

The Apostle's Creed

Sunday School
October 8, 2023

Lesson Notes: WEEK 10

"He descended into hell" – Part Two

- There are **FOUR** main approaches/methods of thought toward the *"he descended into hell"* phrase of the Apostle's Creed:
 - ~~One, "There isn't enough evidence" view~~
 - **Two**, Lutheran view
 - **Three**, Catholic view
 - **Four**, Reformed/Presbyterian view

Main source text: 1 Peter 3:18-20

- **Lutheran's believe:** When Jesus died, he descended to the actual Hell, where the wicked dwell, and declared victory over death BY PREACHING to those who weren't saved during the times of Noah, thus, giving them ONE LAST CHANCE to believe. He preached so he could then take their spirits to heaven when he personally ascended from earth 43 days later.
- **Let's counter with some observations and questions:**
 - **First**, notice the very first thing Peter says about Christ and what he did in verse 18: *"for Christ suffered once for sins."*
 - **Second**, notice the scope of his suffering: *"the righteous for the unrighteous."*
 - **Third**, why would only a select few be given a second chance?
 - When has God ever shown favoritism (Romans 2:11)?
- **Lutherans take this passage too literally.**
 - 1 Peter 4:6 / John 3
 - The *"spirits in prison"* was Peter's way of labeling unbelievers – people who are spiritually DEAD before Christ enters their hearts. *They are perpetual prisoners to sin!*
 - Why would Jesus need to come down to Hell to "finish" something else when he said on the Cross, *"It is finished"*?
- **Roman Catholics believe:** After Christ's death, He went to the *"Limbus partum"*, meaning the *"place of our Fathers"* where Old Testament saints were placed in a holding cell, awaiting the revelation of the gospel preached by Christ. This was a temporary prison, waiting for Jesus to give them access to heaven. These Old Testament saints were kept hidden from God because Jesus had not justified them in God's sight yet.
 - Noticeable differences from the Lutheran view:
 - The name of the place Jesus goes to in Hell.

- The demographic of people there (*not only limited to Noah, but ALL Old Testament saints*).
 - By Jesus going there, access to heaven was granted.
 - These Old Testament saints were kept hidden from God the Father.
 - Jesus didn't go to declare victory, but was more of a "rescue" mission.
- **Let's counter** with some **observations and questions**:
 - **First**, nothing is hidden from God (Psalm 139, Proverbs 15:3).
 - If God the Father didn't know about this place, how did God the Son know about it separately?
 - **Second**, many Catholics call this temporary prison, "*Paradise*".
 - If heaven didn't exist yet, where did some of the Old Testament saints physically go that were taken by God (Enoch, Elijah)?
 - What about Moses on the Mountain of Transfiguration with Elijah and Jesus?
- **Where do Presbyterians stand with these two views?**
 - **First**, both views destroy the GRACE of God.
 - **Second**, we must be Biblical, not only traditional.
 - As theology from the Reformation reminds us, "*sola Scriptura*" = "*Scripture alone*"
 - Heidelberg Catechism #44