

## Question: "Did Jesus go to hell between His death and resurrection?"

**Answer from GotQuestions.org:** There is a great deal of confusion in regards to this question. This concept comes primarily from the Apostles' Creed, which states, "He descended into hell." There are also a few Scriptures which, depending on how they are translated, describe Jesus going to "hell" (ie. 1 Pet 3:18-20). In studying this issue, it is important to first understand what the Bible teaches about the realm of the dead.

In the Hebrew Scriptures, the word used to describe the realm of the dead is *sheol*. It simply means the "place of the dead" or the "place of departed souls/spirits." The New Testament Greek word that is used for hell is "hades," which also refers to "the place of the dead." Other Scriptures in the New Testament indicate that sheol/hades is a temporary place, where souls are kept as they await the final resurrection and judgment. Revelation 20:11-15 gives a clear distinction between the two. Hell (the lake of fire) is the permanent and final place of judgment for the lost. Hades is a temporary place. So, no, Jesus did not go to hell because hell is a future realm, only put into effect after the Great White Throne Judgment (Revelation 20:11-15).

Sheol/hades is a realm with two divisions (Matthew 11:23, 16:18; Luke 10:15, 16:23; Acts 2:27-31), the abodes of the saved and the lost. The abode of the saved was called "paradise" and "Abraham's bosom." The abodes of the saved and the lost are separated by a "great chasm" (Luke 16:26). When Jesus ascended to heaven, He took the occupants of paradise (believers) with Him (Ephesians 4:8-10). The lost side of sheol/hades has remained unchanged. All unbelieving dead go there awaiting their final judgment in the future. Did Jesus go to sheol/hades? Yes, according to Ephesians 4:8-10 and 1 Peter 3:18-20.

Some of the confusion has arisen from such passages as Psalm 16:10-11 as translated in the King James Version, "For thou wilt not leave my soul in hell; neither wilt thou suffer thine Holy One to see corruption....Thou wilt show me the path of life." "Hell" is not a correct translation of this verse. A correct reading would be "the grave" or "sheol." Jesus said to the thief beside Him, "Today you will be with me in paradise" (Luke 23:43). Jesus' body was in the tomb; His soul/spirit went to the "paradise" side of sheol/hades. He then removed all the righteous dead from paradise and took them with Him to heaven. Unfortunately, in many translations of the Bible, translators are not consistent, or correct, in how they translate the Hebrew and Greek words for "sheol," "hades," and "hell."

Some have the viewpoint that Jesus went to "hell" or the suffering side of sheol/hades in order to further be punished for our sins. This idea is completely unbiblical. It was the death of Jesus on the cross and His suffering in our place that sufficiently provided for our redemption. It was His shed blood that effected our own cleansing from sin (1 John 1:7-9). As He hung there on the cross, He took the sin burden of the whole human race upon Himself. He became sin for us: "God made him who had no sin to be sin for us, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God" (2 Corinthians 5:21). This imputation of sin helps us understand Christ's struggle in the garden of Gethsemane with the cup of sin which would be poured out upon Him on the cross.

When Jesus cried upon the cross, “Oh, Father, why have you forsaken me?” ([Matthew 27:46](#)), it was then that He was separated from the Father because of the sin poured out upon Him. As He gave up His spirit, He said, “Father, into your hands I commit my spirit” ([Luke 23:46](#)). His suffering in our place was completed. His soul/spirit went to the paradise side of hades. Jesus did not go to hell. Jesus’ suffering ended the moment He died. The payment for sin was paid. He then awaited the resurrection of His body and His return to glory in His ascension. Did Jesus go to hell? No. Did Jesus go to sheol/hades? Yes.

**Recommended Resource:** [Jesus: The Greatest Life of All by Charles Swindoll.](#)