

Did Jesus Really Descend into Hell?

1. Tradition or Truth?

Many religious traditions teach that after Calvary, **Jesus went down into hell**. They say that between so called Good Friday and Easter Sunday He went to preach to spirits and to release Old Testament saints from a place of waiting.

This teaching is often linked to the Apostles Creed, to **Acts 2:27**, and to **1 Peter 3:19**. It is then repeated so often that many accept it without careful study.

However, the Bible shows that this story is a **false narrative**. It leads people toward **false doctrine** and can cause them to worship a **false Christ**. When a lie is repeated again and again, without a love of truth, it often becomes accepted as truth.

Paul writes in **2 Thessalonians 2:11 12**:

“And for this cause God shall send them strong delusion, that they should believe a lie: that they all might be damned who believed not the truth, but had pleasure in unrighteousness.”

If we reject clear truth and hold to tradition, we come under great danger.

2. The Misleading Sign of Easter

The common Easter tradition teaches:

- Jesus was crucified on a Friday afternoon;
- He was buried before the Jewish Sabbath;
- He rose early on Sunday morning.

If this were so, the time in the tomb would be only **one day and two nights**. Yet Jesus gave a very clear sign to the unbelieving religious leaders.

Jesus in **Matthew 12:39 40**:

“But he answered and 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 whales belly; so shall the Son of man be three days and three nights in the heart of the earth.”

The only sign Jesus gave was **three days and three nights** in the heart of the earth. The common Friday to Sunday story does not match His own words.

The religious Easter celebration is also rooted in **pagan sun worship**, connected with the rebirth of a sun god. It does not come from the teaching of Christ and His apostles. It presents a wrong time line and a wrong Christ.

Those who ignore the clear sign Jesus gave, and who cling to such traditions, place themselves in danger of delusion.

3. Jesus Own Promise: Paradise, Not Hell

On the cross, Jesus gave a **direct promise** that cannot be ignored.

The thief first spoke in faith.

Luke records in **Luke 23:42**:

“And he said unto Jesus, Lord, remember me when thou comest into thy kingdom.”

Jesus answered with a clear promise.

Jesus in **Luke 23:43**:

“And Jesus said unto him, Verily I say unto thee, To day shalt thou be with me in paradise.”

Notice these points:

- The thief asked about the **kingdom**;
- Jesus answered about **paradise**;
- Jesus said “**To day shalt thou be with me**”.

According to Scriptural language studies, **paradise** is a symbol of the **kingdom and church of God**, not of hell. It would be wrong to say that the kingdom of God is hell.

Therefore, when Jesus and the repentant thief died on the **fourteenth day of Nisan, 31 A.D.**, their **souls** entered **paradise**, the kingdom of God, on that same day.

Jesus is God. He cannot lie. His promise must stand. This alone shows that **Jesus did not go to a place of torment called hell after Calvary**.

4. A Rule for Study: No Contradictions in the Bible

Some say that **Acts 2:27**, which quotes **Psalm 16:10**, proves that Jesus went to hell.

Peter in **Acts 2:27**:

“Because thou wilt not leave my soul in hell, neither wilt thou suffer thine Holy One to see corruption.”

At first glance, this seems to clash with **Luke 23:43**. Did Jesus go to **hell**, or to **paradise**?

We must remember an important rule. The Bible never truly contradicts itself. If we think it does, our understanding is wrong.

Paul writes in **1 Corinthians 14:33**:

“For God is not the author of confusion, but of peace, as in all churches of the saints.”

Confusion comes when we **wrongly divide** the Word. We need **proper Bible study**.

Isaiah gives us a method.

Isaiah in **Isaiah 28:13**:

“But the word of the Lord was unto them precept upon precept, precept upon precept; line upon line, line upon line; here a little, and there a little; that they might go, and fall backward, and be broken, and snared, and taken.”

We must:

- Set **precept upon precept**, and **line upon line**;
- Compare verse with verse, Scripture with Scripture;
- Let clear verses guide our understanding of harder verses.

Isaiah also tells us to seek companion Scriptures.

Isaiah in **Isaiah 34:16**:

“Seek ye out of the book of the Lord, and read: no one of these shall fail, none shall want her mate: for my mouth it hath commanded, and his Spirit it hath gathered them.”

The Holy Spirit gathers **matching verses** to bring understanding. We must also ask, **who is speaking, and to whom**. In Acts 2 Peter speaks to Jews and quotes the Hebrew Scriptures.

With these rules, the apparent clash between “**in hell**” and “**in paradise**” can be solved.

5. Understanding the Soul: **NEPHESH**

We are **compound beings**. We have:

- A physical body, made of dust;
- A spiritual nature, the inner person.

The inner person is often called the **soul** or **spirit**. This is the real you.

David speaks of his own person in the womb.

David in **Psalm 139:13 14**:

“For thou hast possessed my reins: thou hast covered me in my mothers womb. I will praise thee; for I am fearfully and wonderfully made: marvellous are thy works; and that my soul knoweth right well.”

Here David speaks of himself as a **knowing soul** in the womb, before full physical formation. This shows that the **soul is more than the body**.

Solomon shows what happens at death.

Solomon in **Ecclesiastes 12:7**:

“Then shall the dust return to the earth as it was: and the spirit shall return unto God who gave it.”

The body returns to dust. The spirit returns to God.

So when Jesus said, “**To day shalt thou be with me in paradise**”, He spoke of His **soul**, not His physical body. His body was taken down from the cross.

John records in **John 19:38**:

“And after this Joseph of Arimathaea, being a disciple of Jesus, but secretly for fear of the Jews, besought Pilate that he might take away the body of Jesus: and Pilate gave him leave. He came therefore, and took the body of Jesus.”

The body was placed in a tomb, but the **soul** went to **paradise**.

The Old Testament word behind “**soul**” in **Psalm 16:10** is the Hebrew word **NEPHESH**. This word has more than one use.

- It can mean a **breathing creature**, a living physical person;
- It can mean the **inner being** or spiritual life.

We must use **context** and **harmony** to decide which meaning fits.

For example, **NEPHESH** can describe living people.

Moses in **Genesis 12:5**:

“And Abram took Sarai his wife, and Lot his brothers son, and all their substance that they had gathered, and the souls that they had gotten in Haran; and they went forth to go into the land of Canaan; and into the land of Canaan they came.”

Here **NEPHESH** refers to **living persons**.

It can also refer to a **dead body**.

Moses in **Numbers 6:6 7:**

“All the days that he separateth himself unto the Lord he shall come at no dead body. He shall not make himself unclean for his father, or for his mother, for his brother, or for his sister, when they die: because the consecration of his God is upon his head.”

The words “**dead body**” in verse 6 translate the Hebrew **NEPHESH**. So **NEPHESH** can mean a **corpse**, a dead physical body.

When David writes in **Psalm 16:10**, and Peter repeats it in **Acts 2:27**, the context is the **burial** and **resurrection** of Christ. The focus is on **corruption**, which belongs to the physical body, not to the soul in paradise.

So in this context, **NEPHESH** in **Psalm 16:10** rightly refers to **Christ body**, not His inner spirit.

6. Understanding Hell: SHEOL

The word translated as “**hell**” in **Psalm 16:10** is the Hebrew word **SHEOL**. The King James Bible translates **SHEOL** in two main ways:

- “**grave**” about thirty times;
- “**hell**” about thirty one times.

Again, **context** decides the meaning.

Sometimes **SHEOL** clearly means the **grave**, the place of the dead body.

Solomon in **Ecclesiastes 9:10**:

“Whatsoever thy hand findeth to do, do it with thy might; for there is no work, nor device, nor knowledge, nor wisdom, in the grave, whither thou goest.”

Here there is no work, device, knowledge, or wisdom in **SHEOL**. This fits the **grave**, not a conscious place of torment.

Sometimes **SHEOL** is translated “**hell**”, and the language is strong.

Isaiah in **Isaiah 5:14**:

“Therefore hell hath enlarged herself, and opened her mouth without measure: and their glory, and their multitude, and their pomp, and he that rejoiceth, shall descend into it.”

Yet God declares that He knows the **end from the beginning**.

Isaiah in **Isaiah 46:10**:

“Declaring the end from the beginning, and from ancient times the things that are not yet done, saying, My counsel shall stand, and I will do all my pleasure.”

God never needs more space or more measure. When we read these passages with care and with the whole Bible in view, it is better to understand many of these **SHEOL** verses, including **Psalm 16:10**, as referring to the **literal grave**.

So in **Psalm 16:10**:

- *NEPHESH* points to **Christ body**;
- *SHEOL* points to the **grave**.

This fits the subject of **corruption** and resurrection.

7. The Correct Reading of Psalm 16:10 and Acts 2:27

With this understanding, we can state the sense of **Psalm 16:10** in simple terms.

David in **Psalm 16:10**:

“For thou wilt not leave my soul in hell; neither wilt thou suffer thine Holy One to see corruption.”

In the light of *NEPHESH* and *SHEOL*, the meaning is:

God would not leave Christ **body in the grave**, and He would not allow that body to **see corruption**.

Peter confirms that David spoke prophetically of Christ.

Peter in **Acts 2:31**:

“He seeing this before spake of the resurrection of Christ, that his soul was not left in hell, neither his flesh did see corruption.”

Notice that Peter joins:

- “**soul**” in *SHEOL*;
- With “**flesh**” not seeing corruption.

He is speaking of the **resurrection body**, not of the soul in paradise. There is no thought of Christ preaching in a place of torment.

So we can safely say:

- Christ **body** was in the **grave**;
- Christ **soul** was in **paradise**, in the kingdom of God;
- God did not leave His **body in the grave**, and it did not decay.

This agrees fully with Jesus promise, **“To day shalt thou be with me in paradise.”** There is no contradiction at all.

8. Summary of the Bible Journey After Calvary

- The tradition that Jesus went to **hell** between His death and resurrection is not taught by Scripture;
- Jesus gave only one sign, **three days and three nights in the heart of the earth**, which the Good Friday to Easter Sunday story does not match;
- Jesus promised the repentant thief, **“To day shalt thou be with me in paradise”**, not in hell;
- Careful study, **precept upon precept and line upon line**, shows that God Word does not contradict itself;

- The Hebrew words *NEPHESH* and *SHEOL*, in **Psalm 16:10**, speak of Christ **body** and the **grave**, not His spirit in a place of torment;
- Peter in **Acts 2** confirms that David spoke of the **resurrection of Christ**, not of a journey into hell.

The widespread belief that Jesus **went to hell** after Calvary is a **misconception**. When we handle the Word correctly, we see that **“thy word is truth”**.

Jesus in **John 17:17**:

“Sanctify them through thy truth: thy word is truth.”

The truth is found, not in church tradition, but in careful, Spirit guided study of the Scriptures.
