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THREE DAYS

When Jesus was suffering on the cross, there was a discussion going on between the two thieves on each side of them. They had committed crimes and were worthy of the death penalty. In Isaiah 53:12 is a prophecy that says: "...and he was numbered with the transgressors; and he bare the sin of many..." In Mark 15:27-28 that scripture is fulfilled. ***"And with him they crucify two thieves; the one on his right hand, and the other on his left. And the scripture was fulfilled, which saith, 'and he was numbered with the transgressors'."*** In Luke 23:39-43 ***"And one of the malefactors (thieves) which were hanged railed on him, saying, If thou be Christ, save thyself and us. But the other answering rebuked him, saying, Dost not thou fear God, seeing thou art in the same condemnation? And we indeed justly; for we receive the due reward of our deeds: but this man hath done nothing amiss. And he said unto Jesus, Lord, remember me when thou comest into thy kingdom. And Jesus said unto him, Verily I say unto thee, Today shalt thou be with me in paradise."***

Jesus didn't say that he would be with this man in the future. He said "today". Under the Old Covenant all those that had faith in God and looked toward the coming Messiah, went to paradise when they died. Paradise was also called Abraham's bosom. The righteous went there at death. There was a separation or a fixed gulf between Paradise and Hell. In Luke 16 there is the story of the rich man and the beggar. The rich man fared well in life, while the beggar was sick with sores. Both died. The beggar died and went to Abraham's bosom while the rich man went to hell (Hades). It was a place for both righteous and unrighteous.

When Jesus told the thief that had compassion on Jesus where he would go, he went to paradise, not hell. Jesus had said to his disciples that he would be in the heart of the earth (Matthew 12:40). In Ephesians 4 it says in v 8: ***"Wherefore he saith, When he ascended up on high, he led captivity captive, and gave gifts unto men. Now that he ascended, what is it but that he also descended first into the lower parts of the earth? He that descended is the same also that ascended up far above all heavens, that he might fill all things."***

Jesus went to hell on our behalf, so we don't have to go there. He descended there, and preached to those in Abraham's bosom and set them free. That is where he was those three days and nights (to fulfill scripture). Then when the resurrection came, those that were held captive also were resurrected. In Matthew 27: 51-53 it says: ***"And, behold, the veil of the temple was rent in twain from the top to the bottom; and the earth did quake, and the rocks rent; and the graves were opened; and many bodies of the saints which slept arose, and came out of the graves after his resurrection, and went into the holy city, and appeared unto man."*** You will notice when Jesus' resurrection happened, they too were resurrected.

Those special three days that Jesus' body was in the tomb, his spirit and soul were in the heart of the earth where paradise and hell are. He unloosed those that were held captive in Abraham's bosom. I can't even imagine the joy they had when Jesus appeared there with them, and taught them and set them free.

Those in Christ now that die go immediately to heaven. There is no such thing as soul sleep or purgatory or a holding place or even Abraham's bosom anymore. Paradise is now in heaven. You make your choice where you go before you die. You either choose to go to heaven, or hell. Jesus has made the way, and he is the only way. Praise God he came to set those captives free, but also came to set you and I free too!