

Let's Go to Hell: The Real Easter Story

Many Christians who celebrate Passover and the death of Christ have no idea or understanding of the depths of what they are celebrating. Some only see the events surrounding Christ's death, burial, resurrection, and ascension through a historical perspective. To them, these aspects are only a creed, a dogma and a story whose realities are dimmed by a lack of revelation.

There are some awe-inspiring truths surrounding the death of Jesus Christ. In a real sense Jesus went through the same awful experience that a sinner must go through who dies without God. He became sin and was forsaken by God. When He died He did not ascend to heaven into the presence of the Father, but He descended into hades.

On the cross He told one of the criminals who was crucified beside Him, "Assuredly, I say to you, today you will be with Me in Paradise" (Luke 23:43). In Old Testament times paradise was known as Abraham's bosom, which was situated in the heart of the earth. It was below, not above.

Every Old Testament patriarch, prophet and king testified to this. "For I shall go down into the grave (hades) to my son in mourning" (Gen. 37:35). It was only after the resurrection and the establishment of the New Covenant in Christ's blood that Paradise was transferred or translocated to the third heaven. "And I know such a man—whether in the body or out of the body I do not know, God knows—how he was caught up into Paradise and heard inexpressible words, which it is not lawful for a man to utter" (2 Cor. 12:3-4).

When Jesus died, His spirit left His body and descended into the heart of the earth. The Bible says He also preached to the

spirits in prison. "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, by whom also He went and preached to the spirits in prison, who formerly were disobedient, when once the Divine longsuffering waited in the days of Noah ... " (1 Pet. 3:18-20).

So first, Jesus told the criminal on the cross that he would be with him in paradise, and then here, it says that Jesus preached to the disobedient spirits in prison. In other words, it is pretty clear that Jesus Christ appeared and ministered in both compartments of hades.

If you will recall the account Jesus told in Luke 16 of the rich man and Lazarus, He spoke of those two compartments that were separated by a great gulf. Jesus was the first human being who was able to cross over into both of them. While there He seized the keys of hades and death. Oh glory to God!

"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" (Rev. 1:18).

This verse is the reason Christ was able to go from one compartment of hades to the other. He could commune with the righteous where Abraham, Lazarus, and the Old Testament saints were, and He could cross over to the other compartment where the rich man and the disobedient spirits were. He overcame Satan and stripped him of his authority and took back the keys of hades and death. This is why I shout!

After three days when Jesus Christ finally ascended He led captivity captive. In other words, He didn't ascend alone. He took the captives who were in the righteous compartment of hades and ascended up with them into the presence of God in the third heaven where paradise now was.

Therefore He says: "When He ascended on high, He led captivity captive, and gave gifts to men. (Now this, "He ascended"—what

does it mean but that He also first descended into the lower parts of the earth? He who descended is also the One who ascended far above all the heavens, that He might fill all things)" (Eph. 4:8-10).

But before ascending into the immediate presence of God He made a stop on the earth and displayed His marvelous wisdom and grace. He not only announced His resurrection and ascension to Mary (John 20:17), commissioning her to go and tell His other disciples the great and joyful news, but many other Old Testament saints also arose with Him and came out of their graves. Then they went into Jerusalem and appeared to many. Hallelujah!

"Then, behold, the veil of the temple was torn in two from top to bottom; and the earth quaked, and the rocks were split, and the graves were opened; and many bodies of the saints who had fallen asleep were raised; and coming out of the graves after His resurrection, they went into the holy city and appeared to many" (Matt. 27:51-53).

This is spectacular! The whole story must be told. Now at death all believers ascend immediately into the presence of God. Hell and death have been defeated! We are free!

In the light of Christ's invisible journey, perhaps now these words of Paul will have deeper meaning:

"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. O Death, where is your sting? O Hades, where is your victory?" The sting of death is sin, and the strength of sin is the law. But thanks be to God, who gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ" (1 Cor 15:54-55).

As we celebrate the resurrection of Jesus Christ, let us remember the reality of these events. And that is why I don't look for the Easter bunny and hunt for Easter eggs.

Christ has risen!

Bert M. Farias, revivalist and founder of Holy Fire Ministries, is the author of several books including *The Real Spirit of Revival* and the newly released *My Son, My Son*—a beautiful father-son book co-written with his son Daniel for the purpose of training up a holy generation. He and his wife also host *The Holy Ghost Forum*—a school of the Spirit. Follow him at Bert Farias and Holy Fire Ministries on Facebook or @Bertfarias1 on Twitter.