

Worship services are being cancelled until further notice because of Covid-19. However, we will have worship services through the Internet Zoom platform every Sunday at 10:30 AM in NB, NS and PEI. The Zoom link for this service will be sent to you by email. The telephone numbers for Zoom always remains the same but the Meeting ID and password number change every week. If you need more information, please contact Mr. Vautour. See the bottom of the bulletin the contact information.

If you have friends or acquaintances who want to join in the worship service, please do not hesitate to share with them the Zoom links to join with us in the worship our great God.

For more information about special activities happening in GCI, please see the international website at [www.gci.org](http://www.gci.org). On the left-hand upper side of the screen, you will see 3 short lines. You simply need to click on it. A drop-down menu will appear. Click on **"PARTICIPATE"**.

**Please note that audio sermons are available of sermons are available at [www.worshipim.ca](http://www.worshipim.ca) and video sermons are now available on YouTube – GRACE COMMUNION INTERNATIONAL-MONCTON (see link below)**

**The Church and its Ministry**, article that accompanies Mr. Deddo's study on the book of Acts is available in PDF on our local website under **"Featured Articles"**.

**Bible Study: Thursday September 24, 2020 at 7:30 – Subject: 1 John 5**

If you have a prayer requests, other events you would like to announce and/or praise to our great God you would like to share, **please try to contact Mr. Vautour by email, text or telephone no later than Saturday, in the morning.**

**Let us also pray to God for the church in Canada** that we collectively learn to trust Jesus and learn from Him. Let us pray that we will have the wisdom not rely on our own understanding but on Him and his teaching as we are led by the Holy Spirit.

**Let us pray for the leadership in GCI** that they would be strengthen in the love and wisdom of our Lord as they seek to guide us in God's grace and will.

**Offerings:** you can send your offering directly to the following address: **Grace Communion International- Canada, Suite 203A, 2121 Airport Dr., Saskatoon, SK 7SL 6W5**. If you prefer, you can also call **1-306-653-2705**. Thank you for your continued generous giving to God by giving to this part of God's church, his body.

***For those living in Moncton area, if you wish, you can drop your offerings in our mailbox. I will mail them with the ministerial expenses at the end of each month.***

**From Mr. Bill Hall – GCI Canadian Director** "We will continue to process the donations we receive in Saskatoon. Members are urged to mail them directly to our office for the time-being. They can also donate via phone using a credit card, or via Canada Helps using the donate button on our website [www.gcicanada.ca](http://www.gcicanada.ca) We are waving the provision that all donations given via Canada Helps go toward national expenses for the time being. We will credit all donations received via Canada Helps to a member's local congregation, if we can identify where they attend."

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## The descent of Jesus (part 2)

By [Ted Johnston](#) - [September 08, 2020](#)

*This post continues a series exploring [Raising Adam, Why Jesus Descended into Hell](#) by Gerrit Dawson. For other posts in the series, go to <http://thesurprisinggodblog.gci.org/2020>*

**Last time**, we noted the declaration of the Apostle's Creed that Jesus "descended into Hell." We pointed out that "Hell" translates the Greek word "Hades" and its Hebrew equivalent "Sheol," and that a better English translation is "realm of the dead." We then noted that Jesus' descent to the realm (condition) of the dead occurred on Holy Saturday, the day after Jesus' crucifixion on Good Friday, and the day before his resurrection on Easter Sunday. **But what happened to Jesus on Holy Saturday? And why is that important for our salvation?** This post presents some of the answers that Dawson offers to these important questions.

### The foundation of biblical testimony

Dawson begins by laying a biblical foundation upon which to ground our understanding of what happened to Jesus (and through him to all humanity) on Holy Saturday. According to Dawson, that foundation consists of five key elements of biblical testimony:

**1. Jesus' prediction** that rather than being resurrected directly from the Cross on Good Friday, he would descend to the dead and then, after three days, rise again ([Mark 8:31](#), cf. [Matt. 17:22-3](#); [Luke 9:22](#); [John 2:19](#), NRSV). "Then he began to teach them that the Son of Man must undergo great suffering, and be rejected by the elders, the chief priests, and the scribes, and be killed, and after three days rise again." (Mk 8:31 NRSV)

"<sup>22</sup> ¶ As they were gathering in Galilee, Jesus said to them, "The Son of Man is going to be betrayed into human hands, <sup>23</sup> and they will kill him, and on the third day he will be raised." And they were greatly distressed." (Mt 17:22-23 NRSV)

"saying, "The Son of Man must undergo great suffering, and be rejected by the elders, chief priests, and scribes, and be killed, and on the third day be raised."" (Lu 9:22 NRSV)

"Jesus answered them, "Destroy this temple, and in three days I will raise it up."" (Joh 2:19 NRSV)

**2. Biblical declarations** that Jesus was raised from the state of being dead. Dawson notes (p. 24) that Jesus' "body was raised from the tomb only when his spirit returned from Sheol" (as we saw last time, "Sheol" is the Hebrew word for what is "Hades" in Greek, both meaning "realm of the dead.") It's important to note that Scripture speaks of death as the separation of the human spirit from the body. It also indicates that prior to Jesus' resurrection, the spirits of people who died were kept in Sheol, while their bodies decomposed on earth. As Dawson notes, rather than thinking of Sheol as a "place," Scripture leads us to view it as a spiritual state or

condition. The point to note here is that from the time Jesus died on the Cross until the moment of his resurrection, he shared to the full "the common human experience of disembodied afterlife" (p.24) -- life in Sheol (Hades).

**3. Peter's comment** in his Pentecost sermon (Acts 2:27, KJV "**For You will not leave my soul in Hades, Nor will You allow Your Holy One to see corruption.**" (Ac 2:27 NKJV) ), where he ascribes to Jesus the words of David in Psalm 16 that God would not abandon Jesus' soul to Hell (Hades/Sheol) or let His Holy One see corruption. Though Jesus experienced to the full what it means to die as a human (including descending to the realm of the dead), God did not abandon Jesus to that "place" (condition), but raised him up. But before his resurrection from the dead, Jesus experienced the separation of his spirit (soul) from his body (Psalms 116:3 "**The snares of death encompassed me; the pangs of Sheol laid hold on me; I suffered distress and anguish.**" (Ps 116:3 NRSV) ) just as all humans do at death -- a condition that, for Jesus, lasted from late Friday afternoon until early on Sunday. For the rest of us, that disembodied condition (called the "intermediate state") lasts from death until the time we are resurrected at Jesus' return at the end of the present age.

**4. Paul's references**, including in Romans 10:7 (NRSV) "'or 'Who will descend into the abyss?'" (that is, to bring Christ up from the dead)." (Ro 10:7 NRSV) } where the apostle asks, "Who will descend into the abyss? (that is to bring Christ up from the dead)." Paul's point is that this question is irrelevant because Jesus, having descended into the state of the dead (the "abyss") has been raised -- he no longer is to be found there. Dawson comments: "The abyss was death in the profundity of its distance from any experience of the presence of God" (p. 25). Paul refers to Jesus' time in the "lower parts of the earth" in Ephesians 4:9 (NRSV) "**(When it says, 'He ascended,' what does it mean but that he had also descended into the lower parts of the earth?)"** (Eph 4:9 NRSV) }, where the Greek word translated "lower" (*katotera*) is used in the Greek version of the Apostle's Creed to affirm that Jesus truly did descend to the "netherworld of the dead."

**5. Sheol imagery** found in several psalms and elsewhere in the Old Testament. This imagery helps us understand the reality that Jesus experienced during his time in Sheol. Jesus voiced several of these psalms (e.g., Psalms 30:3; 18:4-6; 49:15; 116:3-4 "**O LORD, you brought up my soul from Sheol, restored me to life from among those gone down to the Pit.**" (Ps 30:3 NRSV)

**"4 The cords of death encompassed me; the torrents of perdition assailed me; 5 the cords of Sheol entangled me; the snares of death confronted me. 6 In my distress I called upon the LORD; to my God I cried for help. From his temple he heard my voice, and my cry to him reached his ears."** (Ps 18:4-6 NRSV)

**"But God will ransom my soul from the power of Sheol, for he will receive me. Selah"** (Ps 49:15 NRSV)

**"3 The snares of death encompassed me; the pangs of Sheol laid hold on me; I suffered distress and anguish. 4 Then I called on the name of the LORD: 'O LORD, I pray, save my life!'"** (Ps 116:3-4 NRSV)), the Psalter being his prayer book. Jesus recited these psalms with a growing understanding that what they say about Sheol (even if metaphorically) address what he would experience upon death. Dawson comments: "As Jesus takes up these prayers, new depths of meaning open with them" (p. 26).

### **Interpreting the testimony**

Concerning how this biblical testimony is to be understood, Dawson points out three major streams of theological interpretation that have existed for much of Christian history:

**1. Descending into triumph.** As shown on the cover of *Raising Adam* (see picture above), the early church understood that "Jesus descended into the dead in order to raise all of mankind who would trust him, as symbolized by raising Adam" (p. 28). Having conquered Satan and death on the Cross, Jesus descends to Sheol as a *victor* (see [Hebrews 2:14-15](#) "14 ¶ **Since, therefore, the children share flesh and blood, he himself likewise shared the same things, so that through death he might destroy the one who has the power of death, that is, the devil,** 15 **and free those who all their lives were held in slavery by the fear of death.**" (Heb 2:14-15 NRSV) ). Dawson comments:

*The entry of the Living One (Rev. 1:18 "and the living one. I was dead, and see, I am alive forever and ever; and I have the keys of Death and of Hades." (Re 1:18 NRSV) ) into the realm of the dead destroyed it. Having broken its power, Jesus descended to the underworld in order to liberate all the souls of the dead who had been awaiting a savior. This is classically known as the harrowing of hell. Jesus plundered death of its spoils and the devil of his captives, setting us free for everlasting life. (p. 28).*

*[Jesus] went down to the root, to the origin, of human nature. All the way to the first man. To dig beneath our sin. To undo the fall. To raise up all that had been lost. Resurrection after such a descent meant haling us from the inside out. This was not only a salvation worked out above us in a heavenly ledger but within our fallen nature as well. As one of us, Jesus the Son of God was lifting us up to his Father in the Holy Spirit. (p. 29)*

This understanding draws on [1 Peter 3:18-19](#) in which Jesus "**put to death in the flesh but made alive in the spirit... proclaimed to the spirits in prison.**" This then is connected to the statement in [1 Peter 4:6](#) that "**the gospel was preached even to those who are dead,**" leading to the understanding that the rising Jesus liberated the dead souls who had awaited him.

**2. Hell on the Cross.** Some who are skeptical about the interpretation given above, prefer to think of Jesus' descent into Hades as happening while he hung on the Cross. They see this indicated by Jesus' cry of dereliction during that time: "**My God, my God, why have you forsaken me**" ([Matt. 27:46](#)). According to this interpretation (which was advanced by John Calvin), on the Cross, Jesus bearing the full force of judgment against sin, underwent the hell of damnation as our substitute. Thomas Torrance provides another take on this interpretation, writing in *Theology of Reconstruction* (p. 124) that the crucified Jesus *answered for us to God; even in his terrible descent into our God-forsakenness in which he plumbed the deepest depths of our estrangement and antagonism, he reconstructed and altered the existence of man, by yielding himself in perfect love and trust to the Father. (Dawson, p. 30)*

Those who embrace this interpretation, tend to relegate what Jesus did on Holy Saturday to the realm of mystery.

**3. Solidarity with the dead.** This interpretation emphasizes that during Holy Saturday, Jesus entered what theologian Hans Urs von Balthasar called a "solidarity in nontime with the dead" -- an "entry of the soul into the passive, helpless, free fall state of *being dead*" (p. 32). According to this view, through his time in Sheol, Jesus took the side of sinners even in death (death being the consequence of sin), thus accepting fully our condemnation. Dawson explains: *Jesus' descent to the realm of the dead during Holy Saturday assures us that God who has wed himself to our humanity stays with us not only to the end of the age but even through the dark passage of death, even through the deep suffering and sorrow of this present age. (p. 33).*

Rather than seeing these three streams of interpretation as mutually exclusive, Dawson suggests that they can be integrated, providing this understanding:

*The event of Christ's descent into hell touched his dying, his being fully in the state of the dead, and his rising from the dead in glorious resurrection. To put it another way, the descent was a bridge event. It is not only the gap between cross and resurrection, but the vital link between them. It is the "place" where the turn is made from defeat to victory and Holy Saturday partakes of both.... [Jesus] descended fully into our death, both spiritual and physical. But in doing so, he laid hold of us at the deepest point of our estrangement from God. He descended in order to raise us up with him in resurrection life.... Jesus went farther from the Father than Adam had fallen. He journeyed, as it were, back before the first sin, down to the root of our creation. Then, he raised Adam. Jesus grabbed the man who represents our human nature and condition. Jesus went down, got Adam and took him with him as he rose. The new, last Adam, redeemed the first Adam.... Jesus completed the recreation of our humanity in the place of the dead, in hell; in rising, he raised us also. This is what it means that Jesus descended fully into our death in order to raise us fully into his life. (pp. 34-5)*

Here is another illustration of Jesus' descent into Sheol, followed by his ascent in resurrection, lifting up humanity out of Sheol as he went:



*The Harrowing of Hell* by Albrecht Durer  
(public domain via Wikimedia Commons)

## Unmasked

From [gci.org](http://gci.org) Sept. 16, 2020



James Henderson



Am I the only one to get confused when wearing a mask? Recently I had my face mask on when I went for a cup of coffee. I tried to pay by using my phone, but it would not process. What was the problem? My phone's security works by facial recognition and the mask obscured my face! I felt flustered and peered intently at the phone, thinking it would click in. People in the socially distanced line behind me were snickering as they watched, and I too began to laugh.

Masks have a fascinating history and were worn for all sorts of reasons, and they still are. I remember watching a movie that featured a masquerade, a party where people wore elaborate masks to conceal who they were. The idea goes back to the theatres of ancient Greece and elsewhere, where actors would don a mask to get into character. Typically, they'd use a mask that featured a recognizable attribute of the role they were playing.

A friend of mine, who knew I was a Christian, asked me once about God. What is he like? Would he please come out from behind his mask and identify himself? My friend was being sarcastic, but I had an answer, based on [Colossians 1:15](http://www.bible.com/bible/1/Colossians/1/15), where we read that Jesus "is the image of the invisible God" (ESV). Jesus came, I said to him, to show us who God is, to reveal how God is love.

It's something worth noting. If we want to know what God is like, how he thinks and how he cares for us, we look to the life of Jesus.

Jesus is God unmasked.

**Prayer: Thank you, Father, for revealing yourself through your Son, Jesus Christ, and help me please to grow more and more into his image. In his name, Amen.**

*GCI principle website and Moncton Websites—*a) [www.gci.org](http://www.gci.org) , b) [www.worshipim.ca](http://www.worshipim.ca) , c) <https://www.facebook.com/GCIMoncton>; d) *Grace Communion International-Moncton* <https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCgKazyWhmKmdZy69vJcFfPg>

*For a wealth of helpful articles about God, grace and his plan for salvation, who we are, etc., please see the GCI.org website.*

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