

JESUS ENDURED THE AGONISING AND BRUISING BIRTH PAINS OF HADES.

The tragic failure of the Church to preach about and meditate upon our Lord's imprisonment in Hades for us.

Over fifty years ago, a young girl of about ten, named Margaret Birch, asked me deep theological questions about Hell, and Jesus going to Hades for us, for between one and two hours, she puts the modern churches to shame. It is a tragedy that the events of Christ's life, between His death on the cross and the resurrection are seldom, and even never, considered, or meditated upon, by the modern church. It is a seriously neglected area of vital Christian truth. Christ's descent into Hades and His imprisonment there for us, for our sins, reveals to us the astonishing evidence and undeniable proof of the willingness of divine love to sacrifice to the utmost limit for us. When Jesus was suffering the birth pangs of Hades, it was the time of heavens greatest anguish and agony, and the time of greatest admiration, praise and worship. All of Heaven saw that God considered no sacrifice was too great to make for His Creation, and that God would do everything that He could to redeem, save and bless His creation. They are amazed at His immense sacrificial love, that gave, and still gives, to the very uttermost. The Scriptures proclaim that Jesus loves us to the uttermost, and that God the Father loves imperfect Christians like ourselves, with the same great love that He loves His perfect only begotten Son, the Lord Jesus. Jn.15v9. 17v23. Eph.2v4. How wonderful!!!

Most Christians have never really thought about the descent of Jesus into Hades.

It is a complete mystery to me how almost all Christians have neglected this most marvellous and breathtaking truth about the life of Christ. The amazing fact that out of pure love for us, and to redeem us, Jesus took our place in Hades, God's prison. When Jesus took our place in Hades, He was cut off from His Father, because He was paying the penalty for our sins. Ps.22v1. Mt.27v46. Mk.15v34. This act of matchless love, is more significant and important than any of the great miracles our Lord performed, and no less important than His death on the cross. Our Lord's confinement in Hades was the most important part of His atoning work; this is where He paid the penalty for our sin, when His soul was made an offering for our sins. Is.53v10.

The fact of our Lord's decent into Hades gives us a remarkable insight into the character of God.

It reveals the lengths to which God is prepared to go to save us, and bless us, and His amazing long-suffering and mercy to sinners. The revelation of the amazing longsuffering of God with the unsaved is revealed by Christ's remarkable efforts to influence and win them, by preaching to them even in Hades. This truth of the extent of divine mercy, is of critical importance, or a cloud can come between ourselves and God, for we have to be able to say, with total confidence, "True and righteous are thy Judgements." Rev.16v7. 19v2. Total assurance and peace can only come, when we have complete confidence in God's justice and judgements. Satisfaction over God's justice is vital, for failure to see God's longsuffering character and perfect justice, obscures our vision of God, and hinders true fellowship and communion with Him.

The two greatest extremes of pain and joy were the portion of Christ's in Hades.

Christ's greatest pain and suffering occurred when He was made sin for us in Hades, and His greatest joy was at His proclamation of release for His Old Testament Saints, at the end of His imprisonment there. To correctly understand the Mount of transfiguration, Gethsemane, and the cross, we have to consider Christ's descent into the Abyss in Hades, in the lower parts of the earth. Rom.10v7. Eph.4v9,10.

The greatest bruising of the soul of Jesus took place in Hades.

This was what the conflict in Gethsemane was all about. In Acts.2v24., "the pains of death," is "odinas" 5604 "tou" 3588, "thanatou" 2288. The word translated "pains," "odinas," is used to describe the excruciating travailing pains of childbirth. The pains in the soul of Jesus were like the worst pains that a woman endures in childbirth. Women who have experienced childbirth will know how painful that can be, and almost certainly understand from the use of this word, far better than any man, the extent of Christ's suffering in Hades. 1Pet.3v18-20. 4v6. Eph.4v8-10. Rom.10v5-9. "Oodinas," is also used to describe the intolerable anguish caused by the catastrophic calamities, which just precede the return of Jesus. Mt.24v8. Mk.13v8. 1Thes.5v3.

The bruising and burden that Jesus endured in Hades for us was even more excruciating, agonising, and unbearable than the pains of the cross. Atonement was not fully completed until Jesus had paid the penalty for our sin, by being imprisoned in Hades in our place, and was raised for our justification. Note well, Rom.4v25.25. "Who was delivered for our offences, and was raised again for our justification." See also Rom.10v7-9. 1Pet.1v3 We read in Lk.9v30,31. **v30** "And, behold, there talked with him two men, which were Moses and Elias: **v31** Who appeared in glory, and spoke ('and were speaking') of his decease which he should accomplish at Jerusalem." KJV

In Lk.9v30., "of his decease," is "ten exodon 1841, autou" 846, and literally means, "of His exodus."

On the Mount of Transfiguration, Moses and Elijah spoke with Jesus of the exodus of God's saints from Hades, that Jesus was going to accomplish through His atonement. Some expositors say that this is a softened expression for death. However, this is speaking of something, which is much more than a softened expression for death. It is obviously speaking of the exodus of God's children from Hades, that Jesus was going to accomplish by His death, a far greater deliverance than the "exodus" of the children of Israel from Egypt. Who was better able to talk about this greater exodus from Hades than Moses, who led the exodus from Egypt?

Peter, who witnessed the scene on the Mount of Transfiguration, uses "exodon" in 2Pet.1v15-18. to speak of his own exodus to glory at his martyrdom.

In Lk.9v30., "which he should accomplish," is "en emellen 3195 pleroun" 4137.

The 1885 English Revised Version, "which he was about to accomplish," is a better translation. However, when the verb "pleroo" is used in connection with prophecy, it means "to receive fulfilment," and since "pleroun," is the present active infinitive of "pleroo," the best translation must be, "which he was about to bring to fulfilment" at Jerusalem. The prospects of this fulfilment were gruesome, the body of Jesus was cruelly beaten and brutally treated by evil men, but in Hades the soul of Jesus experienced something even more horrendous, when His soul was made an offering for sin. Is.53v10. Eccles.12v7. Rom.10v7. Mt.12v39,40. Jesus suffered in Hades for "three days" and the best part of "three nights," before the Father gave Him His spirit back. Eph.4v8,9. 1Pet.3v18-20. 1Pet.4v6.

1. The creed states that Jesus did descend into Hell.

The word "hell" with its later meaning of the place of eternal punishment was not in the minds of the makers of the creed. They meant that Christ descended into the unseen world of the departed, into a place where those who had died awaited His coming to release them. Confusion has arisen because the Authorised Version has translated Sheol and Hades as "Hell." However in early English, "hell" meant, "unseen," or, "covered in." In an old game of English forfeits, "the hell" was the covered place where laughing girls hid themselves to pretend to escape being kissed, when playing a game of forfeits. To them it was heaven not a place of punishment. A Devon thatcher was in time passed called a "hellier" because he "covered in" a dwelling.

2. The various Hebrew and Greek words used for the place to which the dead go.

There are two Greek words translated "hell" in the A.V. one is Hades, the temporary abode of the dead, corresponding to the Old Testament "Sheol," the other is "Gehenna," which is the eternal abode of the unrepentant wicked.

A. GEHENNA occurs 12 times in the New Testament.

It occurs in Mt.5v22,29,30. 10v28. 18v9. 23v15,33. Mk.9v43-47. Lk.12v5. James.3v6. "Gehenna" is from the Hebrew "Gay" i.e. gorge or valley and a Jebusite name, "Hinnom," for the valley outside of Jerusalem, whose perpetual fires were kept burning, to burn the dead bodies of animals and criminals, and the refuse of Jerusalem. This place of cleansing of the contaminated refuse of Jerusalem by fire, was used as by the Jews, and the Lord Jesus, as a picture of the place of divine judgment.

Gehenna is also called "the lake of fire." Mt.8v12. 13v42,50. 22v13. 24v51. 25v80. Lk.3v19. It is also the place of "fire and brimstone" Mt.25v41,46. Rev.14v9-11. 19v20. 20v10-15. 21v8. Is.66v22-24. The first casting into the lake of fire occurs at the start of the Millennium, at Christ's second coming, when the followers of Antichrist are eternally judged 1000 years before the last judgement. The wicked angels are also confined to Gehenna at this time. The people who refused to take their stand with Christians in the great tribulation are also sent to Gehenna, their love for evil being eternally fixed. Mt.25v30,41,46.

B. HADES is translated as "hell" 10 times in the Authorised King James Version.

This occurs in Mt.11v23. 16v18. Lk.16v15. 16v23. Acts.2v27,31. Rev.1v18. 6v8. 20v13,14. It is quite incorrectly translated as "grave" in 1Cor.15v55. Hades is not the grave or tomb, Greek, "Mnaimion," which is never translated "hell." "Mnaimion" is quite clearly the place where the bodies go to at death. "Hades is the place where unsaved souls go at death. Before Jesus died even the Old Testament saints went to "Abraham's bosom" in Hades, and received some measure of comfort from God.

The lower depths of Hades are a prison for evil angels, there, "the wicked are silent in darkness," 1Sam.2v9., "fearful" and "utterly consumed with terrors." Ps.73v19,20. They have "a certain terrifying expectation of judgment, and the fury of a fire, which will consume the adversaries." Heb.10v27. (NAS)

N.B. Two other words describe the part of Hades in which evil beings are incarcerated.

This is where evil angels in particular, are kept in chains of darkness, and are reserved for the day of judgement.

1. THE ABYSS, or, THE DEEP. Greek. "Abbisos."

It occurs in Lk.8v26,31. Rom.10v7. Rev.9v1-3,11. 11v7. 17v8. 20v1-10 The Old Testament equivalent is "Abaddon." i.e. "destruction." See Job.26v5,6. 28v22. 31v12. Ps.85v11. Prov.15v11. 27v20.

N.B. the Abyss and "Tartaros" were on the other side of the great gulf where Lazarus was comforted. Lk.16v19-31. Is.14v9. Ez.32v17-32. This was where our Lord went in our place, to pay the penalty for our sins. Rom.10v7.

2. TARTAROS.

The evil angels who left their first estate were confined to Tartaros awaiting eternal judgement.

We read in 2Pet.2v4., "For if God did not spare the angels who sinned, but cast them down to hell (Tartaros) and delivered them into chains of darkness, to be reserved for judgment." NKJV. In 2Pet.2v4., "cast them down to hell." "Hell" is "tartaros," the aorist active participle of "tartaroo" 5020, from "tartaros." It is surprising to

find Peter using this pagan term, which the Greeks used to speak of the place of eternal punishment. It proves that even worldly people know that the darkness and judgement of Hades is a fact. The Scriptures do not regard Tartaros as the place of eternal judgment, "Gehenna;" they say it is the temporary prison of the wicked until the last judgment. Tartaros is the deepest abyss of Hades, the dark and doleful subterranean region where wicked beings suffer incarceration until they stand before God at the great white throne judgement.

"Delivered," is "paredoken" the aorist active indicative of "paradidomi" 3860, the very form that Paul uses in Rom.1v21,26,28., to describe people being given over by God to a destructive sinful life when they love evil. These people will be delivered; "into chains of darkness." is "seirais" 4577, "zophou" 2217. "Zophos," 2217, only occurs in Heb.12v18. 2Pet.2v4,17. and Jude.v6,13.

The manuscripts Aleph, A, B, and C read, "seirois," from "seiros," a pit, 2 Peter 2:4., the Amplified Bible follows this reading, "For God did not [even] spare angels that sinned, but cast them into hell, delivering them to be kept there in pits of gloom till the judgment and their doom." Both reading are true to the facts, they are chained, Rev.20v1-3., and they are in pits of darkness.

The wicked are "reserved for judgment," "eis" 1519, "krisin" 2920, "teroumenous," the (continuous) present passive participle of "tereo" 5083, to keep, to guard, the wicked are, "kept and guarded for judgment." The same word "tereo" is used to speak of God guarding our heavenly inheritance. In 1Peter.1v4., "reserved," is "teteremenen," the perfect passive participle of "tereo" 5083, to carefully take care of, to guard. No thieves can break into our heavenly inheritance. See Mt.6v19-21.

In Jn.17v11,12., Jesus asks the Father to keep the disciples in His care, "keep them" is "tereson autous," 846. "Tereson" is the aorist active imperative of "tereo" 5083. This was so, "that they may keep on being one as we are." In John.17v12., Jesus also states, how He had kept, "eteroun," the imperfect active of "tereo," "I continually kept," and guarded "ephulaxa," the aorist active of "phulasso" 5442, Jesus was the sentinel ("phulax" 5441) who watched over and guarded them. In 1Pet.1v5., we read we are guarded by God every second of every day. "Are guarded," is "phrouroumenous," the (continuous) present passive participle of "phroureo" 5432, to garrison, from "phrouros," a sentinel, a military term. It is also used of God's guarding peace in Phil.4v7.

Why have I gone on at such length talking about God's protective love? Because in this dark world, we need to be fully assured that our Almighty Heavenly Father guards and protects us in the same way that He guards our heavenly inheritance. We also need to fully grasp how we have been delivered from being prisoners who would have been guarded in God's prison, to Sons of God who are co-heirs with Jesus in a glorious heavenly Kingdom. **The price for our blessing was our dear Lord's horrific suffering in Tartaros, in the depths of the Abyss, in Hades. Jesus bravely endured all this terrible suffering and bruising, out of pure love for us, to open Heaven to us.**

C. PARADISE.

Paradise, Greek, "paradeisos" 3857, occurs Lk.23v45. 2Cor.12v1-4. Rev.2v7.. It is the abode of the righteous in heaven, it indicates a park, pleasure ground, forest, or orchard. In the Septuagint it is used of the Garden of Eden. The Hebrew 1588 "gan," from 1598; a fenced and protected garden enclosure is used to describe Eden, in Gen.2v8,9,10,15,16. 3v1,2,3,8,,10,23,24. Ezek.36v35. Joel2v3. It is also used to describe the magnificent gardens of the Babylonian and Persian kings, Neh.3v15., the hanging gardens of Babylon were one of the seven wonders of the world. It is used to describe the glorious garden of God in Paradise in heaven, in which Satan walked before he fell, in Ezek.28v13. In Is.58v11., God promises us that with correct praying, loving living, and caring giving, our souls can be like a watered garden, a veritable Eden.

(See also the Hebrew, "pardec" which is translated as "orchard" in Song of Solomon.4v13. Ecc.2v5. Neh.2v8., 6508, "pardec," describes a park, a preserve, an enclosed garden, a forest)

The gates of Hades do not prevail against the church; Christians go to the heavenly paradise. Mt.16v18. Lk.23v43. 2Cor.12v4. Rev.2v7.Phil.1v20-24.. 2Cor.5v6-10. Heb.12v18-24.

N.B. THE HUGE DIFFERENCE BETWEEN AN OLD TESTAMENT AND A NEW TESTAMENT SAINT AT DEATH.

a. The Old Testament saint's fear and dread of death.

Heb.2v15." Who by fear of death lived all their lifetime in bondage through fear of death." The blood of bulls and goats could not take away sin, only the redemption and death of Christ. See Eccles.12v7. "Then shall the dust of which Christ made man's body return to the earth as it was, and the spirit shall return to God who gave it." The Old Testament saint lost their body and spirit.

Job, one of the godliest and greatest of God's saints, was fearful of death, he said in Job.10v21,22., "I go to the land of darkness and the shadow of death. A land of darkness, as darkness itself, and the shadow of death, without any order, and where the light is as darkness." See also Gen.37v35. 42v38. 44v29,31. Jacob dreaded going down to "Sheol" Ps.16v10,11. "My flesh also will rest on hope v10. For you will not leave my soul in

Sheol, nor will you allow your Holy One to see corruption v11. You will show me the path of life." This was a prophecy about our Lord, but resting in hope was the experience of the Old Testament saints in Hades, and it was painful and trying, they were all their lifetime in bondage through fear of death. Heb.2v14,15.

We read in Lk.16v22,25., that Lazarus was carried to Abraham's bosom, and God said to the selfish rich man, now Lazarus is comforted and you are tormented. The Old Testament saints were Comforted in Hades, the wicked were tormented by their sins and confinement in the Abyss, and by fear of future judgement. Heb.10v26,27.

2. The New Testament saints victory over Hades and joy in death.

We read in Mt.16v18., "The gates of Hades shall not prevail against the Church." "Hades" is not Satan's kingdom; it is God's prison for the wicked and unrepentant dead.

"He that believes in me shall never die." Jn.11v21-26. 8v35,36. 50v5.

"You shall be with me in paradise." Lk.23v43. 2Cor.12v1-4.

"I go to prepare a place for you, I will come again and receive you to myself, that where I am there ye may be also." Jn.14v3.

"Father I desire that they also whom you gave me be with me where I am that they may behold my glory which you have given me." Jn.17v24.

"For me to live is Christ, and to die gain v23. having a desire to depart and be with Christ which is far, far, far better." Phil.1v21,23.

"We are confident, yes, well pleased rather to be absent from the body and to be present with the Lord." 2Cor.5v8.

"Our Saviour Jesus Christ has abolished death and brought life and immortality to light through the Gospel." 2Tim.1v10.

"You may come to Mount Zion, and the city of the living God - and the church of the first born in heaven." Heb.12v22-24.

N. B. OUR DEAR LORD JESUS SUFFERED THE PAINS OF HADES FOR HIS SAINTS.

a. Jesus took the punishment of all His saints by being imprisoned in Hades.

Christ's descent into Hades was the only way that the Old Testament saints could be released from Hades. It also opened heaven to the New Testament sons. Jesus had not only to teach about Hades and judgement; He had to take our place in the Abyss. This is why Moses and Elijah came to encourage our Lord to press on, and they spoke of His "decease," Greek "exodus," which He should accomplish at Jerusalem. Lk.9v31. This encouragement caused Him to "set His face LIKE A FLINT." We read in Is.50v7., "Therefore have I set my face like a flint." "I give my back to the smiters, and my cheeks to those who plucked out the hair, I hid not my face from shame and spitting." We read in Lk.9v51. that Jesus, "steadfastly set His face to go to Jerusalem."

b. The agonies of Gethsemane were an anticipation and result of the agonies of Hades.

Mt.26v37. "Began to be sorrowful and very heavy." Heavy depression and great sorrow; "very heavy" is the same word that is used of the sickness of Epaphroditus, which brought him near to death. Mk.14v33. "Sore amazed," is amazement to the edge of horror. Mt.26v38. "Perilupus," means encompassed around and surrounded by sorrows. Lk.22v44. "Agony," means a conflict, a wrestling, a contest.

Jesus found the pains of Hades more trying than the pains of the Cross. Heb.5v7. Who in the days of this flesh, when he had offered up prayers and supplications, with strong cryings and tears unto Him that was able to save him from ("ek," "out of") death, and was heard in that He feared v8. Though He were a Son, yet learned He obedience by the things that He suffered." Passionate sobbing, heavy distraught weeping. Why? not prayer to save Him "from death," but prayer to save Him "out of death," i.e. Hades.

WHAT WERE THE BIRTH PAINS OF HADES?

1. The soul-agony of being separated from the Father.

"Jesus cried with a loud voice saying, "My God, My God, why hast thou forsaken me?" Mk.15v34. N.B. Notice the pain of the Cross, the mocking, the abuse, the mocking had not caused a cry, but when He was made sin for us and forsaken by God for us, this was the reason for this cry of unutterable anguish. This was the first time Father and Son had not been in fellowship together. It shoed the anguish of soul of our Lord.

Moses and Paul had wished themselves accursed for their people's sake. "I could wish myself accursed for Christ." Rom.9v3. If thou wilt forgive their sin - and if not, let me I pray thee out of thy book which thou hast written." Exod.32v32. Which brings us to our next point. But only one was the Lamb of God.

2. The soul-agony of being made sin for us.

Jesus alone could be God's perfect Lamb. Christ alone was wounded for our transgressions and bruised for our iniquities. Thou shall make His soul an offering for sin. Is53v5,10. Jesus experienced the soul agonies of bearing the judgement by God, by being treated as a sinner, and by being isolated with the evil angels in Tartaros. The Light of the World endured the chains of darkness for us. 2Pet.2v4,17,18. Judev13.

The Lord Jesus was not only forsaken by God, but also judged by God for our sins. The Father put Him in the depths of the Abyss, the place of imprisonment for the wickedest fallen angels. Jesus was treated as a sinner, and isolated in Tartaros, with the most evil beings there has ever been, but Jesus overcame this greatest trial of all, and triumphed over this environment of total evil.

3. The soul-anguish of trusting God without His spirit and God's presence.

We see that when our Lord said, "It is finished." He was thinking of His fulfilment of prophecy, His life on earth. The worst was to come in Hades; He was surrounded and imprisoned with evil angels. Ps.69v20-22." They gave me vinegar to drink." When Jesus said "Father into thy hands I commend my spirit," it was the greatest act of courage there has been, no V.C. can match this for courage. Jesus was without His Spirit, the mighty instrument that had channelled the Father's healing power and love to the multitudes, it had gone and He had to trust God without it, and the communion with His Father that it gave Him.

The Lord Jesus had promised that He would never, never, never, never, never forsake his own or fail them, but He experienced the pain that His own would never know. In these most appalling and devastating of circumstances Jesus manifested perfect faith in the Father. It was a gigantic test and act of faith. What this cost the Father is not difficult to imagine, the great earthquake, the darkness at midday, the rending of the three inch thick solid veil of the Temple, give a revelation of the agonizing and distressing feelings of God the Father.

4. The soul anguish Jesus suffered in Hades was the greatest that He suffered.

It was the pain of soul more severe and greater than Gethsemane. It was the pain of soul more testing than the pain of the cross. When the Lord Jesus spoke on the parable of the rich man and Lazarus and the great gulf and the sufferings of Dives on the wrong side of Hades - our Lord knew He was going to be there on the wrong side of Hades, the great gulf between Him and the saints.

God forsook Jesus, so that we might never be forsaken. As He suffered, He said, "I am the atoning Lamb, I am their sacrifice, I must go through for them." It was for us. He was in soul anguish to rescue all those who rested in hope in the saviour. Acts.20v26. Justified by faith in Jesus and His death. The Old Testament saints who rested in hope in Hades.

JESUS PREACHING IN HADES. 1Pet.3v17-22. 4v6.

"Being put to death in the flesh, but quickened by the spirit, by which He went and preached to the spirits in prison which sometimes were disobedient in the time of Noah."

A. THE GREAT JOY OF JESUS AFTER HIS GLORIOUS TRIUMPH OVER DEATH AND HADES.

1. Jesus had the supreme joy of restored fellowship and communion with the Father.

Christ's agonising cry on the Cross, "My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?" Mt.27v46. Mk.15v34., reveals the pain that Jesus felt when He was cut off from the Father because of our sins. After His three days and nights in Hades we read in 1Pet..3v18., that Jesus was quickened or made alive in the spirit, "zopoiethis" 2227 "de" 1161, "pneumati" 4151. "Zoopoiethis" is the aorist passive participle of the verb "zopioieo," to make alive, to revitalise, to quicken. "Pneumati," should be translated as, "in spirit;" not as in the King James Version, "by the Spirit," meaning the Holy Spirit, as the verse is referring to his own spirit, which He gave back to the Father, when He said in His death-cry on the cross, "Father, into thy hands I commend my spirit." Lk.23v46. When God gave Jesus His spirit back, Jesus proclaimed His victory in Hades.

When Jesus was quickened in spirit, the Father's presence filled and surrounded Him. The shared glory and fellowship that they had enjoyed from before the foundation of the world was renewed. Heaven rejoiced as the Father proclaimed with great joy, "My Son, God the Word, has made atonement for sin, Heaven is now opened to all believers.

2. Jesus had the great joy of knowing that atonement had been made.

The Father said, "you have conquered, the sacrifice is accepted, you are indeed, My beloved Son in whom I am well pleased." You have established the Law and made forgiveness possible. Here our dear Lord Jesus truly cried, "tetelestai, which means, "It is finished, accomplished and perfectly brought to the goal. In Jn.19v30., when Jesus cried out, "It is finished," He was speaking about His life, His atonement was not finished until He had died, and was raised from the dead. Jesus was stating the wonderful fact that He had perfectly fulfilled every prophecy that was written in God's word about Him, and perfectly fulfilled everything that the Father had asked Him to do, and perfectly fulfilled every directive vision that the Father had given Him. Jesus was God's truly obedient Son in everything. This took astonishing courage, determination, staying power, and absolute and total love for us. Wonderful Jesus.

David had said in Ps.139., "If I make my bed in Sheol, thou art there." Christ had been the comfort of the Old Testament saints in Hades - now He comes to release them. Their long wait was over; the Lord had come for His own.

3. THE MULTITUDES OF CAPTIVE SAINTS IN HADES WERE TAKEN TO HEAVEN BY JESUS. Eph4v8,9.

Jesus had the great joy of releasing the saints, and proclaiming that they were justified in Him. The King of Glory, victorious in the greatest battle of all, is now crowned with glory and honour, and possessing all power and authority, He comes to set free all the captive Old Testaments saints in Hades free. Ps.24v7-10. Heb.2v14,15. The blood of bulls and goats could never atone for sin; Christ came to proclaim His victory and atonement. The rejoicing and praise from the saints was greater than words can tell. Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, Daniel, all God's great Old Testament saints. The joy our Saviour had in their release. The saints greatly rejoice in their Saviour, knowing that their eternal salvation was both prepared and won by Jesus. Worthy is the Lamb they cry with all their redeemed being.

N.B. Jesus leaves the great multitude ascending to Heaven out of Hades, to meet with, and minister to, the women and Mary Magdalene. He really cares. He was more interested in ministering to them, than He was of receiving the adulation and praise that was waiting for Him in Heaven.

B. IS THERE A CHANCE OF SALVATION AFTER DEATH?

JESUS PREACHED LIKE A HERALD TO THE IGNORANT AND WICKED IN HADES.

The words used for Jesus preaching to the dead are the normal words for preaching the Gospel.

"Kerusso." 2784. Robertson says "kerusso" is, "the normal word for Christ's preaching." So to say "Kerusso" excludes good news is ridiculous. See Mt.3v1. Jn.4v17,23. 9v35. 10v7,27. 11v1. 24v14. 26v13. Mk.1v4,7,14,38,39. 3v14. 6v12. 14v9. 6v15,20. Lk.3v3. 4v18,19. 8v1. 9v2. 24v47. Paul appointed to Kerusso. 1Tim.2v7. 2Tim.1v11. Noah. 2Pet.2v5. See, Acts.8v5. 9v20. 10v37,42. 15v21. 19v13. 20v35. 28v31. etc.

In Hades our Lord preached first to the spirits that were in prison.

These were the disobedient angels who left their first estate. Gen.6v4. 2Pet.2v4. Jude.v6. In 1Pet.3v19., "He went and preached," is "poreutheis ekeruxen." "Poreutheis," is the aorist passive participle of "poreuomai," 4198, "Ekeruxen," is the aorist active indicative of "kerusso" 2784, which means, to proclaim after the manner of a herald, and as Thayer says, "always with the suggestion of formality, gravity and an authority which must be listened to and obeyed." The verb "kerusso" is frequently used to describe the preaching of Jesus in the Gospels. Here "kerusso" is used to show how Jesus heralded His victory over the world, the flesh, the Devil, and Hades, in Hades, and carried out the greatest and most awe-inspiring evangelistic crusade that has ever taken place, after death, and to the dead. This Scripture describes, beyond any doubt, the supreme and unprecedented personal triumph and mighty preaching of Jesus in the place of the dead. It cannot be at any other time than when He was "quickenened in spirit" while He was in Hades. 1Pet.3v18.

Jesus preached, "to the spirits in prison" "tois en phulake pneumasin." "Phulake" 5438," a guard, watch, sentinels, it is also used of a place where captives are kept, a prison. "Spirits," "pneumasin" 4151. is used of God, the Holy Spirit, good angels, and good men, Heb.12v23., however, in 1Pet.3v19., "pneumasin" refers to the fallen angels referred to in Gen.6v4. 2Pet.2v4. Jude.v6. The language is clear, Jesus did preach to the spirits in prison, when God the Father gave Him His spirit back.

What was the attitude of Christ to the evil spirits in prison?

Jesus did not go to gloat; He could never be like that. Col.1v20. tells us, "He had made peace with the blood of the cross, by Him to reconcile all things; whether they be things in earth or things in heaven." However, these evil angels were beyond repentance, for we read that they are still in everlasting chains of darkness. 2Pet.2v4. Jude.v13. Jesus preached like a herald of His atonement for sin and gave the full revelation of His character. A blaze of the incredible love of God, but this failed to win these evil beings.

JESUS ALSO PREACHED GOOD NEWS TO THE REST OF THE DEAD.

Euangelizo," 2097. Is used in 1Pet.4v6., it means, to tell, or announce, good news, ("evangelise") especially the gospel. It only occurs in Matthew's Gospel in Mt. 11v5. We read in Mt.11v4,5. **v4** Jesus answered and said to them, "Go and tell John the things which you hear and see: **v5.** "The blind see and the lame walk; the lepers are cleansed and the deaf hear; the dead are raised up and the poor have the gospel preached to them." (NKJ) Jesus made it quite clear that healing is a natural and expected companion of true preaching of the Gospel, it is an essential part of God's good news." Euangelizo" does not occur in Mark's Gospel. However, Luke uses it often in His Gospel and Acts. Lk.1v19. 2v10. 3v18. 4v18,43. 7v22. 8v1. 9v6. 16v16. 20v1. In Acts "Euangelizo". Acts.5v42. 8v4,12,25,35,40. 10v36. 11v20. 13v32. 14v7,15,21. 15v35. 16v10. 17v18. Paul also uses it a lot in his writings. Rom.1v15. 10v15. 15v20. 1Cor.1v17. 9v16,18. 1Cor.15v1,2. 2Cor.10v16. 2Cor.11v7. Gal.1v8,9,11,16,23. 4v13. Eph.2v17. 3v8. 1Thes.3v6. Heb.4v2,6. See also. 1Pet.1v12,25. 4v6. Rev.10v7."declared" is "euangelizo." 14v6.

We read in 1Pet.4v5,6., "They will give an account to Him who is ready to judge the living and the dead. v6 For to this end was the gospel preached **even to the dead**, that they might be judged indeed according to men in the flesh, but live according to God in the spirit." The phrase, "was the gospel preached," is the

translation of the Greek word, "euangeliste" the aorist passive indicative of "euangelizo" 2097, which means, to announce glad tidings like a herald, to bring good news, and particularly the good news of the gospel, we get our word evangelise from it.. Jesus evangelised Hades, and told the wonderful news, that through His atonement all the dead saints could now leave the darkness of Hades, and go into the bliss, fullness and light of Heaven. This was, indeed, the most supreme good news. It was the glad tidings that they had all been waiting and longing to hear for many centuries, and how they welcomed and praised the Saviour who had come to release them from the darkness of Hades, and take them to His kingdom. What amazing immeasurable sacrificial love!

It cannot be clearer; Jesus preached, "to them that are dead," "nekrois" 3498. It means the physically dead. Some interpret "dead" here as meaning spiritually dead in trespasses and sins, as in Col.2v13. and Eph.2v1.. However, it is against reason to say that Peter changes the subject from the definite sense of physical death in 1Peter.4v5., to then speak of spiritual death in the same context in the next sentence. Bigg, in sharp contrast, differs completely from this viewpoint that it is speaking of spiritual death, and says that Peter means that all who do not hear the gospel message in this life will hear it in the next, before the final judgment. With this I heartily and completely agree. Paul states in Rom.2v24., that the heathen have rejected God, and blasphemed His Name, because of the bad lives of believers. Rom.2v24. God, the just and righteous judge of all the earth, will correct the wrong ideas that people have of Him, because of bad living believers. Gen.18v25. Mt.11v20-24. Lk.10v13,14.

C. THERE IS DEFINITELY A CHANCE OF SALVATION AFTER DEATH?

In 2Pet.3v9., Peter declares, "The Lord is not slack concerning His promise, as some count slackness, but is longsuffering toward us, not willing that any should perish but that all should come to repentance." God is not slack, powerless, or unwilling to bring His promises to us to fruition. "Not willing," is, "me boulomenos," the present middle participle of "boulomai," 1014, "to will deliberately, to wish, to desire," it usually expresses the deliberate exercise of the will more strongly than "thelo." So God strongly and definitely wills and desires that no one should perish, but people's wills frustrate this divine will and desire, just as Jesus said when He wept over Jerusalem, in Mt.23v37., "O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, the one who kills the prophets and stones those who are sent to her! How often I wanted to gather your children together, as a hen gathers her brood under her wings, but you were not willing!" See. Lk.13v34.. In 2Pet.3v9., "Perish, is "apolesthai," the aorist infinitive of "apollumi," and sadly, as 2Pet.3v7. states, some will perish, but that is not God's desire. It is God's will and desire for "all" ("pantas," all, everyone) to come to repentance. "Come," is "choresai," the aorist active infinitive of "choreo," to make room, to have room for, that is, have opportunity for repentance and salvation. Jn.1v7. 12v32. Rom.4v16. Eph.2v4-9. 1Tim.2v4-6. 1Jn.2v2. Rev.5v9.

There can be no doubt that evil enemies of God, like Jezebel, Antichrist, and Satan and his angels, will not enter the kingdom of God in the next life, for they have refused to repent of their wickedness. However, Augustine taught that there will be no chance of salvation after death for those who have never heard the Gospel, and said that they will go to Hell for ever. He also proclaimed the monstrous doctrine, that babies who die unbaptised, go to Hell forever, like the very worst sinner.

The Dean of Wells, E. H. Plumptre D.D., writes on pages 152 and 153 of his book, "The Spirit's in Prison:-

"And so the dark shadow of Augustine fell on the theology of the Western church, and condemned its thoughts of the love of God to many centuries of disastrous twilight. It started from the assumption that the whole human race was, through the sin of Adam, 'one mass of perdition.' From this Divine grace elected some to salvation. But none are elected outside the range of those who believe and are baptised. The whole heathen world, therefore, was left to eternal torments: its virtues were but 'glittering vices {de Civ. Dei, 19.25}}. Even for unbaptised infants dying before they had done good or evil there was but the 'levissima damnatio' of the alienation from the life of God, which was the common lot of all the lost, and compared with the eternity of which, any torments enduring for ages and then ceasing, would be a light thing to bear {Enchirid. C. 29}. And baptism, though indispensable, was yet not sufficient. To hold the true faith, to live a holy life, these he rightly saw were conditions of eternal blessedness, and these were possible only for those who came under the decree of God's electing grace. The narrowness of mediaeval scholasticism, the hardness of Calvinistic Protestantism are each of them traceable to the influence of the great bishop of Hippo. And to that influence also, it must be added, is traceable the whole scholastic and Tridentine doctrine of purgatory with all its practical corruptions. The instincts of mankind led them to turn to the one mitigating feature in the terrible theology that shut out ninety-nine hundredths of mankind from all hope of escaping hell." **End of quote.**

1. Peter states that Jesus has ALREADY preached to the dead in Hades. 1Pet.4v6.

See also 1Pet.3v18-20. All the Old Testament saints were saved after they died, when Jesus preached the good news of His atonement to them in Hades. If they had been saved before Jesus preached to them, and went to rescue them, they would not have been in Hades. It is difficult to understand why Christians refuse to accept that there will be a chance of salvation after death, when Peter, in 1Pet.3v18-20. and 4v6., declares that Jesus has already preached to the dead. Jesus did this preaching after His soul was made an offering for sin in Hades, and He had won salvation for us. Is.53v10. Mt.12v40. Acts.2v24,31. Rom.10v7. Eph.4v8-10. In 1Pet.4v6., Peter uses "euangelizo" to state that Jesus preached the good news of

the Gospel to the dead, that is human beings who had died. We read in 1Pet.4v5,6., "They will give an account to Him who is ready to judge the living and the dead. v6 For this reason the Gospel was preached also to those who are dead, that they might be judged according to men in the flesh, but live according to God in the spirit." "Euangelizo" is always used of the preaching of the good news concerning Jesus. Mt.11v5. Lk.3v18. 4v18,43. Acts.8v4,12,25,35,40. 17v18. Rom.10v15. Gal.1v8,9. 1Pet.1v12,25. Rev.10v7. 14v6.

Peter also informs us in 1Pet.3v19., that Jesus preached to the wicked angels imprisoned in the Abyss by God, who had taken upon them human flesh in the time of Noah. Gen.6v1-7. Jude.v6. Here "preached," is "kerusso," to publish, to proclaim, to preach the Gospel as a herald, a "kerux." For "kerusso," see Mt.3v1. 4v17,23. 10v7. 11v1. 24v14. Acts.8v5. 9v20. 28v31. 1Cor.1v23. 2Cor.4v5. 2Tim.4v2. etc. Jesus proclaimed like a herald His great victory to the wickedest beings that have ever lived, the evil angels who were expelled from Heaven with Satan for choosing evil while living with God in Heaven. We know from 2Pet.2v4,17. and Jude.v6,12., that they are so hardened by evil, that they are beyond repentance and redemption, and are "reserved in everlasting chains under darkness unto the judgement of the great day." Some say these sons of God who were disobedient in Noah's time, were the sons of Seth, however, the whole tone of Gen.6v1-7., is of angelic beings who came to live as men. "Sons of God," not sons of men, are married to "daughters of men," the result was "giants," and great wickedness. Job.38v4,7. Jude.v6. It is foolish to say that men only began to realise that women were good looking well over 1,000 years after the creation. Peter says that these beings that were in prison were "spirits," and only an angel could be imprisoned as a spirit in Hades, for when a man dies who is unsaved, his spirit goes back to God who gave it. Eccles.12v7. It is the souls of men that are in Hades, not spirits. Christians retain their spirit, and go into God's presence at death. Mt.16v18. Jn.11v24-26. Phil.1v21-23.

We know that angels are sexless, but God appears to have allowed these evil angels to take upon themselves human bodies, they certainly have the power to do this, for we see that the magicians of Egypt were able to change matter and create physical bodies by the power of evil spirits. Exod.7v11,12,22. 8v6,7,18,19. One thing cannot be disputed, these beings lived, and then died like men, and then after death Christ personally preached to them. Ps.82v6,7. We know they did not respond to Christ's message, they are so hardened in evil that they are beyond repentance, and so they are still imprisoned in Hades in everlasting chains of darkness. 2Pet.2v4,17. Jude.v6,13. In Col.1v20., Paul tells us that Christ's blood bought the opportunity for salvation for "all on earth and all in Heaven alike," however, whether people repent and accept His sacrifice is another matter, both angels and men can refuse to repent and accept the Divine mercy.

2. The early Church fathers also testify that Jesus preached to the dead.

In 1Pet.3v19. and 4v6., Peter gives sufficient proof for an honest person, that the early Church believed and preached that Jesus proclaimed His glorious atonement and victory to the dead in Hades. There are, however, other reliable witnesses that testify that this was the widespread belief of the Church until around 400 A.D., when Augustine changed the doctrine of the Church on this and other important subjects. Luther, being an Augustinian monk, unfortunately brought Augustine's new theology into the Reformation. The great spiritual leaders of the early centuries of Church history, many of whom were martyrs for Christ's sake, proclaim with one voice that Jesus preached to the dead. We will now give a synopsis of some of the evidence given by the Dean of Wells, E. H. Plumtre D.D., in the 1886 edition of his, "The Spirits In Prison," from page 83 onward. Plumtre states that the evidence of our Lord's descent into Hades and His preaching to the dead includes all the leading familiar names, which are consulted when the early faith and practice of the Church are examined. The weight and authenticity that is attributed these witnesses on vital truths such as the Incarnation, baptism, the Eucharist, and the authenticity of the Gospels, must also be granted to the facts they give on the doctrine of our Lord's preaching to the dead.

1. Irenaeus. Bishop of Lyons, explicitly states how Jesus, "descended into the regions beneath the earth, preaching His advent there also, and the remission of sins for those who believe in Him," and he also states that remission of sins was received by, "all who had hopes towards Him, who proclaimed His advent and submitted to His dispensations." Irenaeus 4.27,2.

2. Justin. accused the Jews of mutilating a prophecy of Jeremiah's, which had read, "The Lord God, the Holy One of Israel, remembered those His dead who slept in the dust of the grave, and descended to them to proclaim to them His salvation."

3. Clement of Alexander. About 50 years after John's death says that the Scripture teaches Jesus preached the Gospel to the dead. Clement preached that the souls of the Heathen as well as Jews benefited from the revelation of Christ to them in Hades. The Jews being in bonds to the burden of the Law, and the Heathen being "those in darkness," received the proclamation of the truth of the Gospel from Jesus. This proclamation involved the offer of salvation, and the possibility of repentance and forgiveness of all the sins that a man had committed in ignorance, when not clearly knowing God.

4. Origen, answers the taunting comment of the infidel Celsus. Origen was Clement's pupil, who, as we have already stated, believed that Jesus preached to the dead. A famous infidel named Celsus was speaking with Origen and ridiculed this widespread belief of the Church, he said, "I suppose Christ, when He failed to persuade the living, went down to Hades to persuade those who live there?" Origen answered him, "Whether it

please Celsus or no, we of the Church assert that the soul of our Lord, stripped of its body, did there hold converse with other souls, that were in like manner stripped, that He might there convert those who were capable of instruction, or were otherwise in ways known to Him fit for it." Origen c. Celsum, 2.43.

5. Tertullian also stated that the belief that Jesus descended into Hades and preached there, had been held in the Church since the days of the apostles, his testimony is of great value since Tertullian censured anything that was new.

6. Cyril of Jerusalem. He states, in beautiful picturesque language, that: "The holy prophets ran unto Him {Jesus}, and Moses the lawgiver, and Abraham and Isaac and Jacob; David also and Samuel, and Isaiah and John the Baptist, who bore witness when he asked, Art thou He that should come, or look we for another? All the just were ransomed whom death had devoured, for it behoved the King who had been heralded to become the redeemer of His noble heralds. Then each of the just said, O death where is thy sting? O grave where is thy victory? For the Conqueror hath redeemed us." Cyril Hieros., Catech. 14. 9,10. Cyril also sees Christ conversing with "strugglers after right who had never seen His face on earth," as well as the disobedient.

7. Athanasius. He said that more than the Patriarchs and prophets were delivered from Hades, he extended the circle of those who Jesus delivered from Hades through His preaching, "and thinks of the souls of Adam as held fast under sentence of death, and crying to his Lord ever more, and of those who had pleased God, and had been justified by the law of nature, as mourning and crying with Him till the mercy of God revealed to them the mystery of redemption." More evidence could be given, but these quotes will suffice to show that the early Church believed that Jesus preached to the dead.

N.B. Further proofs that salvation and forgiveness is possible after death.

1. In Rev.20v15., "And whosoever," "kai ei tis," should be translated, "And if anyone."

We read in Rev.20v15., "And anyone not found written in the Book of Life was cast into the lake of fire." As someone has said, if there was a crowd at a railway barrier, and it was said that those who had no ticket would not be allowed to pass, it would be taken for granted that some would have tickets. So Rev.20v15., strongly infers that some who are raised at the second resurrection are saved. If Rev.20v15., meant that none of those who were raised at this resurrection were saved, it would have to read, "since none of them were found written in the book of life, they were all cast into the lake of fire." The people in Rom.2v6-16., are judged at this resurrection, the Gentiles who have tried to live righteously even without having the Law or the Gospel, and so Rom.2v 7., promises them eternal life.

2. In 2Cor.6v2., Paul is addressing the Corinthians, who have had their opportunity of salvation.

These people were already saved, they had received the grace of God, and in 2Cor.6v1., Paul implored them not to receive the grace of God in vain. Paul does not use the definite article in 2Cor.6v2., when he writes, "in a time acceptable," "kairo dekho;" and "in a day of salvation," "en emera soterias." There is also no definite article in, "Behold, now a time acceptable," "idou nun kairos euprosdektos," and "Behold, now a day of salvation," "idou nun emera soterias." Paul quotes 2Cor.6v2., from Is.49v8., which reads, "In an acceptable time have I heard thee, and in a day of salvation have I helped thee." As there is no definite article either in the original Scripture in Is.49v8., or in Paul's Greek quotation, we should accept the translations of Young and Rotheram, and others, who read, "now a day of salvation.

For those who have the opportunity of salvation, like the Corinthians, it is indeed the day of salvation for them. However, one cannot make this Scripture mean that there is no opportunity of salvation after death for those who have never had an opportunity of salvation. The whole age of grace is a day of salvation, but it is not the only time of salvation, and there is no Scriptural evidence to limit the day of salvation to this life, for those who have had no opportunity of salvation. Jesus Himself said that there is forgiveness in the world and age to come for all sin, except blasphemy against the Holy Spirit. Mt.12v31,32.

3. In Heb.9v27., "It is appointed unto men once to die, but after this the judgement."

Paul is not teaching that there will be no opportunity or day of salvation after death, and no second probation for those who have had no real opportunity of hearing and perceiving the fullness of the Gospel. All that Heb.9v27. teaches, is that there will be judgement after death, but this is just as true for Christians, as it is for unbelievers. 1Cor.3v10-15. 2Cor.5v8-11. The whole context of this verse teaches that Jesus died to save mankind; it is certainly not teaching that death closes the door of salvation. There is judgement after death, but the final judgement takes place at the end of the Millennium, and 1Pet.3v18-20. and 4v6., state that Jesus has already preached the Gospel to the dead after death.

4. In 1Tim.2v5.6., Paul tells us that the Christ who died for all, will give the testimony to all in due times.

The Revised Version reads, "the testimony to be borne in its own times." Rotheram reads, "The testimony in its own fit times." They correctly render "kairois," in the plural as "times." "Kairois," is used in the Scriptures in the sense of divinely ordained epochs, times, and appointments. The vast majority of people who have lived on the earth, have known little or nothing about either the Law or the Gospel, and those who have, have often been put off by the disgraceful lives of Israelites and Christians, who did not obey the Word of God that they preached. Rom.2v17-24. The God who so loved the world will make sure that everyone will hear the good news

about His Son's atoning death. How could the Christ who died on Calvary to redeem mankind, conceal from people the fact that He died to save them, or tell them that His death no longer availed for them? Jesus will never cast out those who come to Him in repentance, sincerity and truth. Jn.6v37. "The mercy of Yahweh is from everlasting to everlasting." Ps.103v8,17. Paul declares that God will give a full opportunity of salvation to all, for He has no pleasure in the death of anyone. It is inconceivable and unscriptural to say that a God of love will put people into an eternal Hell without a chance of salvation, because, due to no fault of their own, they were not fortunate enough to hear the Gospel.

5. The Judge of the whole earth will do right. Gen.18v25. Rev.6v10. 15v3. 19v2.

a. No one will be able to point an accusing finger at God, and every mouth will be stopped. Rom.3v19.

The ways of God are far higher and much better than our ways, not far worse; God abundantly pardons the repentant sinner. Is.55v7-9. It is very wicked to attribute to God what we would condemn in a man as injustice, cruelty, hardness of heart, and lack of love. Some people take great interest in human welfare, they have laboured to abolish slavery, others care for the sick and old; it cannot be true that the creature pursues such things with greater zeal than God pursues the more important eternal salvation of the souls of men. Therefore, how can a person's salvation depend on whether they are lucky enough to hear the Gospel? Job.4v17-19. 33v12. The only thing that makes Hell tolerable at all, is the fact that it is unavoidable, because the wicked love evil and resist all God's attempts to save them. God has no pleasure in the death of the wicked, He desires all to come to repentance and be saved. Ezek.18v23,30-32. 2Pet.3v9. "His mercy endures for ever." Ps.136v10-26. Jer.33v11..

b. In Mt.12v31,32., Jesus said there is forgiveness in the next age for all sin but blasphemy against the Holy Spirit. Blasphemy against the Holy Spirit, is the unrepentant hardness of heart that rejects Jesus and ascribes the mighty works of the Holy Spirit to Satan. The Judge of the whole earth will do right concerning those who have not heard the Gospel.

c. Jesus said that there was even hope for people who in limited light had come under Divine judgement.

In Mt.11v20-24., Jesus said that the people of the cities of Tyre, Sidon and Sodom, which had come under Divine judgement, would have repented if they had seen the mighty miracles that were seen by the people of Chorazin, Bethsaida and Capernaum, who had refused to repent, and had rejected Jesus, in spite of His mighty works, and so were doomed to Hell. Jesus was saying, therefore, that on judgement day God will take into account the limited light that the people of Tyre, Sidon and Sodom had received in their lifetime, and also how they would have responded to His ministry; and because of this it will be more tolerable for the people of Tyre, Sidon and Sodom on judgement day, than for the people of Chorazin, Bethsaida, and Capernaum. Mt.10v15. Mk.6v11. Lk.10v12-15. This must mean that some of them will be saved, as there are no degrees of tolerability in Hell.

The principle of judgement according to light is a fact of Scripture. Lk.12v47,48. As Paul states in Acts.17v30., "Therefore having winked at and overlooked {"hupereido"} the times of ignorance, God is now declaring to men that all everywhere should repent." God has overlooked and taken no notice of the times of ignorance until the full light of the Gospel was revealed. Jesus Himself gave this full light when He preached the Gospel to the dead in Hades, this must have included the people of Tyre, Sidon and Sodom. 1Pet.3v18-20. 4v6.

NOTE:

This and other studies can be found at:

www.truthforthelastdays.com

www.thesecretofeternallife.com

www.clparker.com