

HC 44– Christ’s Descent into Hell – A Benefit for you

Brothers and Sisters in Jesus Christ: The last time you saw that Christ’s suffering for you guarantees you a better death in the future ... and a better life now. You can face death with delight, not dread. You can live with assurance, not anxiety! Today we will go into detail about one aspect of Christ’s suffering that has drawn much attention over the years: You will hear about “Christ’s descent into hell” and its significance for you.

Our headings are:

What does Christ’s Descent into Hell Mean

What does Christ’s Descent into Hell Mean To You

Our goals are: That you will be refreshed with the knowledge of your deliverance from sin, and that you will be equipped to face any crisis or temptation that comes up in your life.

44 Q. WHY DOES THE CREED ADD, “HE DESCENDED INTO HELL”?

A. To assure me in times of personal crisis and temptation that Christ my Lord, by suffering unspeakable anguish, pain, and terror of soul, especially on the cross but also earlier, has delivered me from the anguish and torment of hell.

四十四问：为何加上“降在阴间”呢？

回答：好使我在极大的愁苦和试探中，可以确信我的主耶稣基督，藉他在一切苦难中所经历的（1），尤其是在十字架上所遭受的那无法言表的惨痛、苦楚和惊恐，已经拯救我脱离了地狱的惨痛和苦楚，并使我因此可以得着完全的安慰（2）。

What Does Christ’s Descent Into Hell Mean?

1. There are 2 aspects of Christ’s descent into hell.

a. Christ endured “hellish” (地狱的) suffering for you. This view is emphasized by those of the Continental Reformed churches, like we are.

b. Christ entered into the grave. This view was emphasized by the Reformed Churches of England, Presbyterians 长老会

2. Christ’s descent into hell - a reference to his “hellish” suffering.

a. Jesus Christ suffered unspeakable (hellish) spiritual anguish (痛苦) during his life and especially at the end. Anguish is excruciating (使苦恼的, 极度的) or severe distress. Nowhere was his anguish clearer than in Gethsemane. Jesus’ anguish was so severe that his sweat became as drops of blood (Luke 22)...and he pleaded for his friends to stay and pray with him.

Matthew 26:36 Then Jesus came with them to a place called Gethsemane, and said to the disciples, "Sit here while I go and pray over there." 37 And He took with Him Peter and the two sons of Zebedee, and He began to be **sorrowful and deeply distressed**. 38 Then He said to them, "My soul is exceedingly sorrowful, **even to death**...

About 750 years before Isaiah spoke of Jesus’ anguish. Grief was the Lord’s friend...the one always around.

Isaiah 53:3 He is despised and rejected by men, **A Man of sorrows and acquainted with grief**. And we hid, as it were, our faces from Him; He was despised, and we did not esteem Him. 4 Surely **He has borne our griefs And carried our sorrows**...

Christ’s mental anguish was exacerbated (使恶化) by the fact that the ones he came to redeem cared nothing for him.

b. Jesus Christ suffered unspeakable physical pain during his life and especially at the end. Isaiah 53. His physical suffering was exacerbated because he suffered at the hand of the ones he came to redeem...and he suffered alone...as his friends abandoned him...and he suffered innocently.

c. Jesus Christ suffered terror of his soul during his life and especially at the end when his Father rejected him. Nothing was closer to hell than to be rejected by the Father!

Matthew 27: 45 Now from the sixth hour until the ninth hour there was darkness over all the land. 46 And about the ninth hour Jesus cried out with a loud voice, saying, "Eli, Eli, lama sabacht hani?" that is, **"My God, My God, why have You forsaken Me?"**

No wonder Jesus prayed that if it were possible that the Father might take away his cup of suffering.

3. Christ's "descent into hell" -a time in the grave.

a. Presbyterian say that Christ's descent into hell was his time in the grave. They say so because "grave" and "hell" are often used interchangeably in the Scriptures. **Look at the same word. The 2nd example was about Christ's death.**

Psalms 49:15 But God will redeem my soul from the power of the **grave**. For He shall receive me.
Psalms 16:10 For You will not leave my soul in **Sheol**. Nor will You allow Your Holy One to see corruption.

In the Jewish mindset, it was common to use the grave as hell, and hell as the grave. Why? There was no worse place in their minds than the grave, so they used that word to describe **hell – the place of eternal torment**. **The Jews also use the word Gehenna**, a place outside of Jerusalem where they burned garbage and pagan (异教徒) sacrifices, to refer to hell – the place of eternal torment.

Some Gentiles used tartarus – a place where they would continually burn refuse (废弃物, 垃圾) – as the word of hell. (This word is from Greek mythology 神话) There was no worse place in their minds. **Other Gentiles used the Greek word "hades" (阴间) – the Greek word for "grave," to refer to hell – the place of eternal torment.** (Hades = Pluto – god of the dead.) One more proof that Hades does not have to be the place of eternal torment: Hades was thrown into the place of eternal torment.

Revelation 20:14 Then Death and Hades were cast into the lake of fire. This is the second death.

Today we use the word "hell" that from the English noun "hill." To the English mind, to be buried under a large pile of dirt – a hill - **was the worst place imaginable**, so they used the word for "hell," the **place of eternal torment**.

b. This means that "Christ's descent into hell" does not have to be in literal hell, but simply references his time in the grave. He had to suffer. He had to be humiliated.

4. Morally, Jesus did not have to go to a literal hell. His suffering in life and death and his spending time in the tomb were properly considered hell. Adam's death was cause for your eternal **separation** from God (death), but Christ's suffering and separation from God paid the price of your **restoration** (life).

5. Joyce Meyer teaches heresy (异端邪说) on this matter. She teaches that Jesus had to suffer on the cross to be born again (but **Jesus did not need redemption.**) and that he had to go to the literal hell **to be tormented by the demons for you, and after the torment, the Father had to order the demons to let him go (but Jesus had power to lay down his life and take it up again).**

6. Roman Catholics believe Jesus had to go to a fiery hell to preach to OT saints who died without hearing the Gospel. (Hebrews 11, says OT believers had faith.) **But here is the verse they misuse!**

1Peter 3:18 For Christ also suffered once for sins, the just for the unjust, that He might bring us to God, being put to death in the flesh but made alive by the Spirit, 19 by whom also He went and preached to the spirits in **prison**,

But if you are eternally damned, you can't be saved. (After death comes the judgment.) Peter was not referring to those in eternal hell but to the souls of those who were trapped in sin – a spiritual prison. Peter was comparing "spiritual prisoners" with those who do evil. (Parallelism) 1Peter 3:17.

What Does Christ's Descent Into Hell Mean To You

1. You were in Christ in his descent into hell! Since you were united/baptized in Christ in his hellish suffering, death, and burial, his benefits are counted as yours.

Romans 6: 5 For if we have **been united together in the likeness of His death**, certainly we also shall be in the likeness of His resurrection (复活), 6 knowing this, **that our old man was crucified with Him**, that the body of **sin might be done away with**, that we should **no longer be slaves of sin**. 7 For he who has died has been freed from sin. 8 **Now if we died with Christ, we believe that we shall also live with Him**, 9 knowing that Christ, having been raised from the dead, dies no more. Death no longer has dominion over Him. 10 For the death that He died, He died to sin once for all; but the life that He

lives, He lives to God. 11 Likewise you also, **reckon yourselves to be dead indeed to sin, but alive to God** in Christ Jesus our Lord.

2. Since you were united/baptized in Christ in his hellish suffering, death, and burial, when you go through personal crisis in life, you need not worry. No crisis then can destroy your soul or your faith. The ultimate punishment for sin has been paid.

3. Since you were united/baptized in Christ in his hellish suffering, death, and burial, when you are tempted to sin against God by lusts of the flesh, lust of the eyes, and the pride of life, you have the strength to say no to sin...just like Jesus did when he was tempted in the wilderness.

4. Since you were united/baptized in Christ in his hellish suffering, death, and burial, you now have rest – a rest no one can take away. And you can look forward to that eternal rest in heaven.

Hebrews 4:8 For if Joshua had given them rest, then He would not afterward have spoken of another day. 9 There remains therefore a rest for the people of God. 10 For he who has entered His rest has himself also ceased from his works as God did from His.

You are dead to any and all eternal consequences of sin. Hallelujah.

5. Since you were united/baptized in Christ in his hellish suffering, death, and burial, death's sting (毒钩) has been removed for you. You need not fear death.

1Corinthians 15:54 So when this corruptible has put on incorruption, and this mortal has put on immortality, then shall be brought to pass the saying that is written: "Death is swallowed up in victory." 55 "O Death, where is your sting? O Hades, where is your victory?" 56 The sting of death is sin, and the strength of sin is the law. 57 But thanks be to God, who gives us the victory...

54 这必朽坏的既变成不朽坏的,这必死的既变成不死的,那时经上所记‘死被得胜吞灭’的话就应验了。55 “死啊,你得胜的权势在哪里?死啊,你的毒钩在哪里?” 56 死的毒钩就是罪,罪的权势就是律法。57 感谢神,使我们借着我们的主耶稣基督得胜!

6. In short, since you were united/baptized in Christ in his hellish suffering, death, and burial, you can now live victoriously (得胜地).

Galatians 2:20 "I have been crucified with Christ; it is no longer I who live, **but Christ lives in me;** and the *life* which I now live in the flesh **I live by faith in the Son of God,** who loved me and **gave Himself for me.**

The more you kill sin, the more you will bring glory to God and the greater the blessing you will receive. (See how wonderful Christ's suffering and death is to your life now?) Live victoriously.

Romans 12:1 I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that you **present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable to God, which is your reasonable service.**

Conclusion:

You were united with Christ when he was buried, so what he achieved is credited to your account through your faith (信心) .

Brothers and Sisters in Jesus Christ:

1. Are you thankful as you should for your new life in Jesus? Revelation 1:18 "I am He who lives, and was dead, and behold, I am alive forevermore. Amen. And I have the keys of Hades and of Death.

2. Stop every day and say: “Thank you Lord for saving me.”

3. Confidently go about your duties knowing that you will never have to pay for your sins. Don't live a defeated life overwhelmed (被压垮) by sins. Shed that load off of your back. Serve the covenant community. Send the message of salvation to the lost. Sing songs of praise. Share your goods.

Finally: If you are not a Christian, I pity (可怜) you! I pity you because I know you will have to suffer and die for your sins...in the worst possible way. But the Lord's love for the world says that if you knock and invite him, he will come in and have fellowship (团契) with you forever. That means, pray and ask him to come into your life. He will give you salvation that was purchased by Christ's blood.