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BETWEEN THE CROSS AND THE RESURRECTION

In the Old Testament those that had faith and were looking for Messiah looked “unto” his coming. When they died, they were taken to Abraham’s bosom. We learn this from Luke 16 in the parable of the rich man and Lazarus. The rich man was not a believer and when he died, he was buried. In verse 23 it says, **“and in hell he lift up his eyes, being in torments, and seeth Abraham afar off, and Lazarus in his bosom.”** The word “hell” is haides (Greek) which is the place (state) of departed souls (unsaved) in the grave or hell.

All those that die without faith were taken to hell, while those that were faithfully expecting Messiah went to Abraham’s bosom.

When Jesus died on the cross, he ascended into hell. We read that in Ephesians 4:9 where it says, **“Now that he ascended, what is it but that he also descended first into the lower parts of the earth?”** If you ever wondered where hell is, it is in the lower part of the earth, where there are flames and heat beyond our imagination. Out of that lower part comes lava from volcanoes, which consumes a person upon contact.

Why did Jesus ascend into hell? We see that in Ephesians 4:8 where it says, **“Wherefore he saith, when he ascended up on high, he led captivity captive, and gave gifts unto men.”** When Jesus went to hell he went there in our place. We, because of our sin, deserved to go there, but he became the substitute. The souls in Abraham’s bosom were unable to leave there until the resurrection. In I Peter 3:19 it says, **“By which also he went and preached unto the spirits in prison.”** Notice it doesn’t say Jesus preached to those persons that were alive. He preached to their spirits in hell, (their bodies were in the grave) and those that received his gift of salvation were set free.

Jesus set those captives free and led them out of that place. Their graves were opened, and they ascended into heaven. It could not happen until the resurrection, because that is when the price was paid for salvation. Jesus put his blood on the altar in heaven, and their salvation was sealed.

So where was Jesus between the cross and the resurrection? He was in the lower parts of the earth (hell) and Abraham’s bosom. There was a gulf between Abraham’s bosom and hell, but they could see each other. After the resurrection those that had believed (had faith in) Messiah’s coming were set free.

We now have the ability to receive that same release from bondage through salvation. Praise God for Jesus’ substitutionary death, time in hell, and resurrection for us. We serve a mighty God that loves us. Everything Jesus did was motivated by love! Now it is our job to share that love with others so they too can have a future with Jesus in heaven, and not in torments in hell.