

## Did Jesus Go To Hell?

Several charismatic preachers (including Benny Hinn, Joyce Meyer, and Kenneth Copeland) have taught that, when Jesus died on the cross, His spirit went to hell, where He was tortured by Satan and demons, suffering the full wrath of God while He was imprisoned there. The Catechism of the Catholic Church cites the Apostles' Creed, saying that Jesus "descended into hell." The purpose of this article is to show what the Scriptures actually say about what happened to Jesus when He died on the cross.

Let's start with Jesus' own words. As He hung on the cross, He told the thief, "Truly I say to you, today you shall be with Me in Paradise" (Luke 23:43). As He neared death, Jesus said, "Father, into Your hands I commit My spirit." By Jesus' own words, it is clear that Jesus did not expect His spirit to go to hell, but to go to Paradise.

Peter also addressed the matter in Acts 2:25-28, citing a prophecy of David in Psalm 16:10-11:

For David says of Him, "I SAW THE LORD ALWAYS IN MY PRESENCE; FOR HE IS AT MY RIGHT HAND, SO THAT I WILL NOT BE SHAKEN. THEREFORE MY HEART WAS GLAD AND MY TONGUE EXULTED; MOREOVER MY FLESH ALSO WILL LIVE IN HOPE; BECAUSE YOU WILL NOT ABANDON MY SOUL TO HADES, NOR ALLOW YOUR HOLY ONE TO UNDERGO DECAY. YOU HAVE MADE KNOWN TO ME THE WAYS OF LIFE; YOU WILL MAKE ME FULL OF GLADNESS WITH YOUR PRESENCE."

In that prophecy, David said that the soul of Jesus would not be abandoned to Hades. Hades (verse 27) is the realm of the dead where souls go after the death of the body; it corresponds to Sheol of the Old Testament. It is neither heaven nor hell (Gehenna), as demonstrated in the case of the rich man and Lazarus (Luke 16:19-31). The King James Version, here and in other passages, incorrectly translates the Greek word ᾗδης (hades) as hell, an error corrected in the New KJV, NASB, ESV, and other modern translations. This mistranslation may be a contributor to the doctrine that Jesus went to hell. Matthew 10:28 says that hell is the place where soul and body are destroyed. Yet David prophesied, and Jesus knew, that Jesus' body would not undergo decay and His soul would not be abandoned to such destruction.

Peter further commented in 1 Peter 3:18 that Jesus was "put to death in the flesh, but made alive in the spirit." It was the body of Jesus that died, not His spirit. Again he wrote, "Christ has suffered in the flesh," showing that Jesus suffered not in the spirit but in the body.

The apostle Paul also confirmed the nature of the death of Jesus in Colossians 1:22, "He has now reconciled you in His fleshly body through death." It was the death of Jesus' fleshly body that brought reconciliation. The Hebrew writer concurs: "we have been sanctified through the offering of the body of Jesus Christ once for all" (Hebrews 10:10).

The ultimate penalty of sin is "eternal destruction, away from the presence of the Lord" (2 Thessalonians 1:9). It is eternal spiritual death. Jesus did not receive this ultimate penalty...He did not go to hell. Men tortured and killed the body of Jesus, but the Father preserved His soul and spirit in Hades, then resurrected His body. Jesus did not suffer in the spirit while His body was dead. He suffered just as prophesied in Genesis 3:15, a minor bruise: the death of His physical body.

Since Jesus died in the flesh only, and was resurrected, we have confidence that our suffering in the flesh, even unto physical death, is temporary as well. As Peter wrote, "Therefore, those also who suffer according to the will of God shall entrust their souls to a faithful Creator in doing what is right."

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