



The Import of the Resurrection of Christ Part 4

April 26, 2026

1 Peter 3:18-22

Well, we are continuing on in our look at the resurrection of our Lord Jesus Christ and some things that flow from that, dragging out, if you will, Easter, but we do that every Lord's Day because that's why we worship on Sunday, the first day of the week, because of our Lord's glorious resurrection. So you're going to want to go back, if you would, to 1 Peter 3, 1 Peter 3.

Why were we even looking at this passage? Well, the question came up, where did Jesus go? When His body was placed in the grave, where does His spirit actually go? And you'll recall that, and I want to be very careful again about this as well, I was taught, and I found out that the majority of you were also taught, at least the majority of you that I spoke to, the same way that, well, in the Old Testament times when a genuine believer's following under the covenant law and so forth and believing in the coming Messiah, you know, Moses, Abraham believed God, it was reckoned to him for righteousness and so forth, died because Christ hadn't come to the cross yet, hadn't made atonement for sins, been buried and risen and gone and ascended to the Father yet. They had to "wait" for that event to occur in the 'realm of the dead', called Sheol in the Greek Hades. Well, the wicked are also said to go to Sheol or the 'realm of the dead'. Does that mean then they're in the same place? Well, yes and no, the theory went. There's sort of two compartments or two areas; one a place of comfort and joy, sometimes referred to as Abraham's bosom or paradise, but not quite heaven, and the others into this place of torment, awaiting the ultimate place of torment, Hell. And then the theory goes, after Christ died on the cross, He went down to that good side, if you will, of Sheol and proclaimed the gospel of Christ, finished their justification, and led captives, those captives, led captivity captive, if you will, and led them back to glory into heaven at that time. If you



believe that, you're not in sin, we're not going to break fellowship over that, and the men who preached that to you, I wished for the ones I know, that I might do one one thousandth of the good for the cause of Christ, that those wonderful men who taught me those things did in their lifetime. But I do believe, in my responsibility as the preaching elder of this church, I believe in my heart of hearts, those dear men are in error, and much greater theological minds than mine, I assure you, believe that they are in error as well. And there's some great truths surrounding that.

Now, I made a comment last week in talking about this. Well, one clear, obvious answer to that is that you don't go to the good part of Sheol, the Old Testament saints who died, didn't go to the good part of Sheol, because there is no such good part of Sheol in that regard, because of what? Well, 1 Corinthians 5:8, Paul says, absence from the body is presence with God, presence with Christ. And then, how about Philippians 1:3? To be absent from the body is to be present with the Lord, and so forth. I would rather depart, He says, and be with Christ, in that Philippians 1:3 passage. But the objection was raised, wait a minute, John, that's Paul talking post-cross, that's Paul talking post-resurrection. We believe all that. The issue, John, is the Old Testament saints. And I mean, after all, it says right there in 1 Peter 3, He went down and preached to those who were in prison. And then, we're going to get to an Ephesians 4 passage in a minute. Well, let me give you some Old Testament passages, as well as some other New Testament passages, for you to chew on.

First of all, I've already said in quoting Genesis 15:6, it's re-quoted in Romans 4, Abraham believed God and it was reckoned, it was accounted, to Him for righteousness. Guess what? If the righteousness of God is placed to your account, what are you waiting for? You are in the presence of the Lord, you would immediately go to heaven. But let me give you a few more. One biggie for me is Psalm 73:24. That's a Psalm of Asaph. He says, Father, you will counsel



me, you will guide me. And afterward, meaning what? In this life, you will counsel and guide me, the psalmist says. And afterward, after this life, obviously, receive me to ... Sheol? No, glory. Ecclesiastes 12:7, the spirit of man returns to God. Here is one big one, Luke 23:43. Oh, John, you just said Old Testament, you're in New Testament, wait a minute. Luke 23:43 is the thief on the cross. And the thief on the cross, the one who comes to believe in Christ as Messiah, says, "Oh, remember me when you come into Your glorious kingdom." And what does Jesus say to Him? He turns and said to him, "...today", that's important, this day, "...you will be with me in Paradise." Wait a minute, this day, when did Christ rise from the dead? Two days later, He was declared the Son of God with glory by His resurrection, but He died that first day on the cross. And that first day, that thief also died because that day, that thief was with Him in paradise and Christ had not risen from the dead yet. He didn't go to Sheol, He was with Christ. Are you telling me that a thief on a cross who comes to Christ two days before Christ died, hours before Christ dies, goes to glory, goes to heaven and Moses and Abraham and Elijah and everybody else are still waiting for the resurrection of Christ to get there? No way.

Now, some have objected to that and they say, well, He doesn't say heaven. He said, this day, you will be with me in paradise. Well, guess what? Paradise is a synonym for Heaven because Paul himself over in 2 Corinthians 12:1-4 says, there was a man, I know not, and he's referring to himself, was caught up to the third heaven, caught up to heaven, saw things and he refers to it in verse four, there in paradise, saw things which human voices are almost incapable to utter. Paul equates the word paradise with heaven and the thief went to heaven. There's more. Let me just give you a couple of more without belaboring. Here's one, 2 Kings 2:11. ***Elijah went up by a whirlwind***, and it says specifically, ***to heaven***. Now, let me get this straight. One of the prophets, Elijah, is automatically just taken up to heaven by God directly



to heaven, but Moses and Abraham and Isaac and Jacob and Joseph and David and everybody who died believing in the Old Testament, they're waiting for hundreds and hundreds and hundreds of more years until the coming of Messiah before they go to glory. That is not what the scriptures teach. And I think I gave you this one, Psalm 23:6, David himself says, ***Surely goodness and mercy shall follow me all the days of my life: ...*** and then I'll go to that good place called of side of Sheol. No, he says, then ***I will dwell in the house of the Lord forever.*** So absent from the body, if you are a believer in the Old Testament, absent from the body, if you are a believer in the New Testament is presence with the Lord Jesus Christ.

Look at 1 Peter 3, pick it up at verse 18, ***for Christ also died for sins once for all, the just for the unjust in order that He might bring us to God having been put to death in the flesh, but made alive in the spirit;*** I explained that to you. Death is separation. He was separated from the Father on the cross for time being when He was bearing sin. The fellowship was restored before He died because He says "Father" again into Thy hands I commit My spirit and He gives up the spirit. We explained all of that. So He's made alive in the spirit and in that spirit while His body lay in the grave, ***He went and made proclamation*** (He didn't preach an evangelistic sermon, He declared His triumph) ***to spirits.*** We said that it has to refer to angels because angels are always what's referred to when the word spirit is used without a genitival phrase modifying it. In *phylakē*, in prison, human souls are never said to be bound up in prison anywhere in the scriptures. It's a particular place. And then we went on and said, why these particular angels? Well, they were fallen angels. How do you know? It says they were disobedient. Verse 20. Well, wait a minute. Weren't all the fallen angels disobedient? And He goes on and says they were the ones who were disobedient in the time of Noah. And we explained all of that when the angels, the sons of God in Genesis 6:2, looked upon the daughters of men and somehow tried to pollute the human race by creating this demonic, a



male, excuse me, human angelic hybrid form of a creature, if you will, that would not be able to be redeemed and so forth. And so we explained all that.

Now, we said the word there in Genesis 6:2, Nephilim, the Nephilim. Some think the Nephilim were the giants who were the offspring of these angels who took on, who enveloped men's bodies and procreated with women and brought about these unique individuals. Mike Fink brought up a great question about, well, wait a minute. If that's true, and some think it just means violent people, but if that's true, later on in scripture, doesn't the phrase Nephilim pop up again where they talk about these guys? Well, actually, it only appears one other place. It appears in Numbers 13:33, and it's when the spies go and scope out the promised land and they say, wow, we were like grasshoppers and they were like the Nephilim, the Nephilim were there. And most commentators believe that that is exaggerated language to try to explain how fearful they were. They weren't really grasshoppers. We were like grasshoppers compared to the strength of these people. And so they think it's not a reference to real Nephilim. In any event, that is the explanation.

So, so what? Go to Ephesians 4, because this is the one that shocks a lot of people. You go to Ephesians 4, and what about this taking captive, the captives and so on and so forth? Well, in Ephesians, first of all, what's the book of Ephesians all about? The book of Ephesians is the blueprint for the church. The book of Ephesians is literally the explanation of the church of God. It's the most complete treatise on the way the church is established and the way the church should operate historically anywhere in the scriptures. And Paul, by the time you get to Ephesians 4, he's talking about the unity. He wants unity in the body of Christ. And what's he say when he gets to verse 4, Ephesians 4:4? ***There is one body, one spirit, just as also you were called in one hope of your calling, one Lord, one faith, one baptism, one God and Father of all who is the maker of all through all and in all.*** Unity, unity, unity. Then He goes



on and says, however, in this unity, there is a tremendous diversity. In what way? We're unified in the cause of Christ. We're unified in the sense that we are all indwelt by the Spirit of God. We're unified in that, but there's diversity just like the members of the body. A hand is not a foot, an eye is not an ear and so on and so forth. And so He's explaining the diversity we have while unified in the body. But then in the middle, and he talks about gifts, he gave gifts to men, but in the middle of his talking about spiritual gifts, which pops up in Ephesians 4:7, but even though there's this unity, but to each one of us, grace was given according to the measure of Christ; Christ's gift. In other words, we're unified, but we have different gifts. We have different abilities based upon the measure and the grace and the giftedness with which Christ has given to each one of us. And he's going to talk about, if we had time to exposit the whole chapter, he's going to talk about spiritual gifts for the glorification of God, for the edification of the body of Christ. And he's going to talk about how valuable they are and how we should be responsive and trying to use those constantly within the body of Christ. Why? Because first of all, they come from God, they're gifts from God, that alone shows their value to us. But then he's going to talk about the tremendous cost that God in the person of Christ paid to give us those gifts. That cost was the cross. And he goes into this misunderstood and mistaught, I'm afraid, passage of scripture. Read with me Ephesians 4:7 through 9 and 10. ***But to each one of us, grace was given according to the measure of Christ's gift. Therefore, it says,*** now he's going to quote a verse, verse 18 out of Psalm 68. That's important. I'm coming back to that. ***"WHEN HE ASCENDED ON HIGH, HE LED CAPTIVE A HOST OF CAPTIVES, AND HE GAVE GIFTS TO MEN."*** (Now this expression, "He ascended," what does it mean except that He also had descended into the lower parts of the earth? He who descended is Himself also He who has ascended far above all the heavens, that He might fill all things.) Now he's talking about filling all things in the sense of God filling all things through the church. Where are you



getting that at? Well, over in Ephesians 1:22 and 23, ***And He put all things in subjection under His feet, and He gave Him as head over all things to the church,*** Verse 23 of Ephesians 1, ***which is His body, the fullness of Him who fills all in all.*** He's talking about the church, talking about unity in the church. He's talking about the value of spiritual gifts. He's talking about the diversity of gifts, but the unity we have in Christ. And he goes into this sort of parenthetical statement about, therefore it says, He ascended on high and He led captive, a host of captives. Now nowhere in that verse of scripture does it say He descended to Hell. It says He descended to the lower parts of the earth. And you say, well, where's this whole idea? If 1 Peter 3 is He didn't go to hell, He was going down into a prison where fallen angels were kept, and He wasn't going into Sheol, the good compartment of Sheol, and preaching the gospel, is this lower parts of the earth? Is that that good part of Sheol that maybe He went to? And the answer is no. The whole idea of Him descending into Hell is a mistranslation of several verses of scripture, and they got slammed into the Apostles' Creed in about 350 AD. It pops up again in a reworking of the Apostles' Creed just in the development of the church, local church congregations, not the church universal. And it shows up again in the 600s, and it's just been there a long time. And just because it's been there a long time doesn't make it right. And it is. It's misleading.

So what's He talking about here? Well, we don't have time to go there, but Psalm 68 is a song of triumph. It's a triumphal song. And what it's talking about is when a, like the Roman generals, when they would go out and they would conquer a foe, they would have a triumph for them. What's a triumph? A triumph would be a triumphal parade, and the conquering general would come back into Rome, built on the seven, you know, hills of Rome, and they would go to the highest hill of Rome, this conquering general, and He would be leading behind him what? The spoils of His victory. And some of the spoils of His victory would be the



conquered soldiers who would be coming to be made slaves in the Roman Empire. He would be bringing back the gold and maybe the bizarre animals or whatever, the spoils of victory from that land, that country, that people he would be bringing back. And the other thing he would bring back is the POWs, Roman soldiers who maybe had been captured and held prisoner by the other side, and the freed captives he would be bringing back. The same way in the nation of Israel, when they would have victories and so forth, they would go up. Psalm 68 was a psalm written most likely by David at the time of the bringing of the Ark of the Covenant back to Jerusalem. Jerusalem originally was a pagan city. It was a Jebusite city. It's conquered by the children of Israel, and its name has changed to Jerusalem, which means *the City of Peace*. And you can read about it in 1 Chronicles, I think it's 13 through 15, 1 Samuel 6 and 7. You can read about the Ark of the Covenant being brought back. And what did they do? They would march up the high hill to the highest hill, Mount Zion, and David or whoever the conquering Israelite general might be would bring behind him the spoils of victory. And one of the things that would also bring behind him would be the Israelites who'd been captured by the enemy and had been held as prisoners of war. And those captives were freed and were coming back to the city. And they would go to the highest place and they would give praise to God on Mount Zion. That's the Psalm that Paul is referring to here. And what's He saying? When, and by the way, it says ascended in verse 8. Verse 9, what does this expression mean? He ascended, but that also He after He descended. Verse 10, descended. Verse 10, ascended. Who's the only person you know of in scripture who ascended? Jesus Christ. He's talking about the Lord Jesus Christ. And what's He saying about the Lord Jesus Christ? He's saying, look, He triumphed over sin. He triumphed over Satan. He triumphed over the grave. And so what did He do? He went and was buried. He arose again and He took those sinners, you and



me, captive to sin, slaves of sinfulness. And He led us captives, captive to Christ. He took us from the kingdom of darkness into the kingdom of His glorious light.

Well, you look at this passage of scripture and say, but doesn't it say, John, He ascended. What does it mean? Verse 9, **except that He also had descended**. You can't get away from this, John. It says **the lower parts of the earth**. It doesn't say Hell. It says the lower parts of the earth. Okay. What does He mean by the *lower parts of the earth*? This phrase in the Hebrew, in the Greek and in the Septuagint, which is the Greek version of the Old Testament, this phrase *lower parts of the earth* appears only four other places in the word of God. This is so rich. As we go to the Lord's table, as we think about what this passage is talking about, it's talking about God ultimately giving gifts to men. What did the conquering hero do when he went up to Mount Zion? What did the conquering Roman general do when he went up to those, one of those seven Palatine Hills around Rome and displayed all the spoils of his victory over these other people? And he brought in the prisoners of war who were now free to be Roman citizens again. He took the spoils of victory and he distributed various gifts to other generals, to other soldiers, to the soldiers who fought bravely in the battle, to the people in general of Rome, to the Roman Senate or whatever. He gave out gifts and this is exactly what the Lord Jesus Christ did when He ascended on high. He gave gifts back to the church because the apostle Paul goes on and even talks about verse 11, 12, He gave some as apostles and some as prophets and some as evangelists and so on and so on and so on and so forth. He's talking, it's in a discussion of spiritual gifts given to the church, those of us who were captive in sin and have now been led free and are captives to Christ. That's what he's talking about.

But it says **He descended to the lower part of the earth**. You still haven't explained that. It appears four other times in Scripture. With that general overview, I want you to look at the richness of this. One of the places where it appears is in Psalm 63 verse 9. It says this, **Those**



who seek my life to destroy it will go into the depths of the earth. In other words, the phrase *depths of the earth* is related to people seeking the psalmist's life to destroy it, people who want to execute him, people who want to murder him. The *depths of the earth* is related to murder, execution.

Second place where it appears, Isaiah 44:23. It refers to the created earth itself. **Shout for joy, O heavens, for the LORD has done it. Shout joyfully, you lower parts of the earth.** What does he mean? He goes on and explains in that verse what he means by *the lower parts of the earth*. It means he says shout joyfully, you lower parts of the earth. Shout for joy, you mountains. Shout for joy, you forests. Shout for joy, every tree. In other words, the surface of the world as we know it and we live in it is referred to the *lower parts of the earth*. So *the lower parts of the earth* can mean the realm of the dead, but it's tied to murder or execution. The phrase *lower parts of the earth* can mean the actual surface, the world in which we live in.

Third place where it's used, Psalm 139:15. I always wondered about this. It says this, **My frame was not hidden from You, when I was made in secret, and skillfully wrought in the depths of the earth;** That is a reference to his mother's womb. The womb of a woman where the unborn child is formed and born is referred to by the phrase *depths of the earth*.

We got a murder and execution. We got the world as we know it. Now we got the womb of a pregnant lady all tied to the phrase *depths of the earth*.

The fourth place where it appears, Matthew 12:40. It's the Lord recounting the story of Jonah and what's He say? **Just AS JONAH WAS THREE DAYS AND THREE NIGHTS IN THE BELLY OF THE SEA MONSTER, so shall the son of man be three days and three nights** in the depth of the earth, **in the heart of the earth.** Three days and three nights, where was the physical body? In the grave. It refers to the tomb. It refers to the grave.



Now, as the men come forward to lead us in communion, quickly I trust to assemble up here to do that. Let me tie this together for you. The conquering king comes up to the high place with his spoils of victory, brought his people who were captive to freedom, and gives out gifts to everybody. That's the earthly typical Israelite Roman historical explanation of a triumph, what they would do. Paul is using that as an analogy to explain in spiritual terms what Christ has done for the elect, for His children, for the church. He's brought them out of captive to darkness and sin, to freedom, and He's distributing gifts to them, which we haven't gone into, and to show you the value, the cost of those gifts and what made it possible, this One who was on high descended to the lower part of the earth. What did He mean by that? One, He became a man. It's the incarnation. He lived in the world, the lower part of the earth. He was born as a man, born of a virgin. He was formed in a woman's womb, the Psalm 139:15, the lower part of the earth. So I got one in the heavens who's formed in a womb and lives on the earth. And then what happens? Psalm 63:9, He's executed, He's murdered, and then He's in the lower part of the earth and He's in the grave as Jonah was in the belly of the fish three days and three nights.

So I've got the created earth, I've got murder, I've got living a human life, and I got being buried three days. And what's it say? And He ascended, He arose again to go on high. And when He did, what did Jesus say? Unless I ascend, I cannot send the Holy Spirit, but if I go away, I will send the Holy Spirit. This is the creation of the church. And what He's saying is, look at the cost for the spiritual gifts you were given by the conquering hero Jesus Christ who ascended on high and gave those gifts to His church. He literally was born of a woman. He lived an earthly life. He suffered, died, was buried three days, but He rose again in triumph. That is exactly what that verse is talking about. It's got nothing to do with preaching the



gospel to Old Testament saints in a “good part” of Sheol, which in my personal view never existed.

Men, would you serve us the elements?

Galatians 3:22. Before faith came, we were kept in custody, captives, under the law, being shut up, that means hemmed in on all sides, captives to the faith that was later to be revealed. Paul says in Romans 7:23, I see another law at work in my body, warring against the law of my mind, making me captive to the law of sin. Proverbs 5:22, an evil man is held captive by his own sins. John 8:34, truly, truly, Jesus said, I said to you, everyone who practices sin is a slave, a captive to sin. 2 Timothy 2:26, taken captive by the devil, there's the description there, to do his, Satan's, will. But Romans 6:18, and having been set free from sin, you became slaves of righteousness. 2 Corinthians 10:5, as slaves of righteousness, what are we told to do? We're told to take captive every thought to our Lord and Master, Jesus Christ. Captives, taken captive. He ascended on high to take captives, captive; to bring sinners to a saving knowledge of Christ. That's the import of the resurrection of Christ and the clear teaching of those passages that we've looked at these last few weeks.

The night before He was crucified, the night before He was going to die on that cross and then descend into the prison where those angels bound from the time of Noah existed to declare His victory. That night before all of that was going to occur, it says He took the bread and broke it and gave it to His disciples. And He said, this is my body, which is given for you. Don't we have much to be thankful for? Let's remember the body of Christ.

The scriptures also say that in similar fashion He took the cup, and He said, this is a cup of a new and an everlasting covenant, a new and an everlasting promise that I am making with you and by application all of us who came as believers in Christ afterwards. We are so quick



to dismiss and forget the price that was paid for our salvation, the cost for those gifts that He has distributed to each one of us for His glory. If you take nothing else away from our time around the Lord's table this morning, think about whether or not you're defaming the name of Christ by not being involved in using your giftedness to minister in some fashion to others in the body of Christ. There's no such thing as an identical twin. Even identical twins have different fingerprints. There's no such thing as an identical twin. There is no other you. And it isn't like we have interchangeable parts. If you're gone, well, we'll just shove her in. No. Are you using your giftedness bought with this cost to serve God? I pray so. In any event, He said, as often as you go through this ritual, do so in remembrance of me. This Lord's Day, this Communion Sunday, I wanted us to remember the cost that was paid for our giftedness that He's given us. Let's remember the blood of Christ.

Father, we thank You for this time in Your Word and these three or four Sundays to explore more and more of the aspects and the implication of Your resurrection. I pray, Father, that it will not be a situation where we have gained knowledge for knowledge's sake because knowledge alone simply makes proud. I pray that we would be hearers of the Word so that we would be doers of the Word. Father, bless these truths to each one of us. We ask it again in the matchless name of Jesus our Christ, and all God's redeemed people saith, Amen and Amen.