

Where Was Jesus Between His Death And Resurrection?

(appropriate for High Schoolers and older)

Michael R. Daily, November 2021

Other youth bible studies by Michael Daily available at: <http://gciweb.org/2011/04/youth-bible-study-materials-michael-r-daily/>

When Jesus rose from the dead He appeared on at least 6 separate occasions over a 40 day period to a total of over 500 people. During these meetings they touched Him and ate food with Him while He taught them and gave them instructions concerning the coming of the Holy Spirit.

I Corinthians 15:3-8

For I delivered to you as of first importance what I also received, that Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures, ⁴ and that He was buried, and that He was raised on the third day according to the Scriptures, ⁵ and that He appeared to Cephas, then to the twelve. ⁶ After that He appeared to more than five hundred brethren at one time, most of whom remain until now, but some have fallen asleep; ⁷ then He appeared to James, then to all the apostles; ⁸ and last of all, as to one untimely born, He appeared to me also.

Acts 1:3

After his suffering, he presented himself to them and gave many convincing proofs that he was alive. He appeared to them over a period of forty days and spoke about the kingdom of God.

Many unbelievers over the centuries have set out to disprove the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead. All of them failed to do so and many of them became Christians in the process. For example Josh McDowell set out to disprove the resurrection but was instead convinced by the historical evidence that the resurrection was true. Mr. McDowell became a Christian and a full time Christian speaker and author on apologetic arguments supporting Christ's resurrection as well as other topics of the Christian faith.

But tonight we are going to look at what Jesus was doing during the three days between His death and His resurrection. This is important because there are some churches that recite creeds stating that Jesus was in Hell during these three days. The assumption being that He was suffering in Hell. But we will see in this lesson that the Bible does not teach that. In fact, the Bible teaches that Jesus visited two different places between His death and resurrection but was not suffering in any way during this time.

Where was Jesus for the three days between His death and resurrection?

To start with, we know that Jesus' body and spirit were separated. His body remained in the tomb, the heart of the Earth.

Matthew 12:40

for just as Jonah was three days and three nights in the belly of the sea monster, so will the Son of Man be three days and three nights in the heart of the earth.

But His body did not decay and His spirit did not go to Hades/Sheol.

Note: Hades (Greek) and Sheol (Hebrew) are the same place. We will describe Hades/Sheol later.

Psalms 16:10

For You will not abandon my soul to Sheol; Nor will You allow Your Holy One to undergo decay.

Acts 2:27-32

Because You will not abandon my soul to Hades, Nor allow Your Holy One to undergo decay. 28 'You have made known to me the ways of life; You will make me full of gladness with Your presence.'

29 "Brethren, I may confidently say to you regarding the patriarch David that he both died and was buried, and his tomb is with us to this day. 30 And so, because he was a prophet and knew that God had sworn to him with an oath to seat one of his descendants on his throne, 31 he looked ahead and spoke of the resurrection of the Christ, that He was neither abandoned to Hades, nor did His flesh suffer decay. 32 This Jesus God raised up again, to which we are all witnesses.

At the end of the three days His spirit and resurrected body were reunited when He rose from the dead. So, the question is, where was His spirit during these 3 days? First, we know that He was not suffering because He declared that His work was finished when He was on the cross. So we know that Jesus did not go to the Lake of Fire.

John 19:28-30

After this, Jesus, knowing that all things had already been accomplished, to fulfill the Scripture, said, “I am thirsty.” 29 A jar full of sour wine was standing there; so they put a sponge full of the sour wine upon a branch of hyssop and brought it up to His mouth. 30 Therefore when Jesus had received the sour wine, He said, “It is finished!” And He bowed His head and gave up His spirit.

He also said, as He was dying, that He committed His spirit into the Father’s hands and He told the thief on the cross next to Him that he would be with Jesus that very day in Paradise.

Luke 23:42-46

And he was saying, “Jesus, remember me when You come in Your kingdom!” 43 And He said to him, “Truly I say to you, today you shall be with Me in Paradise.” 44 It was now about the sixth hour, and darkness fell over the whole land until the ninth hour, 45 because the sun was obscured; and the veil of the temple was torn in two. 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.

So, we know that when Jesus died He spent at least that first day in Paradise.

At this point we need to clarify the meaning of some terms or we will get confused. These terms are Heaven, Paradise, Hell, Hades, Sheol, Abyss, and Lake of Fire. For more information on this topic see, “Heaven & Hell” at: <http://gciweb.org/2011/04/youth-bible-study-materials-michael-r-daily/>

Heaven

“Heaven” is a general term indicating the place where God dwells. The term “Heaven” is kind of like the term “Air Force One”. Air Force One is not the name of a specific airplane. It is the name of any USAF airplane that the president of the United States is on. The second the president steps onto a plane, that plane instantly becomes “Air Force One”. The same is true for Heaven. Wherever God dwells, that place is called Heaven. Right now God dwells in Paradise so Paradise is Heaven. In the future, after the Tribulation has ended, God will dwell in a new city called the New Jerusalem so the New Jerusalem will then be Heaven.

(Matthew 6:9) - “Pray, then, in this way: ‘Our Father who is in heaven, Hallowed be Your name.

Paradise

This is the place of the dead for those with faith in Christ. Today, when a person dies with faith in Christ their spirit goes to Paradise to live with God while awaiting judgment (for degree of rewards). Their body remains in the grave. At the resurrection the spirit and resurrected body of each believer will be reunited. Right now all those who have died in Christ, including the Old Testament believers, are in Paradise with God. God’s angels also inhabit Paradise. Paradise is a temporary place that will be replaced by the New Jerusalem in the future.

(II Corinthians 12:2-4)

I know a man in Christ who fourteen years ago—whether in the body I do not know, or out of the body I do not know, God knows—such a man was caught up to the third heaven. 3 And I know how such a man—whether in the body or apart from the body I do not know, God knows— 4 was caught up into Paradise and heard inexpressible words, which a man is not permitted to speak.

(II Corinthians 5:6-8)

Therefore, being always of good courage, and knowing that while we are at home in the body we are absent from the Lord— 7 for we walk by faith, not by sight— 8 we are of good courage, I say, and prefer rather to be absent from the body and to be at home with the Lord.

Hell

Hell, like Heaven, is a general term that can refer to three different places depending on how it is used. As Heaven indicates the place where God dwells, Hell indicates a place where God does not dwell. Depending on how it is used, the English word “hell” can refer either to Hades/Sheol, the Lake of Fire, or the Abyss/Bottomless Pit.

Key Point: *Whenever a Bible translation uses the word “hell” it is important to understand which Hebrew or Greek word was used in the original documents since they represent different places.*

Hades/Sheol

This is the place of the dead who do not have faith in Christ. Today, when a person dies without Christ their spirit goes to Hades to await judgment (for intensity of punishment – **Luke 12:42-48**). Their body remains in the grave. It is a temporary waiting place where God does not dwell. Hades is the Greek word. Sheol is the Hebrew word for Hades. Hades/Sheol is for people only. Fallen angels do not inhabit it. Although most Bible translations today retain the words “Hades” and “Sheol” in their translations, there are some that translate these words as “hell” (i.e. King James Version). Hades/Sheol is a temporary place that will be done away with at the end of the age. Hades is a place of agony but the intensity is moderate compared to the Lake of Fire.

(Revelation 20:14)

Then death and Hades were thrown into the lake of fire. This is the second death, the lake of fire.

(Luke 16:22-25 - Hades)

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. 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.

(Revelation 14:9-10 - Lake of Fire)

Then another angel, a third one, followed them, saying with a loud voice, “If anyone worships the beast and his image, and receives a mark on his forehead or on his hand, ¹⁰ he also will drink of the wine of the wrath of God, which is mixed in full strength in the cup of His anger; and he will be tormented with fire and brimstone in the presence of the holy angels and in the presence of the Lamb.

Lake of Fire (gehenna)

This is the eternal dwelling place of those who died without faith in Christ who are currently in Hades/Sheol. After the resurrection their spirits, who were in Hades, will be reunited with their resurrected bodies. They will then be judged by God (to determine the intensity of punishment) and thrown body and soul into the Lake of Fire for eternity. The fallen angels will also be judged and thrown into the Lake of Fire as well for eternity. The Greek word translated as “hell” that refers to the Lake of Fire is the word “gehenna”.

(Revelation 20:10-15)

And the devil who deceived them was thrown into the lake of fire and brimstone, where the beast and the false prophet are also; and they will be tormented day and night forever and ever. 11 Then I saw a great white throne and Him who sat upon it, from whose presence earth and heaven fled away, and no place was found for them. 12 And I saw the dead, the great and the small, standing before the throne, and books were opened; and another book was opened, which is the book of life; and the dead were judged from the things which were written in the books, according to their deeds. 13 And the sea gave up the dead which were in it, and death and Hades gave up the dead which were in them; and they were judged, every one of them according to their deeds. 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 25:41

“Then He will also say to those on His left, ‘Depart from Me, accursed ones, into the eternal fire which has been prepared for the devil and his angels;

“Gehenna” is a word that is a reference to a place outside ancient Jerusalem known as the Valley of the Son of Hinnom. The Canaanites and some Jewish people would go there to burn their children alive in sacrifice to Molech. As a result the word “gehenna” was the closest word at the time to what the Lake of Fire is like.

(Jeremiah 7:31)

They have built the high places of Topheth, which is in the valley of the son of Hinnom, to burn their sons and their daughters in the fire, which I did not command, and it did not come into My mind.

Brimstone: *Burning sulfur. When burned, sulfur melts to a blood-red liquid, emits a blue flame, and creates sulfur dioxide gas, notable for its peculiar suffocating odor.*

Abyss / Bottomless Pit (Tartarus)

Have you ever heard your pastor say, “satan can only do what God gives him permission to do”? Have you ever wondered why? After all, satan and his angels rebelled against God before. Why wouldn’t they rebel against Him again? What’s changed?

The reason fallen angels stay within the boundaries God has given them is because of a special prison God created for fallen angels that violate His rules for their behavior on Earth. The original rebellion in Heaven resulted in satan and the angels that followed him being thrown to Earth (**Revelation 12:9**). However, if these fallen angels on Earth don’t stay within the boundaries of behavior God has set for them here, what happens? In the arena of spiritual warfare these fallen angels essentially become “war criminals”. If an angel violates the boundaries of behaviors that God has set up, that angel is immediately removed from Earth and placed in this special prison called “The Abyss”. It is a temporary prison of chains and darkness where war criminal fallen angels cannot move and they cannot see. The Abyss is also referred to as the “Bottomless Pit” (**Revelation 9**) and is translated as “hell” in **II Peter 2:4**. Demons are terrified of the Abyss.

Luke 8:28-31

Seeing Jesus, he cried out and fell before Him, and said in a loud voice, “What business do we have with each other, Jesus, Son of the Most High God? I beg You, do not torment me.”²⁹ **For He had commanded the unclean spirit to come out of the man. For it had seized him many times; and he was bound with chains and shackles and kept under guard, and yet he would break his bonds and be driven by the demon into the desert.**³⁰ **And Jesus asked him, “What is your name?” And he said, “Legion”; for many demons had entered him.**³¹ **They were imploring Him not to command them to go away into the abyss.**

The first recorded use of the Abyss was during the days of Noah when some of satan’s angels violated the boundaries of behavior God commanded for them. The angels that did this during the days of Noah were removed from the Earth and placed in the Abyss. This action deters the remaining fallen angels (who live on Earth) from crossing God’s boundaries for what they are allowed to do. The Abyss is only used for fallen angels who have achieved “war criminal” status in spiritual warfare. It is not used for people at all or for fallen angels that stay within the boundaries God has set for their behavior on the Earth.

(Genesis 6:1-4)

Now it came about, when men began to multiply on the face of the land, and daughters were born to them,² that the sons of God saw that the daughters of men were beautiful; and they took wives for themselves, whomever they chose.³ Then the LORD said, “My Spirit shall not strive with man forever, because he also is flesh; nevertheless his days shall be one hundred and twenty years.”⁴ The Nephilim were 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.

(Jude 1:6-7)

And angels who did not keep their own domain, but abandoned their proper abode, He has kept in eternal bonds under darkness for the judgment of the great day, ⁷ just as Sodom and Gomorrah and the cities around them, since they in the same way as these indulged in gross immorality and went after strange flesh, are exhibited as an example in undergoing the punishment of eternal fire.

These angels have been made an example for other fallen angels to stay within God's boundaries by placing them in a prison of darkness and chains to be held until Judgment Day. At the Judgment they will be removed from the Abyss, judged, then thrown into the Lake of Fire for eternity. Most demons would rather have a few thousand years of freedom on the Earth before their judgment so they stay within God's boundaries so they won't be immediately sent to the Abyss.

II Peter 2:4-5

For if God did not spare angels when they sinned, but cast them into hell (tartarus - abyss) and committed them to pits of darkness, reserved for judgment; ⁵ and did not spare the ancient world, but preserved Noah, a preacher of righteousness, with seven others, when He brought a flood upon the world of the ungodly;

II Peter 2:4 is the only place in the Bible where the word "tartarus" is used and translated "hell", which means this place is different from Hades/Sheol or the Lake of Fire. It is referring to the Abyss and not the Lake of Fire. "Tartarus" is a word that comes from Greek mythology. In ancient Greek mythology, Tartarus is the deep abyss that is used as a dungeon of torment and suffering for the wicked and as the prison for the Titans. In Greek mythology, the Titans were members of the second order of divine beings, descending from the primordial gods and preceding the Olympian gods. The Titans were giant deities of incredible strength, who ruled during the legendary Golden Age, and also comprised the first pantheon of Greek gods and goddesses. By using this word Peter is not implying a belief in Greek mythology. He is just using the Greek word that is closest to describing the actual Abyss – a prison of darkness and chains for supernatural beings.

Note: If the word "hell" in this verse is misunderstood to be the Lake of Fire it would mean that satan and his fallen angels would now be in the Lake of Fire instead of being on Earth, which would be in conflict with other parts of the Bible. This is why it is critical to look at the original languages whenever the word "hell" is used.

As a side note, during the Tribulation, the Abyss/Bottomless Pit will be opened and the war criminal fallen angels will be let out for 5 months to torment people. Their torment will be so severe people will try to kill themselves to escape but they won't be able to. Other references to the Abyss can be found in Revelation chapters 9, 11, 17, and 20.

(Revelation 9:1-6)

Then the fifth angel sounded, and I saw a star from heaven which had fallen to the earth; and the key of the bottomless pit was given to him. ² He opened the bottomless pit, and smoke went up out of the pit, like the smoke of a great furnace; and the sun and the air were darkened by the smoke of the pit. ³ Then out of the smoke came locusts upon the earth, and power was given them, as the scorpions of the earth have power. ⁴ They were told not to hurt the grass of the earth, nor any green thing, nor any tree, but only the men who do not have the seal of God on their foreheads. ⁵ And they were not permitted to kill anyone, but to torment for five months; and their torment was like the torment of a scorpion when it stings a man. ⁶ And in those days men will seek death and will not find it; they will long to die, and death flees from them.

For a detailed study of this topic see, "Why Isn't Life Like a Horror Movie?" at:
<http://gciweb.org/2011/04/youth-bible-study-materials-michael-r-daily/>

Did Jesus Visit The Abyss?

So far we know that between His death and resurrection Jesus visited Paradise and He did not visit Hades/Sheol or the Lake of Fire. The only other place He could have gone during this time is the Abyss. Is there any evidence He went there? Yes.

I Peter 3:18-22

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; ¹⁹ in which also He went and made proclamation to the spirits *now* in prison, ²⁰ who once were disobedient, when the patience of God kept waiting in the days of Noah, during the construction of the ark, in which a few, that is, eight persons, were brought safely through *the water*. ²¹ Corresponding to that, baptism now saves you—not the removal of dirt from the flesh, but an appeal to God for a good conscience—through the resurrection of Jesus Christ, ²² who is at the right hand of God, having gone into heaven, after angels and authorities and powers had been subjected to Him.

According to this passage Jesus appears to have spent some of His time during the three days visiting some spirits that were in prison. The passage goes on to describe these spirits as having been disobedient during the days of Noah. Who are these spirits? There are only two possibilities. Perhaps they were disobedient people who lived during the days of Noah and are now in some kind of prison. The other possibility is that they were the fallen angels who committed war crimes during the days of Noah and were removed from the Earth and placed in the Abyss. The first possibility is not consistent with the rest of scripture. People were going to Hades and Paradise before the flood based on their faith.

Hebrews 11:1-2

Now faith is the assurance of *things* hoped for, the conviction of things not seen. ² For by it the men of old gained approval.

In addition the Bible is clear that after death, people do not have a second chance to repent.

Hebrews 9:27 - And inasmuch as it is appointed for men to die once and after this comes judgment,

The second option is more likely. The word “spirits” is almost always used in the Bible to indicate fallen angels. We also know that a special prison for fallen angels does exist and is called the Abyss. We also know that the first angels (and perhaps the only ones) to be placed in the Abyss were put there for causing problems during Noah’s time. **I Peter 3:22** also provides support for this option by stating that Jesus went into heaven after the angels, authorities, and powers had been subjected to him. These three terms refer to all of the fallen angels. So, what was Jesus doing in the Abyss? Was he there to help the demons? No.

Hebrews 2:16

For assuredly He does not give help to angels, but He gives help to the descendant of Abraham.

He went there to make it clear to the demons in the Abyss that their efforts to thwart the plan of salvation by violating the boundaries God gave them during the time of Noah had failed and, in effect, to officially and publicly declare victory over them!

Colossians 2:13-15

When you were dead in your transgressions and the uncircumcision of your flesh, He made you alive together with Him, having forgiven us all our transgressions, ¹⁴ having canceled out the certificate of debt consisting of decrees against us, which was hostile to us; and He has taken it out of the way, having nailed it to the cross. ¹⁵ When He had disarmed the rulers and authorities, He made a public display of them, having triumphed over them through Him.

He did this before ascending into Heaven after His resurrection so He had to have done this during the three days His body was in the tomb in fulfillment of **I Peter 3:22**.

Conclusion

During the three days between Christ’s death and resurrection Jesus spent time in Paradise and in the Abyss. He visited the Abyss to formally declare victory over the fallen angel war criminals who tried to subvert the plan of salvation during the time of Noah. He publicly declared to them in front of all the angels, both obedient and fallen, that the work of salvation for men had been accomplished and completed and that God was victorious over them.

QUIET TIMES ALONE WITH GOD

JEREMIAH 15:16

THEME: *Where Was Jesus Between His Death And Resurrection?*

PASSAGE FOR MEDITATION: *I Corinthians 15:3-8, Acts 1:3*

How does this passage relate to the theme?

When I reflect on this passage, does it primarily convict, encourage or challenge me? Explain why:

How will I apply this passage to my life in the coming week and is there anything I can do today to make this passage a part of my Christian life?

PASSAGE FOR MEDITATION: *Matthew 12:40, Psalm 16:10, Acts 2:27-32*

How does this passage relate to the theme?

When I reflect on this passage, does it primarily convict, encourage or challenge me? Explain why:

How will I apply this passage to my life in the coming week and is there anything I can do today to make this passage a part of my Christian life?

PASSAGE FOR MEDITATION: *John 19:28-30, Luke 23:42-46*

How does this passage relate to the theme?

When I reflect on this passage, does it primarily convict, encourage or challenge me? Explain why:

How will I apply this passage to my life in the coming week and is there anything I can do today to make this passage a part of my Christian life?

QUIET TIMES ALONE WITH GOD

JEREMIAH 15:16

THEME: *Where Was Jesus Between His Death And Resurrection?*

PASSAGE FOR MEDITATION: *II Corinthians 12:2-4, II Corinthians 5:6-8*

How does this passage relate to the theme?

When I reflect on this passage, does it primarily convict, encourage or challenge me? Explain why:

How will I apply this passage to my life in the coming week and is there anything I can do today to make this passage a part of my Christian life?

PASSAGE FOR MEDITATION: *Revelation 20:14, Luke 16:22-25, Luke 12:42-48, Revelation 14:9-10*

How does this passage relate to the theme?

When I reflect on this passage, does it primarily convict, encourage or challenge me? Explain why:

How will I apply this passage to my life in the coming week and is there anything I can do today to make this passage a part of my Christian life?

PASSAGE FOR MEDITATION: *Revelation 20:10-15*

How does this passage relate to the theme?

When I reflect on this passage, does it primarily convict, encourage or challenge me? Explain why:

How will I apply this passage to my life in the coming week and is there anything I can do today to make this passage a part of my Christian life?

QUIET TIMES ALONE WITH GOD

JEREMIAH 15:16

THEME: *Where Was Jesus Between His Death And Resurrection?*

PASSAGE FOR MEDITATION: *Matthew 25:41, Jeremiah 7:31*

How does this passage relate to the theme?

When I reflect on this passage, does it primarily convict, encourage or challenge me? Explain why:

How will I apply this passage to my life in the coming week and is there anything I can do today to make this passage a part of my Christian life?

PASSAGE FOR MEDITATION: *Luke 8:28-31*

How does this passage relate to the theme?

When I reflect on this passage, does it primarily convict, encourage or challenge me? Explain why:

How will I apply this passage to my life in the coming week and is there anything I can do today to make this passage a part of my Christian life?

PASSAGE FOR MEDITATION: *Genesis 6:1-4, Jude 1:6-7*

How does this passage relate to the theme?

When I reflect on this passage, does it primarily convict, encourage or challenge me? Explain why:

How will I apply this passage to my life in the coming week and is there anything I can do today to make this passage a part of my Christian life?

QUIET TIMES ALONE WITH GOD

JEREMIAH 15:16

THEME: *Where Was Jesus Between His Death And Resurrection?*

PASSAGE FOR MEDITATION: *II Peter 2:4-5*

How does this passage relate to the theme?

When I reflect on this passage, does it primarily convict, encourage or challenge me? Explain why:

How will I apply this passage to my life in the coming week and is there anything I can do today to make this passage a part of my Christian life?

PASSAGE FOR MEDITATION: *Revelation 9:1-6*

How does this passage relate to the theme?

When I reflect on this passage, does it primarily convict, encourage or challenge me? Explain why:

How will I apply this passage to my life in the coming week and is there anything I can do today to make this passage a part of my Christian life?

PASSAGE FOR MEDITATION: *I Peter 3:18-22*

How does this passage relate to the theme?

When I reflect on this passage, does it primarily convict, encourage or challenge me? Explain why:

How will I apply this passage to my life in the coming week and is there anything I can do today to make this passage a part of my Christian life?

QUIET TIMES ALONE WITH GOD

JEREMIAH 15:16

THEME: *Where Was Jesus Between His Death And Resurrection?*

PASSAGE FOR MEDITATION: *Hebrews 11:1-2, Hebrews 9:27*

How does this passage relate to the theme?

When I reflect on this passage, does it primarily convict, encourage or challenge me? Explain why:

How will I apply this passage to my life in the coming week and is there anything I can do today to make this passage a part of my Christian life?

PASSAGE FOR MEDITATION: *Hebrews 2:16*

How does this passage relate to the theme?

When I reflect on this passage, does it primarily convict, encourage or challenge me? Explain why:

How will I apply this passage to my life in the coming week and is there anything I can do today to make this passage a part of my Christian life?

PASSAGE FOR MEDITATION: *Colossians 2:13-15*

How does this passage relate to the theme?

When I reflect on this passage, does it primarily convict, encourage or challenge me? Explain why:

How will I apply this passage to my life in the coming week and is there anything I can do today to make this passage a part of my Christian life?