

Additional notes for the sermon preached by Pastor Roger Poupart at Wayside Chapel on 1 Peter 3:18-22.

Places of the Dead

In the Old Testament we read about a place of the dead called Sheol.

שְׁאוֹל — Sheol

sa'al — “To ask”

Making Sheol a place of asking—continually asking for more dead.

so'al — “Hollow of the hand”

Whereby Sheol is explained as a “hollow or empty place.

שְׁאוֹל - Sheol

1. Sheol is the intermediate place of the dead.

Before Christ, this was the place where both the wicked and righteous alike went. In **Genesis 42:38** we see where Jacob, the Father of the nation of Israel, one of the righteous Old Testament saints said he would go to Sheol at his death. **“But Jacob said, “My son shall not go down with you; for his brother is dead, and he alone is left. If harm should befall him on the journey you are taking, then you will bring my gray hair down to Sheol in sorrow.”**

When the wicked Korah and Dothan led the nation of Israel in rebellion against God and Moses in the wilderness. God caused the ground to open up and swallow them and all that was theirs, **Numbers 16:30** said of them, **“they descended alive down into Sheol.”**

The righteous and unrighteous alike went there, but they were not together. The righteous went to a place called paradise or Abraham’s bosom.

The other one for the wicked is simply described as a place of fire and torment.

Jesus Christ spoke of these places in his parable of Lazarus and the rich man in **Luke 16:23** **“And in Hades he lifted up his eyes, being in torment, and saw Abraham far away, and Lazarus in his bosom.**

2. Once there, a person has no hope of returning to the realm of the living.

Job 7:9 **“When a cloud vanishes, it is gone, so he who goes down to Sheol does not come up.**

3. Sheol is a place from which no one can save himself.

Psalm 89:48 **“ What man can live and not see death? Can he deliver his soul from the power of Sheol?”**

The answer for man is no, but for God, yes. This is why when Christ came along, He led captives from this place. Without Him those in Sheol could not go free.

Psalm 49:15 But God will redeem my soul from the power of Sheol; For He will receive me.

Psalm 86:13 For Thy loving kindness toward me is great, And Thou hast delivered my soul from the depths of Sheol.

Psalm 16:10 For Thou wilt not abandon my soul to Sheol; Neither wilt Thou allow Thy Holy One to undergo decay.

I mentioned that Hades and Sheol are the same place in the Bible. A parallel passage to **Psalm 16:10** is **Acts 2:31** which says, “**He was neither abandoned to Hades, nor did His flesh suffer decay.**”

ᾍδης - Hades

The Greek word, “Hades,” parallels the Hebrew word, “Sheol.”---In the Septuagint, which is the Greek rendering of the Hebrew Old Testament, there is only one time out of 67 that the Hebrew word Sheol is not translated with the Greek word Hades:

It refers to the underworld, the region of the departed.

It defines the intermediate state between death and the future resurrection.

Death claims material part of man.

Hades the immaterial part of man or the soul.

Hades is not the same as **γέενναν**, (Gehenna) the Greek word for “**the Lake of Fire**” or what we commonly call “**Hell**.” The Lake of Fire is the place of permanent punishment for those who have rejected Jesus Christ as their Savior and will be sent there after the Great White Throne Judgment in **Revelation 20:11-15**.

The King James translation can cause confusion for some as it translates Hades as “Hell,” but there is a different Greek word for that as seen in **Revelation 20:14** “**And death and Hades were thrown into the lake of fire. This is the second death, the lake of fire.**”

γέενναν - Hell

In the Greek mind, this was a place below Hades. It is the eternal abode of the wicked, whereas Hades is the intermediate state.

1. Unquenchable fire (Matthew 3:12; 5:22; 18:9; Mark 9:43)

2. Furnace of fire (Matthew 13:42, 50)

3. Blackness and darkness (Jude 1:13)

4. Lake of fire and brimstone (Rev. 19:20; 20:10; 21:8)

5. Prepared for the Devil and His angels (Matthew 25:41)

6. Prepared for the unbeliever (Revelation 20:15; 21:8)
(cf. Matthew 23:33)

When Jesus Christ descended He did not go into the permanent place of punishment that we call “Hell” but would have gone to the realm of Hades or Sheol. Jesus did not stay there, but ascended into heaven **taking captivity captive** (see further notes below on Eph. 4:8). Jesus had defeated sin and death and all who place their faith in Him will be welcomed home to heaven.

For us today as Christians, when we die we do not go to an intermediate place but go straight into the presence of God as **2 Cor. 5:8 tells us to be absent from the body is to be present with the Lord.**

Purgatory

In Catholic doctrine there is a place called **Purgatory**, which is supposed to be a kind of waiting place that is neither Heaven nor Hell but is where you are purified. When it comes to Purgatory this is a man made doctrine that has no Scriptural support. As **Heb. 9:27** says, **“And inasmuch as it is appointed for men to die once and after this comes judgment.”**

The Bible tells us there is no second chance to change locations after we die. In **Luke 16:19** where Jesus talked about Lazarus and the rich man who died. Lazarus was in Heaven and the rich man in a place of punishment. When he begged for Lazarus to cross over and bring him a drop of water to cool his tongue, he was told in **verse 26**, **“between us and you there is a great chasm fixed, in order that those who wish to come over from here to you may not be able, and that none may cross over from there to us.”**

Where we end up when we die is where we stay for all eternity. And where we end up is decided by the decision we make to either receive or reject Jesus’ death in our place while we are still alive here on earth.

As Jesus died on the cross He said in **John 19:30** **“it is finished.”** The Greek text says, “Tetelestai,” which literally means, “Paid in full!” Jesus Christ didn’t say, “I’ve made the down payment, and you’ll have to pay off the rest later.” We can be thankful for the great grace of God that purchased us through the blood of His Son, Jesus Christ!

Ephesians 4:8

Psalm 68:18 says, **“Thou hast ascended on high, Thou hast led captive Thy captives; Thou hast received gifts among men,”**

If you look at Psalm 68:18 and Ephesians 4:8 you see some important differences.

Psalm 68:18 (19, Hebrew)

שָׁלַח לְמַרוֹם
שְׁבִית שָׁבִי
לְקַח מִתְּנוּת בְּאָדָם

Ephesians 4:8

ἀναβὰς εἰς ὕψος
ἤχμαλώτευσεν αἰχμαλωσίαν,
ἔδωκεν δόματα τοῖς ἀνθρώποις.

“You ascended on high;
you led captives captive;
you received gifts from men.”

“Having ascended on high
he led captivity captive;
he gave gifts to men.”

At first glance it would seem that Paul was like many of us when we quote Scripture. We kind of know what the verse says, and get the general meaning across, but in the process sometimes we pull it out of context or butcher it.

But this is not what happened here. What Paul does here is what is called Midrash Pescher. This was a common Rabbinical practice of taking a verse of Scripture and making an interpretative application of it. In this case, Paul makes a Christological application of Psalm 68:18.

What we need to remember is that when Paul did this, he was under the guidance of the Holy Spirit who guided what Paul wrote. With the Holy Spirit authoring both the Old Testament and the New Testament, we can be sure that Paul’s Christological interpretation is a valid application.

This passage is not the only time this done in the Scriptures. You can look at **Matthew 2:14-15** where you read, “**And he (being Joseph) arose and took the Child and His mother by night, and departed for Egypt; and was there until the death of Herod, that what was spoken by the Lord through the prophet might be fulfilled, saying, “Out of Egypt did I call My Son.”**

The prophet that is being quoted here is the prophet Hosea. If you look at **Hosea 11:1** you read, “**When Israel was a youth I loved him, And out of Egypt I called My son.**” The original context dealt with the salvation of the nation of Israel, when God brought them out of Egyptian captivity.

Matthew takes this verse and makes a Christological connection, applying it to Jesus Christ, who brought the nation of Israel their ultimate salvation as Israel’s Messiah.

Paul is exercising this same principal of Christological interpretation in **Ephesians 4:8** as he applies **Psalm 68:18** to Christ.

If you look at Psalm 68, you will see that it applies to God already. Paul changes the second person singular “**you**” referring to God, and applies it specifically to Jesus Christ using the third person singular “**he.**”

In **Ephesians 4:8**, Christ is pictured as returning victorious from battle, ascending not into the city of Jerusalem, but the heavenly Zion, and behind Him are the captives as proof of His victory when he descended.

This brings us to two interpretative questions that are related. Who are these captives, and to understand who they are, we need to know where Christ descended to.

This next slide shows a literal translation of the Greek text:

Ephesians 4:9

τὰ κατώτερα μέρη τῆς γῆς
The lower parts of the earth

This is an interesting verse in the Greek, because it allows three possible interpretations, depending on how you take the words, “τῆς γῆς”

In Greek grammar the form is a Genitive. If you take it as a **Genitive of Apposition** which would mean, “descent” to the earth. This would refer to the “incarnation” where Jesus became a man.

Genitive of Apposition — “descent” to the earth
(**Incarnation**)

Genitive of Possession, which means a descendent into the lower parts which belong to the earth, that is the Grave.

Or it could be taken as a **Genitive of Comparison**, which would mean Jesus descended into the parts **lower than the earth**, that is a place called **Hades**.

Genitive of Comparison — into the parts lower than the earth.

(**Hades**)

So does this mean Christ came to earth, the grave, or Hades to set the captives free? Most likely, Paul is speaking of the second option when Jesus was buried but all three have merit as Christ accomplished them. Christ, who was God, had to come to earth as a man to live a sinless and perfect life. He had to die on a cross as payment for our sins, and be buried.

After Christ was buried, we know from Scripture that He was in the grave for three days before being resurrected. So what happened during those three days?

Turn with to **1 Peter 3:18-20** “**For Christ also died for sins once for all, the just for the unjust, in order that He might bring us to God, having been put to death in the flesh, but made alive in the spirit; in which also He went and made proclamation to the spirits now in prison, 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.**”

Some have taken this passage to mean that Christ, after His death on the cross, went to the abode of the dead and offered those there a second chance at salvation. But when it comes to these spirits and what was being said to them. The Greek word used for the **proclamation** is (kerusso) **κηρύσσω**, which means “**to proclaim, announce or preach.**” There is another word for proclamation that is used three other times in the Book of 1 Peter in **1:12, 1:25 & 4:6**. That word is (euangelizo) **εὐαγγελίζω**, which means **to preach, to proclaim the good news**, as in the gospel. This is where we get our word “**evangelism.**”

Peter uses **kerusso** here to communicate this is not an offer of salvation to the lost, but instead a **proclamation of victory to those who had gone against God.**

Second, the spirits Christ makes the announcement to, do not appear to be human spirits, but angelic ones. When it comes to people and our eternal souls, the Greek word that is used six times in the book of 1 Peter is (psucha) **ψυχη**, like you see in **verse 20** as well as in **(1 Pet. 1:9, 22; 2:11, 25; 3:20; 4:19)**.

Here in **verse 19** we are not dealing with people but the Greek word used is (pneuma) **πνευμα**, which is only used one time in the Bible to refer to human spirits, all the other times it is used of God's Spirit or supernatural or angelic beings.

The angelic beings in view here are probably those fallen angels mentioned in **Gen. 6:1-4**. These were some of the fallen angels who had sinned greatly when they rebelled against God, but then they committed another grievous sin by overstepping their created realm and cohabited with women on the earth. So great was this sin, that God punished them immediately, **Jude 1:6** telling us, **“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.”**