

The Postscript

Ep. 164: Abraham's Bosom & The Descent of Christ

w/ Dan Reneau, Faculty Professor of the Living Faith Bible Institute

Outline of Interview:

- **There are a lot of opponents to the doctrine of the descent, why is that? What are their positions?**
 - Many evangelical Christians think this is simply a late addition to creedal doctrine, not a biblical doctrine. And yet even historically, there is evidence of Christians referring to Christ's descent to the deep even by 200 AD.
 - Others don't like its proximity to some Catholic dogmas (Catechism's purgatory) that suggest Christ was tormented in hell. Augustine rejected the teaching on Christ's descent, which would suggest why Catholics have a differing view of this place. But it was affirmed by early church fathers such as Ignatius, Polycarp, Irenaeus, and Justin Martyr.
 - Others believe he was in the grave for three days and three nights.
 - Others still hold to the descent but see it from a universalist perspective, that Christ suffered in hell for the entire human race.
- **Can you outline a case for the postmortem theology of Abraham's Bosom, providing a biblical case for a place of the dead that preceded the eternal resting place of heaven?**

Luke 16:22

And it came to pass, that the beggar died, and was carried by the angels into Abraham's bosom: the rich man also died, and was buried;

Luke 16:23-26

And in hell he lift up his eyes, being in torments, and seeth Abraham afar off, and Lazarus in his bosom. 24 And he cried and said, Father Abraham, have mercy on me, and send Lazarus, that he may dip the tip of his finger in water, and cool my tongue; for I am tormented in this flame. 25 But Abraham said, Son, remember that thou in thy lifetime receivedst thy good things, and likewise Lazarus evil things: but now he is comforted, and thou art tormented. 26 And beside all this, between us and you there is a great gulf fixed: so that they which would pass from hence to you cannot; neither can they pass to us, that [would come] from thence.

- As you read that passage, a graphic visual begins to reveal two locales: A place of comfort and a place of torment.

Luke 23:39-43 Christ is on the cross along with the two malefactors....

And one of the malefactors which were hanged railed on him, saying, If thou be Christ, save thyself and us. 40 But the other answering rebuked him, saying, Dost not thou fear God, seeing thou art in the same condemnation? 41 And we indeed justly; for we receive the due reward of our deeds: but this man hath done nothing amiss. 42 And he said unto Jesus, Lord, remember me when thou comest into thy kingdom. 43 And Jesus said unto him, Verily I say unto thee, To day shalt thou be with me in paradise.

- At this point in the account, there has been no resurrection. There has been no conquering of the grave. No victory over death.

- Payment for sin has been taken care of but victory over sin will not occur until 3 days pass. The promise of new life is only possible by the one who has received new life himself.
- There would be no way this thief from the cross could enter into the heavenly realm and “Throne room” of God without Christ leading the way (**John 14:6**) . The shed blood of Christ was spilt as payment for the repentant malefactor’s sin, but Christ’s resurrection would be necessary for access to heaven (**1Cor 15**).

- **What was the purpose of Abraham’s bosom (paradise)?**

- It was a holding place for the OT saints.

Genesis 25:8

Then Abraham gave up the ghost, and died in a good old age, an old man, and full [of years]; and was gathered to his people.

- The text says he “was gathered to HIS people”.
- But before that, it says, he gave up the ghost. In this we see, that while his body slept in the grave his person (His soul) was reunited with all the saints and faithful from Adam down to his own day.
- So then, Abraham buys land so he can bury his people and be buried with his people. Spiritually speaking, we understand, his people were not simply of the flesh but for all those of the PROMISED seed.

- **Where is Abraham’s Bosom located?**

- **Luke 16** shows us that **Abraham’s Bosom is adjacent to Hell**.

- **Can you explain the concept of Christ’s decent?**

Matthew 12:40 affirms this.

For as Jonas was three days and three nights in the whale's belly; so shall the Son of man be three days and three nights in the heart of the earth.

- And yet, we know that Jesus wasn’t just lying in the grave for 3 days and 3 nights. Yes, Jesus’ body laid in the ground, but his spirit was released from his body. He “yielded up the ghost” to the Father. In **Luke 23:46** Jesus said, Father, into thy hands I commend my spirit.

- **What was he doing?**

1 Peter 3:18-19

For Christ also hath once suffered for sins, the just for the unjust, that he might bring us to God, being put to death in the flesh, but quickened by the Spirit: 19 By which also he went and preached unto the spirits in prison;

- The first question would be who are these spirits? Who is Jesus preaching too?

2 Peter 2:4 gives us insight.

...God spared not the angels that sinned, but cast [them] down to hell, and delivered [them] into chains of darkness, to be reserved unto judgment;

Jude 1:6

And the angels which kept not their first estate, but left their own habitation, he hath reserved in everlasting chains under darkness unto the judgment of the great day.

- This is undoubtedly a reference to **Genesis 6** and the fallen angels. The scriptures tell us that God chained some of those angels in hell and they have been there and will be there until the final judgment. And yet, I don't believe this was his only message that he gave in hell.

1 Peter 4:6

For for this cause was the gospel preached also to them that are dead, that they might be judged according to men in the flesh, but live according to God in the spirit.

John 5:24-29 – the dead shall hear his voice of the Son of God...

- One message was a message of condemnation to all those fallen angels in hell. And yet there was another message given to the OT saints declaring the gospel and his victory over the grave.
- Following that final message, Jesus becomes that thief IN THE night. He binds the strong man and robs him blind. Taking the keys of hell and death with him (**Revelation 1:18**). The gates have swung open.
 - **Matthew 16:18** – the gates of hell shall not prevail against it.
 - **Job 38:17** – have the gates of death been opened unto thee?

Other Resources:

Briscoe, Brandon L. "The Seven Judgments." Lecture, Sevens: An Overview of Major Doctrines, Living Faith Bible Institute, Kansas City, MO, March 2023.

Emerson, Matthew Y. *"He Descended to the Dead": An Evangelical Theology of Holy Saturday*. Downers Grove: InterVarsity Press, 2019.

Reneau, Dan. "Hell: Abraham's bosom (lecture 3 or 4 in series)." Lecture, Midweek Service, Living Faith, Lee's Summit, MO, May 17, 2023.

Glossary of terms:

Abraham's Bosom (Paradise) – is the temporary place of comfort for the souls of all those saints who passed away before the death and resurrection of Christ.

Christology – the biblical theology that deals primarily with the identity, nature, words, works and character of Jesus Christ the Son of God.

"Captivity Captive" – A reference to Ephesians 4:8 and the theological belief that Christ, after his death, descended into Sheol and delivered all the saints from the captivity of Abraham's Bosom, bringing them into the heavenly realm (third heaven).

Great White Throne (The Judgment of Sinners) – This eternal judicial sentencing is for all those who are found by Christ to be outside of his covering. This judgment takes place at the end of the Millennial Reign - before eternity future. The punishment associated with this judgment is the eternal Lake of Fire. (Rev 20:11-15; Ecc 12:14; 2Peter 3:7)

Hell – is the temporary place of torment for all those who die outside of faith in Christ, and those before Christ who died outside of faith in the God of the Bible. At the end of the Millennial Reign of Christ he will cast all the inhabitants of hell into the Lake of Fire. (Rev. 20:14)

Judgment Seat (the Judgment of Saints) – This judicial sentencing is for all those who are found within the forgiveness and salvation of Christ. This judgment results in either heavenly reward or loss determined by the way in which the individual saint stewarded their life after their

salvation (2Cor 5:10; 1Cor 3:10-15) This Judgment takes place after the rapture of the church (1Thes 4:16-17).

Purgatory – the primarily Catholic theological belief that there is an intermediate state in the afterlife where believers undergo a process of final purification. In this believe, purgatory is distinct from the torment of the damned. This is an extra-biblical dogma that borrows concepts of Abraham’s bosom.

Sheol – the subterranean underworld where the spirit and soul of the dead are delivered. Believers and non-believers were delivered there to their own respective locations to dwell in either Abraham’s bosom (comfort) or hell (torment).

THE SEVEN JUDGMENTS				
SUBJECT	TIME	PLACE	STANDARD/ BASIS	VERSES
1. Jesus	AD 30 (past judgment)	Calvary	Perfect, spotless lamb. Lk 23:33	Gal 3:13; 2 Cor 5:21
2. Christians	Ongoing (present judgment)	Any place	Sonship Heb 12:67	1 Jhn 1:8-9; 1 Cor 11:30-32
3. Christian Saints	After the rapture (future)	In the air	The saint’s works after salvation. 1 Cor 3:13	Jer 17:9-10’ 2 Cor 5:10; 1 Cor 3:11-14; Rom 14:10-13
4. Jewish Nation	Great Tribulation (future-post rapture)	Jerusalem & Palestine	Rejection of the Messiah - Lk 23:18; Acts 7	Daniel 12:1-4; Rev 6-19; Mat 24
5. Gentile Nations	Post-2nd Advent/prior to Millenium	Valley of Jehoshaphat	The treatment of Israel. Mat 25:40	Mat 25:30-42; Joel 3:1-2
6. Fallen Angels	After the Millennium	The Great White Throne	Those who followed Satan. Gen 1:1,2	John 16:11; Rom 16:20; Heb 2:14
7. Sinners	After the Millennium	The Great White Throne	Unsaved/Not born again/ not found in the Book of Life. Rev 20:12	Rev 20:11-15; Ecc 12:14; Heb 7:25

**Chart by Brandon Briscoe in accordance with Living Faith Bible Institute course “Sevens”*

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