This thief had no reason to believe he would be saved for he knew he violated God's law. Mosaic Law was the only Law of God revealed to mankind, and under the Law the thief stood condemned, "You shall not steal." Jesus declared to the thief that his prayer would be answered that very day. The Divine nature of Jesus shines forth by knowing the thief would not linger on the cross for days and days ... which was commonplace in crucifixion ... but our Lord knew the death of the thief would be that very day.

We KNOW Jesus went to Paradise for Jesus Himself told us that's where He's going. Jesus is God in the flesh and I think God is qualified to know where people go at death. The question now becomes, where is Paradise? ... or more aptly put, where "was" Paradise when Jesus died. There is a difference between Heaven and Paradise. Prior to the ascension of Jesus, Paradise was located in Hades.

Paradise is a word of Persian origin, and means *a garden*, particularly a garden of pleasure, filled with trees, and shrubs, and fountains, and flowers. The garden of Eden means, also, the garden of *pleasure*, and in Genesis 2:8 the Septuagint renders the word *Eden* with the term *Paradise*.

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Genesis 2:8-9

- 8 The LORD God planted a garden toward the east, in Eden; and there He placed the man whom He had formed.
- 9 Out of the ground the LORD God caused to grow every tree that is pleasing to the sight and good for food; the tree of life also in the midst of the garden, and the tree of the knowledge of good and evil.

I believe this Garden or Paradise is where the righteous went after death and is the one and same Garden of Eden. God protected the Garden and the tree of life in the midst of the garden after the sin of Adam.

Genesis 3:23-24

- 23 therefore the LORD God sent him out from the garden of Eden, to cultivate the ground from which he was taken.
- 24 So He drove the man out; and at the east of the garden of Eden He stationed the cherubim and the flaming sword which turned every direction to guard the way to the tree of life.

Paradise denotes the abode of the blessed in the after life. Jesus says nothing about the location of Paradise in this scripture, nor of the condition of those there, except that it is a place of blessedness, and that its happiness is to commence immediately after death. We need to examine other verses to determine the location of Paradise, and upon examination we learn it was not in heaven at the time of Jesus' death.

Ephesians 4:8-10

- 8 Therefore it says, "**WHEN HE ASCENDED ON HIGH, HE LED CAPTIVE A HOST OF CAPTIVES, AND HE GAVE GIFTS TO MEN.**"
- 9 (Now this expression, "He ascended," what does it mean except that He also had descended into the lower parts of the earth?
- 10 He who descended is Himself also He who ascended far above all the heavens, so that He might fill all things.)

This was very much part of the ministry of Jesus to release the righteous dead or the redeemed from Paradise and bring them unto Himself. Paradise was secured or protected by God in Hades, the place of the dead.

Luke 4:18

"THE SPIRIT OF THE LORD IS UPON ME, BECAUSE HE ANOINTED ME TO PREACH THE GOSPEL TO THE POOR. **HE HAS SENT ME TO PROCLAIM RELEASE TO THE CAPTIVES,** AND RECOVERY OF SIGHT TO THE BLIND, TO SET FREE THOSE WHO ARE OPPRESSED,

1 Peter 3:19

in which also He went and made proclamation to the spirits [now] in prison,

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Much false and non-biblical doctrine has been made with verse 3:19. Some proclaim this to be purgatory, others claim this verse as Jesus descending into hell. Both positions are false. We know that “works” can NEVER be sufficient for salvation. Mosaic Law was a system of “works” that God indeed established for His people. Those who worked “by faith” are saved or redeemed by faith just as we are. The righteous redeemed were “confined” to Paradise ... certainly not a bad place to be, but inadequate when compared to being “with” God in heaven. The spirits in Paradise still awaited their Redeemer, the prophesied Messiah to “redeem” them before they could be in the **presence** of God. The books of Romans and Hebrews specifically address the truths concerning this. This post is hardly the place to develop those truths in detail.

1 Peter 4:6

For the gospel has for this purpose been preached **even to those who are dead**, that though they are judged in the flesh as men, they may live in the spirit according to [the will of] God.

We also know that Paradise and Hades are not one and the same place, for a great gulf separated the two. It appears from the teaching of Jesus Himself in his story of Lazarus and the rich ruler that those in Hades were aware of those in paradise but the reciprocal does not appear to be true. There is much information to be gleaned from this account, so let's review Jesus' teaching as recorded by Luke.

Luke 16:20

20 "And a poor man named Lazarus was laid at his gate, covered with sores,

Many claim this to be a parable of Jesus, but I believe this to be a true and actual historical event. In parables, Jesus never makes mention of a specific individual by name, but here Jesus identifies the poor man by name, Lazarus.

Luke 16:22

"Now the poor man died and was carried away by the angels to Abraham's bosom; and the rich man also died and was buried.

Abraham's bosom and Paradise were one and the same place.

Luke 16:23-25

23 "In Hades he lifted up his eyes, being in torment, and \*saw Abraham far away and Lazarus in his bosom.

24 "And he cried out and said, 'Father Abraham, have mercy on me, and send Lazarus so that he may dip the tip of his finger in water and cool off my tongue, for I am in agony in this flame.'

25 "But Abraham said, 'Child, remember that during your life you received your good things, and likewise Lazarus bad things; but now he is being comforted here, and you are in agony.'

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We see several things in this one scripture. There is a **conscious existence** in Hades, and there is torment. Though the Final Judgment is yet in the future, the torment of Hades begins immediately upon death. Torment is a type of suffering that originates from within and should not be confused with torture, a punishment imposed upon an individual by an external means. The rich man was in torment for he knew full well the impact of his decisions in life and further knew them to be just.

Luke 16:26

'And besides all this, between us and you **there is a great chasm fixed**, so that those who wish to come over from here to you will not be able, and that none may cross over from there to us.'

A great gulf or chasm that cannot be breached exists between Paradise and Hades.

Luke 16:27-31

- 27 "And he said, 'Then I beg you, father, that you send him to my father's house—
- 28 for I have five brothers—in order that he may warn them, so that they will not also come to this place of torment.'
- 29 "But Abraham \*said, 'They have Moses and the Prophets; let them hear them.'
- 30 "But he said, 'No, father Abraham, but if someone goes to them from the dead, they will repent!'
- 31 "But he said to him, 'If they do not listen to Moses and the Prophets, they will not be persuaded even if someone rises from the dead.'"

We can call these last few verses **ACCOUNTABILITY**. We are all responsible and accountable for the decisions we make in this life. Great miracles, signs and wonders will not move those to accept Jesus as the only means of salvation, only saving faith from God can do that.

Jesus Himself proclaimed the gospel to those who "*by faith*" awaited His manifestation. He proclaimed to the spirits in Paradise that He Himself is their Messiah, and that He is the fulfillment of the scriptures and gospel of His coming.

Romans 10:6-8

- 6 But the righteousness based on faith speaks as follows: "DO NOT SAY IN YOUR HEART, 'WHO WILL ASCEND INTO HEAVEN?' (that is, to bring Christ down),
- 7 or 'WHO WILL DESCEND INTO THE ABYSS?' (that is, to bring Christ up from the dead)."
- 8 But what does it say? "THE WORD IS NEAR YOU, in your mouth and in your heart"—that is, the word of faith which we are preaching,

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Paul says the righteous **“DO NOT”** think or doubt about the completeness of their Salvation when Messiah comes for them. Paul is speaking of the kind of saving faith from God that there is no need to hope for someone to go to heaven to “fetch” or bring the Messiah down nor to go down to Paradise to bring the Messiah up again. Some use this verse to say Christ went into the abyss ... Hell ... but this is NOT what this verse is teaching at all as the verse explains itself. The abyss in Romans 10:7 is referring to the state of the physically dead, not hell.

Romans 10:7

or ‘WHO WILL DESCEND INTO THE ABYSS?’ (**that is**, to bring Christ up **from the dead**).”

Remember what we have been taught by Jesus Himself in Luke 16? Paradise and Hades were in the same place though separated by a great impenetrable gulf.

Jesus brought Paradise and those “confined” to Paradise up to heaven with Him when He ascended to heaven. Jesus Himself declared He was not in heaven with the Father during the time between His death and resurrection.

John 20:17

Jesus \*said to her, "Stop clinging to Me, for I have not yet ascended to the Father; but go to My brethren and say to them, ‘I ascend to My Father and your Father, and My God and your God.’”

This is what Jesus spoke to Mary Magdalene AFTER His resurrection. Paradise and the tree of life are now in heaven with God.

2 Corinthians 12:4

was caught up into Paradise and heard inexpressible words, which a man is not permitted to speak.

Revelation 2:7

‘He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches. To him who overcomes, I will grant to eat of the tree of life which is in the Paradise of God.’

We see by Scripture alone that Jesus descended into Paradise to proclaim the gospel to the righteous dead who awaited their coming Savior, to set them free from the confinement (prison) that held them as they awaited their redemption.

No one comes to the Father except through Jesus.

No one means no one. Those in Paradise awaited their coming Redeemer, and now are redeemed and in heaven with Jesus the Messiah, The Father and The Holy Spirit and all the others saved by grace through faith.