

The Apostle's Creed in the Context of *Church History* and the Doctrine of "He descended into hell"

**The Letter to the Church at Smyrna
100 – 325AD**

"The Church Born in Blood"

Revelation 2:8-11 / Parallel Kingdom Parable – Mark 4:21-29 and Luke 8:16-18

The Meaning of the Name: "Myrrh" or "bitterness".

Revelation: The first and the last, who was dead, and has come to life. Christ who has the first word and the last word has risen from the dead.

Commendation: I know your tribulation and your poverty (but you are rich), and the blasphemy by those who say they are Jews and are not, but are a synagogue of Satan.

1. **Tribulation** - Suffered persecution even to death.
2. **Poverty** - Had their worldly possessions taken from them.
3. **Blasphemed** - Jews spoke against this Church, accusing it of not being of God. However, Christ says that these in fact are cooperating with Satan in opposing the will of God. Jesus said to the Jews who did not believe in Him, "You are of your father the devil, and you want to do the desires of your father. He was a murderer from the beginning, and does not stand in the truth, because there is no truth in him. Whenever he speaks a lie, he speaks from his own nature; for he is a liar, and the father of lies. But because I speak the truth, you do not believe Me. Which one of you convicts Me of sin? If I speak truth, why do you not believe Me? He who is of God hears the words of God; for this reason you do not hear them, because you are not of God." (John 8:44-47)

Criticism: None.

Instruction: Do not fear what you are about to suffer. Behold, the devil is about to cast some of you into prison, that you may be tested, and you will have tribulation ten days. Be faithful until death. Do not fear the tribulation that will come upon you. Remain faithful in your testimony of Me.

Penalty: None.

Promise: I will give you the crown of life. He who overcomes shall not be hurt by the second death. (See ... I remained faithful to the testimony of My Father and have risen from the dead never to die again.) - The Ante Nicene Age 100 – 325 AD

The Ante Nicene Age began with the death of the apostle John and ended with the advent of the First General Ecumenical 9 Council, which was held at Nicea, in northwestern Asia Minor in 325 AD. In fact, the words, Ante Nicene mean "before Nicea."

Like the "**parable of the growing plant**" the Church became visible. No longer was it just some obscure religion in the outlands of the Roman Empire but now a living and growing organism challenging Rome's traditional religion and politics. It needed to be rooted out! Enemies appeared at every level as the **Church battled** against accusations from Jews, persecution by the government and **false teaching by heretical groups**, such as the Gnostics. Thousands were martyred for their faith: being burned to death or thrown to wild animals as a spectator sport. But the blood of the martyrs provided fertile soil for the Church to grow.

- The Rise of Creedal Statements -

As enemies of the Church began to emerge, church leaders found that they needed to develop some orthodox beliefs. They did this through the use of creeds. When the Church was attacked on a specific issue it formulated the correct belief about that issue and included it in an updated creed. The following creed was approved at the Council of Nicea in 325 AD:

We believe in one God, the Father almighty, maker of all things visible and invisible; and in one Lord Jesus Christ, the Son of God, begotten from the Father, only-begotten, that is, from the substance of the Father, God from God, light from light, true God from true God, begotten not made, of one substance with the Father, through Whom all things came into being, things in heaven and things on earth, Who because of us men and because of our salvation, came down and became incarnate, becoming man, suffered and rose again on the third day, ascended into heaven, and will come to judge the living and the dead; And in the Holy Spirit.

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**The Letter to the Church at Pergamum
325 to 787AD**

"Church in the Midst of Satan's Kingdom"

Revelation 2:12-17 / Parallel Kingdom Parable – Matthew 13:31-35 and Mark 4:30-34

The Meaning of the Name: "Fortified" or "High Tower" or "Thoroughly Married" Revelation: The One who has the sharp two-edged sword. Christ is the One who speaks the truth, which is the Word of God.

Commendation: I know where you dwell, where Satan's throne is; and you hold fast My name, and did not deny My faith, even in the days of Antipas, My witness, My faithful one, who was killed among you, where Satan dwells.

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1. **Dwelling Place** - It is right in the middle of Satan's (the deceiver ... the liar ... the accuser ... the adversary) camp.

2. **Testimony and Faith** - Held firm to the truth as the apostle Paul says, "if you confess with your mouth Jesus as Lord, and believe in your heart that God raised Him from the dead, you shall be saved; for with the heart man believes, resulting in righteousness, and with the mouth he confesses, resulting in salvation. (Romans 10:9-10)

Criticism: 'But I have a few things against you, because you have there some who hold the teaching of Balaam, who kept teaching Balak to put a stumbling block before the sons of Israel, to eat things sacrificed to idols, and to commit acts of immorality. 'Thus you also have some who in the same way hold the teaching of the Nicolaitans.

You permit the teaching of the Nicolaitans. The Nicolaitans as a group cannot be traced specifically however, the meaning of the name Nicolaitans is "victory over the people", and **alludes to those who cause people to stumble in their faith. Since they have power over people they are evidently those who have obtained leadership roles within the Church.**

The text parallels what Balaam taught King Balak to do in order to cause the Israelites to apostatize in their faith towards God. Balaam knew that there was nothing either he or King Balak could do to curse the sons of Israel. **But if they could get the sons of Israel to turn away from their God, then God Himself would bring disaster on the people.** Balaam told King Balak that **intermarriage** between his women and Israel's men would begin to turn their hearts from God. The women would get the men to eat food sacrificed to idols and then to commit acts of sexual immorality.

The eating of things sacrificed to idols and committing acts of immorality may have literally happened to this church but evidence to support it is hard to find. However, the text appears to be pointing towards **a spiritual apostasy. By creating a marriage between the Church, which belongs to the Lord and the kingdoms of this world, which belong to Satan the Church would eventually be led into idolatry.** Eating food sacrificed to idols would be taking worldly counsel, instead of partaking of the Word of God and following the Holy Spirit. Sexual immorality exists when you become intimate with one to whom you don't belong ... the Church giving its body to be used by the kingdoms of this world for their pleasure.

Instruction: Repent therefore. Change your mind; do not allow this to continue (stop doing it your way and start doing it God's way).

Penalty: I am coming to you quickly, and **I will make war against them with the sword of My mouth. Christ will fight against all those who teach these things by overcoming them with the truth showing them to be liars and opposing the truth.**

Promise: I will give some of the hidden manna, and I will give him a white stone, and a new name written on the stone which no one knows but he who receives it. If you overcome I will feed you good food ... food from heaven not the earth ... heavenly wisdom because the Spirit of God dwells in Me and I speak the truth and do not lie. I will also give you a white stone showing that you have been acquitted and I will give you My name to be a husband to you in all things.

- The Post Nicene Age 325 – 787 AD

The Post Nicene Age began with the **First General Ecumenical Council**, which was held at Nicea, in northwestern Asia Minor in 325 AD. It ended at the seventh and last **General Ecumenical Council, which was also held at Nicea in 787 AD.** The words, Post Nicene mean "after Nicea."

The "**parable of the mustard seed**" shows that when the mustard plant grows to sufficient size the birds of the air build their nests in it. Jesus explained to His disciples that the birds were representative of the "evil one" (Matthew 13:4 and 19). During this "age" the Church experienced great external growth but worldly alliances were made. With the rise of Constantine as Emperor of the Roman Empire the persecution of the Church ceased and actually came into his favor. *Constantine was a pagan sun worshipper throughout his life but was baptized into the faith on his deathbed in 337 AD.* **During his period of rule, a marriage of Church and State developed. Constantine got deeply involved in Church affairs at the First General Ecumenical Council of the Church at Nicea in 325 AD.** He virtually imposed the understanding we have of the trinity today in opposition to the Arian belief. *Also at this time Sunday was declared the day of rest instead of the Sabbath* and the date of Bikkurim was fixed on the Roman calendar in disregard of the Biblical calendar. At one time Constantine claimed to be a bishop of the Church for external affairs, believing that God had called him to regulate the Church's life. Progressively Constantine saw Christianity as the state religion. And in 391 AD Emperor Theodosius made Christianity the State religion and Church membership mandatory. The Lord's message to this Church was appropriately sent to Pergamum, which means "Fortified" or "High Tower" or "Thoroughly Married."

Several pagan cults existed in Pergamum ... Zeus, Athena and Dionysus. The cult of Asclepius was established by the Attalid kings with that of Asclepius Soter ("the savior" or "healer") being of special importance. The first temple of the imperial cult was built in 29 BC in honor of Rome and Augustus.

The Post Nicene age saw the rise of Monasticism, a withdrawing from the world into communal living in a monastery or convent. St Anthony, the most famous of the "Hermit Monks" was on the scene. St Pachomius established the first monastery in 323 AD and the eastern segment of the Church followed his model. St Benedict followed by establishing the western model of communal living at Monte Cassino in 529 AD and developed the "Rule" 17 in 534 AD.

The "Bible" as we know it was compiled from the various Christian writings and authorized first in the East by Athanasius (writer of the Athanasius Creed) in 367 AD, then by the West at the Synod 18 of Rome in 382 AD and finally by the entire Church at the Synod of Carthage in 397 AD.

Also during this time the hierarchy of the Church came into being following a Roman or worldly pattern. At the Council of Nicea in 325 AD the metropolitan bishops of the Church gained ascendancy (superiority, authority) over country bishops. Then in 381 AD at the Council of Constantinople special honor was granted to the bishops of Rome, Constantinople, Alexandria, Antioch, and Jerusalem. Finally in 451 AD at the Council of Chalcedon Leo I, the Bishop of Rome, asserted that the Bishop of Rome should be supreme, formulating the Petrine concept of papal authority. The Council explicitly rejected Leo's claim to absolute authority in the Church.

The next step in establishing papal supremacy was taken by another Roman Bishop, Gelasius (492-496 AD). He wrote, "Two there are, August emperor, by which this world is chiefly ruled and the sacred authority of the priesthood (of which the pope is head) and the royal power. Of these, the responsibility of the priests is weightier in so far as they will answer for the Kings of men themselves at divine judgment." Both priests and rulers, said Gelasius, should submit to the pope, who is answerable only to Christ.

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In His message to Pergamum (Revelation 2:13) Jesus speaks of Antipas being the Lord's faithful witness who was killed among them in the Church but no historical record can be found concerning this individual. However, a clue might be found in his name Antipas, which means "against the father". Could this be someone who resisted the idea of the papacy?

Worship, at first very simple, was developed into elaborate, stately, imposing ceremonies having the entire outward splendor that had belonged to pagan temples. Ministers became priests. The term "priest" was not applied to Christian ministers before 200 AD. The term was borrowed from the Jewish system, and from the example of heathen priesthood. Leo I (440-461 AD) prohibited priests from marrying, and celibacy of priests became a law of the Roman Catholic Church.

In 395 AD the Roman Empire divided into two parts, the western empire of which Rome was the capital and the eastern empire of which Constantinople was the capital. The Church followed this example with its first schism in 484 AD and its final one in 1054 AD with the establishment of the Roman Catholic Church in the west and the Greek Orthodox Church at Constantinople in the east.

The Post-Nicene church age, which spanned a 462-year period of time, was predominantly marked by the development of the Church's orthodox doctrine. The doctrine itself was developed by various bishops within the Church and approved at one of the seven General Ecumenical Councils.

In the message to the Church at Pergamum (Revelation 2:12-17) Jesus said that it dwelt right in the middle of Satan's (the deceiver's ... the liar's ... the accuser's ... the adversary's) camp. He also said that Satan's throne was there as well. Could he have been referring to the "Great Altar of Zeus" which was discovered at Pergamum and after its excavation in 1886 shipped to Berlin, Germany where it is currently on display?

- The Seven General Ecumenical Councils -

1. **The First Council of Nicea, (325)** repudiated Arianism, adopted the Nicene Creed.
2. **The First Council of Constantinople, (381)** revised the Nicene Creed into the present form used in the Eastern and Oriental Orthodox churches.
3. The Council of Ephesus, (431) repudiated Nestorianism, proclaimed the Virgin Mary as the Mother of God.
4. The Council of Chalcedon, (451) repudiated the Eutychian doctrine of Monophysitism, described and delineated the two natures of Christ, human and divine; adopted the Chalcedonian Creed. The Eastern Orthodox Church does not recognize this council or any of the following councils.
5. The Second Council of Constantinople, (553) reaffirmed decisions and doctrines explicated by previous Councils, condemned new Arian, Nestorian, and Monophysite writings.
6. The Third Council of Constantinople, (680-681) repudiated Monothelitism, affirmed that Christ had both human and Divine wills.
7. **The Second Council of Nicea, (787)** restoration of the veneration of icons and end of the first iconoclasm.

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The Apostle's Creed (the final form was written no later than 724 AD)

1. I believe in God, the Father almighty, Creator of heaven and earth.
2. I believe in Jesus Christ, His only Son, our Lord
3. who was conceived by the Holy Spirit, born of the Virgin Mary,
4. suffered under Pontius Pilate, was crucified, died, and was buried;
- 5. He descended into hell.¹ On the third day He rose again;**
6. He ascended into heaven, He is seated at the right hand of the Father,
7. and He will come again to judge the living and the dead.
8. I believe in the Holy Spirit,
9. the holy catholic church, the communion of saints,
10. the forgiveness of sins,
11. the resurrection of the body,
12. and the life everlasting. Amen.

¹"He descended into hell." This statement was added to the Apostle's Creed sometime before 724 AD. The source of the statement is unknown but much controversy within the church has arisen over it. It appears that the basis for the statement might have been taken from 1 Peter 3:18-20 and 4:6.

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A summary of the development of the Apostles' Creed

Church historian Philip Schaff provides a summary of the development of the Apostles' Creed in his book, *The Creeds of Christendom*. A helpful table, showing the creed's gradual formation in the West from AD 200 to 750, can't be reproduced in

full here, but I'll quote the relevant part, listing each version of the creed, the year, and **the wording of the "descent into hell" clause**, if included:

Version	Year	Clause?
St. Irenaeus	AD 200	--
Tertullian	AD 220	--
St. Cyprian	AD 250	--
Novatian	AD 260	--
Marcellus	AD 341	--
Rufinus (Alquileja)	AD 390	DESCENDIT in INFERNA
Rufinus (Rome)	AD 390	--
St. Augustine	AD 400	--
St. Nicetas	AD 450	--
Eusebius Gallus	AD 550	--
Sacramentarius Gallicanum	AD 650	Descendit AD Inferna
Pirminius (current)	AD 750	Descendit ad Inferna

It's not clear from my table, but if you look at the original, which shows all the clauses of the creed for each of these versions, you'll notice that this particular clause is one of the least-attributed of all of them. **Epecially notable is that it only appears in one version of the creed before AD 600.**

With respect to the first orthodox version containing the phrase (AD 390), **Scaff notes that Rufinus didn't actually interpret the phrase in the Alquileja version the normal way: he thought it meant the same thing as the previous clause, "buried." If that's the case, then the first intentional orthodox/Western use of "descent into hell" was in AD 650.**

This history has encouraged some to call for removing "the clause" ("*descent into hell*") from the creed, such as Protestant theologian Wayne Grudem.⁴ Grudem and others, like John Piper, **also dispute the clause with biblical arguments, so it's likely that Protestant churches that have removed the clause from their creeds are doing so only partially because of the clause's history.**

<https://christianity.stackexchange.com/questions/41911/when-did-he-descended-into-hell-become-part-of-the-apostles-creed>

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Harrowing of Hell

From Wikipedia, the free encyclopedia

In Christian theology, the **Harrowing of Hell** (Latin: *Descensus Christi ad Inferos*, "the descent of Christ into hell") is the triumphant descent of Christ into Hell (or Hades) between the time of his Crucifixion and his Resurrection when he brought salvation to all of the righteous who had died since the beginning of the world. After his death, the soul of Jesus descended into the realm of the dead.

The Harrowing of Hell is referred to in the **Apostles' Creed** and the Athanasian Creed (*Quicumque vult*) which state that Jesus Christ "**descended into Hell**". Christ having descended to the underworld is alluded to in the New Testament in **1 Peter 4:6**, which states that the "*good tidings were proclaimed to the dead*". The Catholic Catechism interprets **Ephesians 4:9**, which states that "*[Christ] descended into the lower parts of the earth*", as also supporting this interpretation. **This near-absence in Scripture has given rise to controversy and differing interpretations.** *The Harrowing of Hell* is commemorated in the liturgical calendar on **Holy Saturday**.

According to *The Catholic Encyclopedia*, **the story first appears clearly in the Gospel of Nicodemus** in the section called the Acts of Pilate, which also appears separately at earlier dates within the Acts of Peter and Paul.

Contents

The Greek wording in the **Apostles' Creed** and Latin may also be translated as "underworld", "netherworld", or "abode of the dead."

The realm into which Jesus descended is called Hell, in long-established English usage, but Sheol or Limbo by some Christian theologians to distinguish it from the hell of the damned

The word "*harrow*" comes from the Old English *hergian* meaning to harry or despoil and is seen in the homilies of the 10th Century. The term *Harrowing of Hell* refers not merely to the idea that Christ descended into Hell, as in the Creed, but to the

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rich tradition that developed later, asserting that he triumphed over *inferos*, releasing Hell's captives, particularly Adam and Eve, and the righteous men and women of the Old Testament period.

(NOTE: In spite of Paul proclamation 50 days after Jesus' Resurrection regarding King David: Acts 2:29, "Brothers, I may say to you with confidence about the patriarch David that he both died and was buried, and his tomb is with us to this day.")

Christ's Descent into Limbo by Andrea Mantegna and studio, c. 1470.

In Classical mythology Hades is the underworld inhabited by departed souls and the god Pluto is its ruler. The New Testament uses the term "Hades" to refer to the abode or state of the dead. In some places it seems to represent a neutral place where the dead awaited the death, burial, and resurrection of Jesus. Several passages from the New Testament have been taken by some to imply that Christ descended into this realm of the dead to bring the righteous ones to Heaven. Other New Testament passages imply it is a place of torment for the unrighteous, leading to speculation that it may be divided into two very different sections.

Verses containing the word "Hades"

- Revelation 1:18: "I am He who lives, and was dead, and behold, I am alive forevermore. Amen. And I have the keys of *Hades* and of Death."
- Revelation 6:8: "So I looked, and behold, a pale horse. And the name of him who sat on it was Death, and *Hades* followed with him. And power was given to them over a fourth of the earth, to kill with sword, with hunger, with death, and by the beasts of the earth."
- Revelation 20:13: "The sea gave up the dead who were in it, and Death and Hades delivered up the dead who were in them. And they were judged, each one according to his works."
- Revelation 20:14: "Then Death and *Hades* were cast into the lake of fire. This is the second death."

Verses without "Hades" but doctrinal support

Although these verses do not contain the word "Hades", theologians have concluded that comparable terms are used as synonyms:

- 1 Peter 3:19–20: (Jesus) "went and made proclamation to the imprisoned spirits – to those who were disobedient long ago when God waited patiently in the days of Noah while the ark was being built. In it only a few people, eight in all, were saved through water...."
- Ephesians 4:7-10 NIV: "But to each one of us grace has been given as Christ apportioned it. This is why it^[or God] says, 'When he ascended on high, he took many captives and gave gifts to his people.'^[Psalm 68:18] (What does 'he ascended' mean except that he also descended to the lower, earthly regions? He who descended is the very one who ascended higher than all the heavens, in order to fill the whole universe."

Verse 8 above is a truncated paraphrase adapting Psalm 68:18, with a changed point of view: "When you ascended on high, you led captives in your train; you received gifts from men, even from the rebellious – that you, O LORD God, might dwell there."(NIV) The parenthetical verses 9–10 of Ephesians are widely read as an exegetical gloss on the text. The word for "lower parts" (the comparative form: τὰ κατώτερα) is similar to the word used for "Hell" in the Greek version of the Apostles Creed (the superlative form: τὰ κατώτατα, English: "lowest [places]").

Frank Stagg writes that the entire passage Ephesians 4:1-16 is a prayerful exhortation to the readers that they measure up to their high calling in Christ. He takes "measuring up" to mean in terms of the unity and maturity of the one body which they already are (vv. 4,12,16). He says that in this long paragraph, the goal of redemption is the building up of the one body of Christ. Verses 4 through 6 set forth their sevenfold unity: "one body, one Spirit, ...one hope..., one Lord, one faith, one baptism, one God and Father of all, the one over all and through all, and in all." Without mentioning "harrowing", he writes that "The very Christ who *ascended* is then described as the one who *descended* and who gave the apostles, the prophets, the evangelists, the pastors, and teachers to the church.

Early Christian teaching

The Harrowing of Hell was taught by theologians of the early church, including in the Catholic *Homily on the Passover* and more explicitly in his *Homily for Holy Saturday* (this day, known as **Holy and Great Saturday**, is also called **The Great Sabbath** since it is on this day that Christ "rested" physically in the tomb. But it is also believed that it was on this day he performed in spirit the *Harrowing of Hell* and raised up to Paradise, having liberated those who had been held captive. This day is also known as **Joyous Saturday**, otherwise known as the night of light and joy.).

The Old Testament view of the afterlife was that all people, whether righteous or unrighteous, went to Sheol when they died. No Hebrew figure ever descended into Sheol and returned, although an apparition of the recently deceased Samuel briefly appeared to Saul when summoned by the Witch of Endor. Several works from the Second Temple period elaborate the concept of Sheol, dividing it into sections based on the righteousness or unrighteousness of those who have died.

The New Testament maintains a distinction between Sheol, the common "place of the dead", and the eternal destiny of those condemned at the Final Judgment, variously described as Gehenna, "the outer darkness," or a lake of eternal fire. Modern English translations of the Bible maintain this distinction (e.g. by translating *Sheol* as "the Pit" and *Gehenna* as "Hell"), **but the influential King James Version used the word "hell" to translate both concepts.**

Catholicism

There is an ancient homily on the subject, of unknown authorship, usually entitled *The Lord's Descent into Hell* that is the second reading at Office of Readings on Holy Saturday in the Roman Catholic Church.

The *Catechism of the Catholic Church* states: "**By the expression 'He descended into Hell', the Apostles' Creed confesses that Jesus did really die and through his death for us conquered death and the devil 'who has the power of death'**

(Hebrews 2:14). In his human soul united to his divine person, the dead Christ went down to the realm of the dead. He opened Heaven's gates for the just who had gone before him."

As the Catechism says, the word "*Hell*" – from the Norse, *Hel*; in Latin, *infernus, infernum, inferi*; in Greek, Ἅδης (Hades); in Hebrew, שְׁאוֹל (Sheol) – is used in Scripture and the Apostles' Creed to refer to the abode of all the dead, whether righteous or evil, unless or until they are admitted to Heaven (CCC 633). This abode of the dead is the "*Hell*" into which the Creed says Christ descended. His death freed from exclusion from Heaven the just who had gone before him: "***It is precisely these holy souls who awaited their Savior in Abraham's bosom whom Christ the Lord delivered when he descended into Hell***", the Catechism states (CCC 633), echoing the words of the Roman Catechism, 1,6,3. His death was of no avail to the damned. Conceptualization of the abode of the dead as a place, though possible and customary, is not obligatory (Church documents, such as catechisms, speak of a "state or place"). Some maintain that Christ did not go to the place of the damned, which is what is generally understood today by the word "*Hell*". For instance, Thomas Aquinas taught that Christ did not descend into the "*Hell of the lost*" in his essence, but only by the effect of his death, through which "he put them to shame for their unbelief and wickedness: but to them who were detained in Purgatory he gave hope of attaining to glory: while upon the holy Fathers detained in Hell solely on account of original sin, he shed the light of glory everlasting."

While some maintain that Christ merely descended into the "*limbo of the fathers*", others, notably theologian Hans Urs von Balthasar (inspired by the visions of Adrienne von Speyr), maintain that it was more than this and that the descent involved suffering by Jesus. Some maintain that this is a matter on which differences and theological speculation are permissible without transgressing the limits of orthodoxy. However, Balthasar's point here has been forcefully condemned by conservative Catholic outlets.

Lutheranism

Martin Luther, in a sermon delivered in Torgau in 1533, stated that Christ descended into Hell.

The Formula of Concord (a Lutheran confession) states, "*we believe simply that the entire person, God and human being, descended to Hell after his burial, conquered the devil, destroyed the power of Hell, and took from the devil all his power.*" (Solid Declaration, Art. IX)

Many attempts were made following Luther's death to systematize his theology of the descensus, whether Christ descended in victory or humiliation. For Luther, however, the defeat or "humiliation" of Christ is never fully separable from His victorious glorification. Some argued that Christ's suffering was completed with His words from the cross, "It is finished." Luther himself, when pressed to elaborate on the question of whether Christ descended to Hell in humiliation or victory responded, "*It is enough to preach the article to the laypeople as they have learned to know it in the past from the stained glass and other sources.*"

Calvinism

John Calvin expressed his concern that many Christians "*have never earnestly considered what it is or means that we have been redeemed from God's judgment. Yet this is our wisdom: duly to feel how much our salvation cost the Son of God.*"

Calvin's conclusion is that "*If any persons have scruples about admitting this article into the Creed, it will soon be made plain how important it is to the sum of our redemption: if it is left out, much of the benefit of Christ's death will be lost.*" **Calvin strongly opposed the notion that Christ freed prisoners, as opposed to traveling to Hell as part of completing his sufferings** (Institutes of the Christian Religion, Book 2, chapter 16, sections 8-10),

Reformed

The Reformed interpret the phrase "*he descended into Hell*" as **referring to Christ's pain and humiliation prior to his death, and that this humiliation had a spiritual dimension as part of God's judgement upon the sin which he bore on behalf of Christians**. The doctrine of Christ's humiliation is also meant to assure believers that Christ has redeemed them from the pain and suffering of God's judgment on sin.

Mormonism

Main articles: Spirit world (Latter Day Saints) and Plan of salvation (Latter Day Saints)

The Harrowing of Hell has been a unique and important doctrine among members of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints since its founding in 1830 by Joseph Smith, although members of the church ("Mormons") usually call it by other terms, such as "Christ's visit to the spirit world." Like Christian exegetes distinguishing between Sheol and Gehenna, Latter-day Saints distinguish between the realm of departed spirits (the "spirit world") and the portion (or state) of the wicked ("spirit prison"). The portion or state of the righteous is often referred to as "paradise".

Perhaps the most notable aspect of Latter-day Saint beliefs regarding the *Harrowing of Hell* is their view on the purpose of it, both for the just and the wicked. Joseph F. Smith, the sixth president of the Church, explained in what is now a canonized revelation, that when Christ died, "there were gathered together in one place an innumerable company of the spirits of the just, ... rejoicing together because the day of their deliverance was at hand. They were assembled awaiting the advent of the Son of God into the spirit world, to declare their redemption from the bands of death" (D&C 138:12,15-16).

In the LDS view, while Christ announced freedom from physical death to the just, he had another purpose in descending to Hell regarding the wicked. "The Lord went not in person among the wicked and the disobedient who had rejected the truth, to teach them; but behold, from among the righteous, he organized his forces ... and commissioned them to go forth and carry the light of the gospel to them that were in darkness, even to all the spirits of men; and thus was the gospel preached to the dead ... to those who had died in their sins, without a knowledge of the truth, or in transgression, having rejected the prophets" (D&C 138:29–30,32). From the Latter-day Saint viewpoint, the rescue of spirits was not a one-time event but an ongoing process that still continues (D&C 138; 1 Peter 4:6). This concept goes hand-in-hand with the doctrine of baptism for the dead, which is based on the LDS belief that those who choose to accept the gospel in the spirit world must still receive the saving ordinances in order to dwell in the kingdom of God (Mark 16:16; John 3:5; 1 Peter 3:21). These baptisms and other ordinances are performed in LDS temples, wherein a church member is baptized vicariously, or in behalf of, those who died without being baptized by proper authority. The recipients in the spirit world then have the opportunity to accept or reject this baptism.

Rejection of the doctrine

A number of Christians reject the doctrine of the "harrowing of hell", claiming that "there is scant scriptural evidence for [it], and that Jesus's own words contradict it". John Piper, for example, says "there is no textual [i.e. Biblical] basis for believing that Christ descended into hell", and, therefore, Piper does not recite the "he descended into hell" phrase when saying the Apostles' Creed. Wayne Grudem also skips the phrase when reciting the Creed; he says that the "single argument in ... favor [of the "harrowing of hell" clause in the Creed] seems to be that it has been around so long. ... But an old mistake is still a mistake". In his book *Raised with Christ*, Pentecostal Adrian Warnock agrees with Grudem, commenting, "Despite some translations of an ancient creed [i.e. the Apostles' Creed], which suggest that Jesus ... 'descended into hell', there is no biblical evidence to suggest that he actually did so."

Augustine

Augustine (354–430) argued that 1 Peter 3:19–20, the chief passage used to support the doctrine of the "harrowing of hell", is "**more allegory** (a story, poem, or picture that can be interpreted to reveal a hidden meaning, typically a moral or political one.) **than history**".

The Journal of Biblical Accuracy, <http://www.jba.gr/>

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The **Gospel of Nicodemus**, also known as the **Acts of Pilate** (Latin: *Acta Pilati*; Greek: Πράξεις Πιλάτου), is an apocryphal gospel claimed to have been derived from an original Hebrew work written by Nicodemus, who appears in the Gospel of John as an associate of Jesus. The title "**Gospel of Nicodemus**" is medieval in origin. The dates of its accreted sections are uncertain, but according to the 1907 edition of the Catholic Encyclopedia **scholars agree in assigning the resulting work to the middle of the fourth century AD**.

The section about Pilate is an older text found in the Greek Acts of Peter and Paul and is a purported official document from Pontius Pilate (or composed from reports at the praetorium at Jerusalem) reporting events in Judea to Emperor Tiberius, and referring to the crucifixion of Jesus, as well as his miracles.

The Gospel of Nicodemus and the Acts of Pilate (300-375AD)

The Gospel of Nicodemus is a Medieval Latin text that scholars believe to have been written in the middle of the 4th century, reportedly by a member of the "Order of Nicodemus". It includes, as part of the text, a section entitled *The Acts of Pilate* and the two titles (for the combined text) are usually used interchangeably. The first two parts of the text attempt to recall the trial and resurrection of Jesus, while **the third section (*The Acts of Pilate*) describes Jesus' descent to "Limbo"**. The first Church leader to mention this version of *The Acts of Pilate* was Epiphanius in approximately 376AD. **It was clearly not written by Nicodemus, Pilate or anyone else who could have witnessed the contents of the book.**

History and authenticity

The oldest sections of the book appear first in Greek. The text contains multiple parts, which are uneven in style and would seem to be by different hands. The *Acts of Pilate* does not purport to have been written by Pilate (thus is not pseudepigraphical), but does claim to have been derived from the official acts preserved in the praetorium at Jerusalem.

The question of the original language is debated. Beyond Greek, the versions in Latin, Syriac, Coptic, Georgian, Slavonic, and other languages have survived.

The authenticity of the document is unlikely and there is no historical basis that Roman governors wrote reports about non-citizens who were put to death. Most modern scholars view the Acts of Pilate as not authentic and as a Christian composition designed to rebut pagan sources.

* * *

THE GOSPEL OF NICODEMUS ACTS OF PILATE

From "The Apocryphal New Testament" M.R. James-Translation and Notes Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1924

<http://www.masterandmargarita.eu>

1. Part I, Recession A in Greek from eight manuscripts, and a Latin translation of the Coptic version in the notes.
2. Part I, Recession B in Greek from three late manuscripts.
3. Part II (*Descent into Hell*) in Greek from three manuscripts.
4. Part I in Latin, using twelve manuscripts, and some old editions. 5. Part II in Latin (A) from four manuscripts.
6. Part II in Latin (B) from three manuscripts.

VI (XXII)

... 2 **Then did the King of glory in his majesty trample upon death, and laid hold on Satan the prince and delivered him unto the power of Hell, and drew Adam to him unto his own brightness.**

VII (XXIII)

Then Hell, receiving Satan the prince, with sore reproach said unto him: O prince of perdition and chief of destruction, Beelzebub, the scorn of the angels and spitting of the righteous why wouldest thou do this? Thou wouldest crucify the King of glory and at his decease didst promise us great spoils of his death: like a fool thou knewest not what thou didst. **For behold now, this Jesus putteth to flight by the brightness of his majesty all the darkness of death, and hath broken the strong depths of the prisons, and let out the prisoners and loosed them that were bound. And all that were sighing in our torments do rejoice against us, and at their prayers our dominions are vanquished and our realms conquered, and now no nation of men feareth us any more.** And beside this, the dead which were never wont to be proud triumph over us, and the captives which never could be joyful do threaten us. O prince Satan, father of all the wicked and ungodly and renegades wherefore wouldest thou do this? They that from the beginning until now have despaired of life and salvation-now is none of their wonted roarings heard, neither doth any groan from them sound in our ears, nor is there any sign of tears upon the face of any of them. **O prince Satan, holder of the keys of hell, those thy riches which thou hadst gained by the tree of transgression and the losing of paradise, thou hast lost by the tree of the cross, and all thy gladness hath perished.** When thou didst hang up Christ Jesus the King of glory thou wroughtest against thyself and against me. Henceforth thou shalt know what eternal torments and infinite pains thou art to suffer in my keeping for ever. O prince Satan, author of death and head of all pride, thou oughtest first to have sought out matter of evil in this Jesus: Wherefore didst thou adventure without cause to crucify him unjustly against whom thou foundest no blame, and to bring into our realm the innocent and righteous one, and to lose the guilty and the ungodly and unrighteous of the whole world? And when Hell had spoken thus unto Satan the prince, then said the King of glory unto Hell: Satan the prince shall be in thy power unto all ages in the stead of Adam and his children, even those that are my righteous ones.

VIII (XXIV)

1 **And the Lord stretching forth his hand, said: Come unto me, all ye my saints which bear mine image and my likeness. Ye that by the tree and the devil and death were condemned, behold now the devil and death condemned by the tree. And forthwith all the saints were gathered in one under the hand of the Lord. And the Lord holding the right hand of Adam, said unto him: Peace be unto thee with all thy children that are my righteous ones.** But Adam, casting himself at the knees of the Lord entreated him with tears and beseechings, and said with a loud voice: I will magnify thee, O Lord, for thou hast set me up and not made my foes to triumph over

The Doctrine of "He descended into hell"

me: O Lord my God I cried unto thee and thou hast healed me; Lord, thou hast brought my soul out of hell, thou hast delivered me from them that go down to the pit. Sing praises unto the Lord all ye saints of his, and give thanks unto him for the remembrance of his holiness. For there is wrath in his indignation and life is in his good pleasure. In like manner all the saints of God kneeled and cast themselves at the feet of the Lord, saying with one accord: Thou art come, O redeemer of the world: that which thou didst foretell by the law and by thy prophets, that hast thou accomplished in deed. **Thou hast redeemed the living by thy cross, and by the death of the cross thou hast come down unto us, that thou mightest save us out of hell and death through thy majesty.** O Lord, like as thou hast set the name of thy glory in the heavens and set up thy cross for a token of redemption upon the earth, so, Lord, set thou up the sign of the victory of thy cross in hell, that death may have no more dominion.

2 And the Lord stretched forth his hand and made the sign of the cross over Adam and over all his saints, and he took the right hand of Adam and went up out of hell, and all the saints followed him. Then did holy David cry aloud and say: Sing unto the Lord a new song, for he hath done marvelous things. His right hand hath wrought salvation for him and his holy arm. The Lord hath made known his saving health, before the face of all nations hath he revealed his righteousness. And the whole multitude of the saints answered, saying: Such honour have all his saints. Amen, Alleluia.

3 And thereafter Habacuc the prophet cried out and said: Thou wentest forth for the salvation of thy people to set free thy chosen. And all the saints answered, saying: Blessed is he that cometh in the name of the Lord. God is the Lord and hath showed us light. Amen, Alleluia. Likewise after that the prophet Micheas also cried, saying: What God is like thee, O Lord, taking away iniquity and removing sins? and now thou withholdest thy wrath for a testimony that thou art merciful of free will, and thou dost turn away and have mercy on us, thou forgivest all our iniquities and hast sunk all our sins in the depths of the sea, as thou swarest unto our fathers in the days of old. And all the saints answered, saying: This is our God for ever and ever, he shall be our guide, world without end. Amen, Alleluia. And so spake all the prophets, making mention of holy words out of their praises, and all the saints followed the Lord, crying Amen, Alleluia.

IX (XXV)

But the Lord holding the hand of Adam delivered him unto Michael the archangel, and all the saints followed Michael the archangel, and he brought them all into the glory and beauty (grace) of paradise. And there met with them two men, ancients of days, and when they were asked of the saints: Who are ye that have not yet been dead in hell with us and are set in paradise in the body? then one of them answering, said: I am Enoch which was translated hither by the word of the Lord, and this that is with me is Elias the Thesbite which was taken up in a chariot of fire: and up to this day we have not tasted death, but we are received unto the coming of Antichrist to fight against him with signs and wonders of God, and to be slain of him in Jerusalem, and after three days and a half to be taken up again alive on the clouds.

X (XXVI)

And as Enoch and Elias spake thus with the saints, behold there came another man of vile habit, bearing upon his shoulders the sign of the cross; whom when they beheld, all the saints said unto him: Who art thou? for thine appearance is as of a robber; and wherefore is it that thou bearest a sign upon thy shoulders? And he answered them and said: Ye have rightly said: for I was a robber, doing all manner of evil upon the earth. And the Jews crucified me with Jesus, and I beheld the wonders in the creation which came to pass through the cross of Jesus when he was crucified, and I believed that he was the maker of all creatures and the almighty king, and I besought him, saying: Remember me, Lord, when thou comest into thy kingdom. And forthwith he received my prayer, and said unto me: Verily I say unto thee, this day shalt thou be with me in paradise: and he gave me the sign of the cross, saying: Bear this and go unto paradise, and if the angel that keepeth paradise suffer thee not to enter in, show him the sign of the cross; and thou shalt say unto him: Jesus Christ the Son of God who now is crucified hath sent me. And when I had so done, I spake all these things unto the angel that keepeth paradise; and when he heard this of me, forthwith he opened the door and brought me in and set me at the right hand of paradise, saying: Lo now, tarry a little, and Adam the father of all mankind will enter in with all his children that are holy and righteous, after the triumph and glory of the ascending up of Christ the Lord that is crucified. When they heard all these words of the robber, all the holy patriarchs and prophets said with one voice: Blessed be the Lord Almighty, the Father of eternal good things, the Father of mercies, thou that hast given such grace unto thy sinners and hast brought them again into the beauty of paradise and into thy good pastures: for this is the most holy life of the spirit. Amen, Amen.

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Source Text Interpreted for “the clause”, “descent into hell”, from the Apostles Creed

1 Peter 3:19: the spirits in prison

I Peter 3:18-20

“For Christ also died for sins once for all, the just for the unjust, so that He might bring us to God, 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 in prison, who once were disobedient, when the longsuffering of God waited in the days of Noah while the ark was being prepared, in which a few, that is, eight souls, were saved through water.”

What are these “*spirits in prison*”? Many people reading the word “*spirits*” in this passage translate it in their minds to dead people that supposedly live now (as spirits) in a prison. Such an understanding however is not founded on the **Word of God**, and here is why: the **Word of God** does not use the word “*spirit*” to denote dead, non-resurrected, men. To understand what are the spirits in prison, we need to look at the **Word of God** and see how it uses this word plus to take into consideration other references of the Bible on the subject described in the above verses of I Peter. For indeed the **Word of God** speaks not in just one but in four different places about what I Peter 3:19 speaks about. But first of all, let’s see what could these spirits in prison be. As we said, they could NOT be dead men. Despite the fact that our age uses the word spirit for dead men that are supposedly living somewhere without resurrection, the Bible does not use this word with such a meaning. It does however use this word to denote angelic beings. As Hebrews 1:13-14 says:

Hebrews 1:13-14

“But to **which of the angels** has He ever said, Sit on my right hand, until I make your enemies your footstool? **Are they not all ministering SPIRITS**, sent forth to minister for those who will inherit salvation?”

and some verses earlier:

Hebrews 1:7

“And of the angels He says: **“Who makes His angels SPIRITS** And His ministers a flame of fire.””

Angelic beings were created by God and they are spirit beings. They are “*spirits*”. Could then be that these “*spirits in prison*” are fallen angels in prison? As we will see yes this is what it is. But let’s first get some background information. As we saw angels are spirit beings. Though all of them were created by God not all remained with God. Some of them rebelled against Him and were fallen from their position. The chief fallen angel is the devil or Satan. Two passages that describe his rebellion and fall are: Ezekiel 28:11-19 and Isaiah 14:3-23. However, the above passage of I Peter 3:19 does not refer to this fall. I Peter 3:20 sets the time to the “days of Noah”. The devil had rebelled long before those days as we see him active in the garden of Edem. Besides that, he and his angels are not in a prison now. Instead the devil is described as “prince of the air” and he and his fallen angels as “principalities ... powers ... rulers of the darkness of this age ... spiritual hosts of wickedness **in the heavenly places**”. Spiritual hosts of wickedness are literally hosts of wicked spirits –and this is what fallen angels are - that are now active in the heavenly places. I Peter 3:19 therefore does not refer to the devil’s fall but to another rebellion of angels that occurred “*in the days of Noah*” and before the Flood. These fallen spirits ended up in a prison and we will read more on this in II Peter and in Jude. But let’s first go to **Genesis 6**, just before the Flood. We will find there details about the fall of these angels.

Genesis 6:1-8

“Now it came to pass, when men began to multiply on the face of the earth, and daughters were born to them, that the **sons of God** saw the daughters of men, that they were beautiful; and they took wives for themselves of all whom they chose. And the LORD said, “My Spirit shall not strive with man forever, for he is indeed flesh; yet his days shall be one hundred and twenty years.” **There were giants on the earth in those days, and also afterward, when the sons of God came in to the daughters of men and they bore children to them.**

Those were the mighty men who were of old, men of renown. Then the LORD saw that the wickedness of man was great in the earth, and that every intent of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually. And the LORD was sorry that He had made man on the earth, and He was grieved in His heart. So the LORD said, "I will destroy man whom I have created from the face of the earth, both man and beast, creeping thing and birds of the air, for I am sorry that I have made them." But Noah found grace in the eyes of the LORD."

There was something that happened when man started multiplying. The "sons of God" saw the daughters of men and took wives from them. See that verse 1 puts in contrast the men and the **daughters of men** with the **sons of God**. "The sons of God saw the daughters of men", we read. Who were these sons of God? Although the believers in the New Testament have been given authority by believing in the Lord Jesus Christ and in His resurrection from the dead to become sons and daughters of God, this was not something that was available in the Old Testament. The term "sons of God" is used 3 more times in the Old Testament, in addition to Genesis 6. In all cases it denotes angelic beings. Let's see these occurrences, all from the book of Job.

Job 1:6

"Now there was a day when the **sons of God** came to present themselves before the LORD, and Satan also came among them."

and in a very similar reference: Job 2:10

"Again there was a day when the **sons of God** came to present themselves before the LORD, and Satan came also among them to present himself before the LORD."

The sons of God that presented themselves before the Lord were obviously angels.

Also Job 38:7 speaking about the earth:

"To what were its foundations fastened? Or who laid its cornerstone, When the morning stars sang together, **and all the sons of God shouted for joy?**"

What Job 38:7 describes, refers to the creation of the earth when no human being was present. But the sons of God, the angels, were present and shouted for joy.

In short the beings of Genesis 6:1 were not human beings. Otherwise they would not be put in contrast with the daughter of men. There was and there is nothing wrong or strange for men to get married and have children. But this is not what happened in Genesis 6. What we have in **Genesis 6** is that non-human beings, angelic beings, sons of God – not sons of men – saw the daughter of men and desired them and furthermore they had children with them! As the Bible tells us in Genesis 6:4, the result of this union were the giants, a race of beings that God had not created nor He intended to create but were instead product of this ungodly union between angels and men. Noah was present at those days. These were "*the days of Noah*" and to these days I Peter 3:19 refers to.

To the same events we have further references in the New Testament. Let's see them, starting from II Peter 2:4-5, 9

II Peter 2:4-5, 9

"For if **God did not spare the angels who sinned, but cast them down to hell and delivered them into chains of darkness, to be reserved for judgment;** and did not spare the ancient world, but saved Noah, one of eight people, a preacher of righteousness, bringing in the flood on the world of the ungodly; ... the Lord knows how to deliver the godly out of temptations and to reserve the unjust under punishment for the day of judgment,"

The phrase "*cast them down to hell*" is one word in the Greek text the verb "ταρταρώω" (tartarōō) and it means "*to cast down to Tartarus*". As Bullinger says: "*Tartarus*" is a Greek word not used elsewhere or at all in the Septuaginta. Homer describes it as subterranean. The Homeric *Tartarus* is the prison of the Titans, or giants, who rebelled against Zeus" (The Companion Bible, Appendix 131). And as Vine also explains: "*the verb tartarōō, translated "cast down to hell" in 2 Peter 2:4 signifies to consign to Tartarus, which is neither Sheol nor Hades nor Hell, but the place where those angels whose special sin is referred to in that passage are confined "to be reserved unto judgement;" the region is described as pits of darkness*" (Vine's dictionary, p. 553). Tartarus is to be understood therefore as a prison and in this prison, as Peter says, were cast the angels that sinned, to be reserved in judgment. They are in this prison of darkness reserved for the day of judgment. See that what follows this reference of II Peter is *Noah and the reference to the Flood*. This is not accidental as both these

events are connected and happened not long from each other. But let's also see the evidence from Jude who also speaks about the same subject:

Jude 6-7

“And the angels who did not keep their proper domain, but left their own habitation, **He has reserved in everlasting chains under darkness for the judgment of the great day**; as Sodom and Gomorrah, and the cities around them in a similar manner to these, having given themselves over to fornication and **gone after strange flesh**, are set forth as an example, suffering the vengeance of eternal fire.”

Jude speaks about the same rebellion as Peter and Genesis. Sometime during the *times of Noah*, angels “left their own habitation” and went after “strange flesh”, after the **daughters of men**. The result? They are now “reserved in everlasting chains under darkness for the judgement of the great day.” This is the prison, the Tartarus that Peter speaks about in his letters. **To these fallen spirits, fallen angels, spirits in prison, Jesus went and preached, says the KJV. The NKJV has this translated better as “made proclamation”.**

Now the text does not say what He proclaimed. But I agree with what Vine is saying in his dictionary, when he speaks about the word “kerusso” that is translated in I Peter 3:19 as “made proclamation” **“to publish, proclaim openly: something which has been done”**:

“In I Peter 3:19 the probable reference is, *not to glad tidings* but to the act of Christ after His resurrection in **proclaiming His victory to fallen angelic beings**” (Vine’s expository dictionary of New Testament words, page 883, emphasis added).

To conclude therefore: when in I Peter 3:19 we read that Jesus went and *preached* to the *spirits in prison*, we should not read into it dead people living in a prison, without resurrection, and Jesus going to them to preach the good news. What the **Word of God** is speaking in I Peter 3:19 is not about dead people but about *spirits, angelic beings* that are in a prison, *in the Tartarus, bound in everlasting chains under darkness*. **Why?** Because of what they did *in the times of Noah*, leaving their own habitation, giving themselves over to fornication and going after “strange flesh”, after the daughters of men.

E. W. Bullinger: The Companion Bible, 1990, Kregel Publications, Grand Rapids, Michigan

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“Paradise” & “Hades” Uncovered

Luke 23 (ESV)

The Crucifixion

³²Two others, who were criminals, were led away to be put to death with him.³³ And when they came to the place that is called The Skull, there they crucified him, and the criminals, one on his right and one on his left. ³⁴And Jesus said, “Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do.” And they cast lots to divide his garments. ³⁵And the people stood by, watching, but the rulers scoffed at him, saying, “He saved others; let him save himself, if he is the Christ of God, his Chosen One!” ³⁶The soldiers also mocked him, coming up and offering him sour wine ³⁷and saying, “If you are the King of the Jews, save yourself!” ³⁸There was also an inscription over him, “This is the King of the Jews.” ³⁹One of the criminals who were hanged railed at him, saying, “Are you not the Christ? Save yourself and us!” ⁴⁰But the other rebuked him, saying, “Do you not fear God, since you are under the same sentence of condemnation? ⁴¹And we indeed justly, for we are receiving the due reward of our deeds; but this man has done nothing wrong.” ⁴²And he said, “Jesus, remember me when you come into your kingdom.” ⁴³And he said to him, “Truly, I say to you, today you will be with me in paradise.”

Luke 16:19-31 (ESV)

The Rich Man and Lazarus

¹⁹“There was a rich man who was clothed in purple and fine linen and who feasted sumptuously every day. ²⁰And at his gate was laid a poor man named Lazarus, covered with sores, ²¹who desired to be fed with what fell from the rich man's table. Moreover, even the dogs came and licked his sores. ²²The poor man died and was carried by the angels to Abraham's side. The rich man also died and was buried, ²³and in Hades, being in torment, he lifted up his eyes and saw Abraham far off and Lazarus at his side. ²⁴And he called out, ‘Father Abraham, have mercy on me, and send Lazarus to dip the end of his

finger in water and cool my tongue, for I am in anguish in this flame.’²⁵ But Abraham said, ‘Child, remember that you in your lifetime received your good things, and Lazarus in like manner bad things; but now he is comforted here, and you are in anguish.’²⁶ And besides all this, between us and you a great chasm has been fixed, in order that those who would pass from here to you may not be able, and none may cross from there to us.’²⁷ And he said, ‘Then I beg you, father, to send him to my father’s house –²⁸ for I have five brothers – so that he may warn them, lest they also come into this place of torment.’²⁹ But Abraham said, ‘They have Moses and the Prophets; let them hear them.’³⁰ And he said, ‘No, father Abraham, but if someone goes to them from the dead, they will repent.’³¹ He said to him, ‘If they do not hear Moses and the Prophets, neither will they be convinced if someone should rise from the dead.’”

Revelation 20 (ESV)

The Thousand Years

¹ Then I saw an angel coming down from heaven, holding in his hand the key to the bottomless pit and a great chain. ² And he seized the dragon, that ancient serpent, who is the devil and Satan, and bound him for a thousand years, ³ and threw him into the pit, and shut it and sealed it over him, so that he might not deceive the nations any longer, until the thousand years were ended. After that he must be released for a little while.

⁴ Then I saw thrones, and seated on them were those to whom the authority to judge was committed. Also I saw the souls of those who had been beheaded for the testimony of Jesus and for the word of God, and those who had not worshiped the beast or its image and had not received its mark on their foreheads or their hands. They came to life and reigned with Christ for a thousand years. ⁵ The rest of the dead did not come to life until the thousand years were ended. This is the first resurrection. ⁶ Blessed and holy is the one who shares in the first resurrection! Over such the second death has no power, but they will be priests of God and of Christ, and they will reign with him for a thousand years.

The Defeat of Satan

⁷ And when the thousand years are ended, Satan will be released from his prison⁸ and will come out to deceive the nations that are at the four corners of the earth, Gog and Magog, to gather them for battle; their number is like the sand of the sea.⁹ And they marched up over the broad plain of the earth and surrounded the camp of the saints and the beloved city, but fire came down from heaven and consumed them, ¹⁰ and the devil who had deceived them was thrown into the lake of fire and sulfur where the beast and the false prophet were, and they will be tormented day and night forever and ever.

Judgment Before the Great White Throne

¹¹ Then I saw a great white throne and him who was seated on it. From his presence earth and sky fled away, and no place was found for them. ¹² And I saw the dead, great and small, standing before the throne, and books were opened. Then another book was opened, which is the book of life. And the dead were judged by what was written in the books, according to what they had done. ¹³ And the sea gave up the dead who were in it, Death and Hades gave up the dead who were in them, and they were judged, each one of them, according to what they had done. ¹⁴ Then Death and Hades were thrown into the lake of fire. This is the second death, the lake of fire. ¹⁵ And if anyone’s name was not found written in the book of life, he was thrown into the lake of fire.

Matthew 25:31-46 (ESV)

The Final Judgment

³¹ “When the Son of Man comes in his glory, and all the angels with him, then he will sit on his glorious throne. ³² Before him will be gathered all the nations, and he will separate people one from another as a shepherd separates the sheep from the goats. ³³ And he will place the sheep on his right, but the goats on the left. ³⁴ Then the King will say to those on his right, ‘Come, you who are blessed by my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world. ³⁵ For I was hungry and you gave me food, I was thirsty and you gave me drink, I was a stranger and you welcomed me, ³⁶ I was naked and you clothed me, I was sick and you visited me, I was in prison and you came to me.’ ³⁷ Then the righteous will answer him, saying, ‘Lord, when did we see you hungry and feed you, or thirsty and give you drink? ³⁸ And when did we see you a stranger and welcome you, or naked and clothe you? ³⁹ And when did we see you sick or in prison and visit you?’ ⁴⁰ And the King will answer them, ‘Truly, I say to you, as you did it to one of the least of these my brothers, you did it to me.’

⁴¹ “Then he will say to those on his left, ‘Depart from me, you cursed, into the eternal fire prepared for the devil and his angels. ⁴² For I was hungry and you gave me no food, I was thirsty and you gave me no drink, ⁴³ I was a stranger and you did not welcome me, naked and you did not clothe me, sick and in prison and you did not visit me.’ ⁴⁴ Then they also will answer, saying, ‘Lord, when did we see you hungry or thirsty or a stranger or naked or sick or in prison, and did not minister to you?’ ⁴⁵ Then he will answer them, saying, ‘Truly, I say to you, as you did not do it to one of the least of these, you did not do it to me.’ ⁴⁶ And these will go away into eternal punishment, but the righteous into eternal life.”