

A decorative border with intricate, symmetrical scrollwork and floral patterns, framing the central text. The border is composed of a repeating pattern of stylized leaves and scrolls, creating a classic, ornate frame.

Did Jesus

Descend

Into

Hell?

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CHAPTER ONE

Acts 2:22 Ye men of Israel, hear these words; Jesus of Nazareth, a man approved of God among you by miracles and wonders and signs, which God did by him in the midst of you, as ye yourselves also know:

23 Him, being delivered by the determinate counsel and foreknowledge of God, ye have taken, and by wicked hands have crucified and slain:

24 Whom God hath raised up, having loosed the pains of death: because it was not possible that he should be holden of it.

25 For David speaketh concerning him, I foresaw the Lord always before my face, for he is on my right hand, that I should not be moved:

26 Therefore did my heart rejoice, and my tongue was glad; moreover also my flesh shall rest in hope:

27 Because thou wilt not leave my soul in hell, neither wilt thou suffer thine Holy One to see corruption.

28 Thou hast made known to me the ways of life; thou shalt make me full of joy with thy countenance.

29 Men and brethren, let me freely speak unto you of the patriarch David, that he is both dead and buried, and his sepulchre is with us unto this day.

30 Therefore being a prophet, and knowing that God had sworn with an oath to him, that of the fruit of his loins, according to the flesh, he would raise up Christ to sit on his throne;

31 He seeing this before spake of the resurrection of Christ, that his soul was not left in hell, neither his flesh did see corruption.

32 This Jesus hath God raised up, whereof we all are witnesses.

Recorded in this Scripture is a portion of the message the Apostle Peter preached on the Day of Pentecost. Being somewhat the inaugural message of this Holy Ghost Dispensation, it has accordingly become very familiar and famous. In this passage is an expression that, sad to say, because of misunderstanding and sectarian tradition, has engendered great confusion. By the help of God we want to draw our focus to that phrase and study so that we can be "rightly dividing the word of truth" (2 Timothy 2:15) and dispel the confusion and falsity commonly associated with the expressions within this text.

In verse 27 are the words we feel impressed to consider: "Because thou wilt not leave my soul in hell." Verse 31 speaks of much the same thing, declaring: "He seeing this before spake of the resurrection of Christ, that his soul was not left in hell . . ." From these words many sectarian bodies subscribe to a doctrine that is recorded in what is commonly called "The Apostles' Creed." A portion of that "Apostles' Creed" says this: "He descended into hell." Numerous Protestant organizations subscribe to that supposed "Apostles' Creed." Many of them recite it weekly in their worship services. Much of that thinking came from a misunderstanding and misapplication of these texts that we will study. Thus the purpose of this study is concerning the question, Did Jesus descend into hell?

First of all, let us notice the audience whom Peter was addressing. He commenced his address in Acts 2:14, saying, "Ye men of Judaea, and all ye that dwell at Jerusalem . . ." Peter was addressing Judaeans and those that "dwell at Jerusalem." Then in Acts 2:22 he said "ye men of Israel," again defining the audience to whom he was speaking. Also, Acts 2:5 tells who was assembled there in Jerusalem on this famous day: "And there were dwelling at Jerusalem Jews . . ." As we begin our study, we must bear in mind that the Apostle Peter was speaking at a Jewish festival—the Day of Pentecost. The word *Pentecost* comes from the Greek word **pentecoste**, which literally means "fifty," and the Feast of Pentecost was fifty days after the Feast of Passover.

Peter's audience was exclusively Jewish, those of Hebrew stock. Therefore, in Acts, Chapter 2, he quoted Hebrew Scriptures to convey the truth to them. Peter began by saying, "This is that which was spoken by the prophet Joel" (verse 16). He referred to the Hebrew Prophet Joel and quoted Joel 2:28 to commence his message. Later in his message (verse 25), Peter said, "For David speaketh . . ." and began quoting a Psalm—again, a portion of the sacred writings with which every Hebrew was familiar. In this message Peter particularly quoted the Psalms, and the Psalms are quoted more in the New Testament than any other Old Testament book.

When the Apostle Peter declared in verse 27, "Because thou wilt not leave my soul in hell, neither wilt thou suffer thine Holy One to see corruption," he was actually quoting Psalm 16:10: "For thou wilt not leave my soul in hell; neither wilt thou suffer thine Holy One to see corruption." Now let us begin to lay "precept upon precept" and "line upon line," as Isaiah 28:13 teaches. The Prophet, penning under divine inspiration, wrote in Isaiah 34:16, "Seek ye out of the book of the LORD, and read: no one of these shall fail, none shall want her mate: for my mouth it hath commanded, and his spirit it hath gathered them." Every Scripture has a mate. If we will study and allow the Spirit of God to guide, for every passage in God's eternal Word that may be somewhat obscure, unclear, or even perhaps confusing at first, there is another Scripture that God will mate up with it to shed light and bring understanding. "God is not the author of confusion" (1 Corinthians 14:33), and He does not desire that we be in confusion. He certainly never designed that His Word be the cause of confusion. Confusion comes when men wrongly divide rather than rightly divide.

Jesus, speaking to the repentant thief on the cross, proclaimed in Luke 23:43, "Verily I say unto thee, To day shalt thou be with me in paradise." To understand this verse, let us consider, biblically, What is the real me? What is the real you? In Psalm 139:13-17 the Psalmist gave understanding concerning who the real you and the real me actually is. Verse 13 states, "For thou hast possessed *my* reins: thou hast covered *me* in my mother's womb." In this verse the Psalmist spoke of a "me" before there was ever any flesh to cover it in the mother's womb. What was this "me" he spoke of that God covers in the womb? The answer is in verse 14: ". . . that my soul knoweth right well." The real me, the real you is the soul. We have a body, but we are a soul.

Verse 15 talks about the act of conception, saying, "My substance was not hid from thee, when I was made in secret, and curiously wrought in the lowest parts of the earth." Then verse 16 reads, "Thine eyes did see my substance, yet being unperfect; and in thy book all my members were written, which in continuance were fashioned, when as yet there was none of them." When conception takes place, initially there are not any members. There are not arms, legs, fingers and toes; there is no body, such as we know it, at that juncture. It develops into one, but at the time of conception, there are no members. Yet verse 17 says, "How precious also are thy thoughts unto *me*, O God!" Before there were members, before the body was formed, before it was completely covered, there was a "me." What is that real "me"? It is the soul. At conception, God puts in a soul.

In Ezekiel 18:4 God said, "All souls are mine." Why is this crucial to understand? Jesus said in Luke 23:43, "To day shalt thou be with *me* in paradise." Who was the real me? He was speaking of His soul, because His body was going to the tomb of Joseph of Arimathaea. The "me" that was going into Paradise was the soul of Christ.

Let us look at the words of Jesus in Luke, Chapter 16, when He uncapped eternity and gave us a view of Paradise and Hades. Of this account of the rich man and Lazarus, Luke 16:26 states, "And beside all this, between us and you there is a great gulf fixed: so that they which would pass from hence to you cannot . . ." Lazarus could not go from Abraham's bosom, or Paradise, to Hades. Thus, when Jesus said to the thief, "To day shalt thou be with me in paradise," He could not go from Paradise to Hades; it violates the scriptural premise. By Jesus' own admission, He went to Paradise. Biblically we found the real "me" is the soul. So when Jesus said, "To day shalt thou be with me," He was talking about His soul.

The question may arise, "How do we reconcile that with Psalm 16:10, which says, 'For thou wilt not leave my soul in hell?'" To rightly divide this, we must understand the words that the Psalmist employed. In Psalm 16:10 the word rendered as "soul" in the Hebrew is the word **nephesh**. According to scholars this Hebrew word has two very distinct definitions. *Strong's Hebrew Concordance* defines it as "a breathing creature." *The Brown, Driver, Briggs Hebrew Lexicon* is more definitive and says it is "that which breathes; the breathing substance or being." The second definition is "soul; the inner being of man."

Now to determine which definition is the proper usage, we must apply two rules:

- 1) We must view it in the context of its usage.
- 2) We must view it in harmony with the greater scheme of Scripture.

We must adhere to those two rules if we are going to rightly divide the Word of Truth.

The Word of God is inerrant and infallible, but the King James Version translators were not. That statement may seem startling; nonetheless, it is true. I believe the King James Version is the best English version available, and I use it, but it is not infallible in its translation. Therefore, we must apply these two rules when looking at any given text. We must view it in the proper context of its usage and also view it in harmony with the greater scheme of Scriptures.

Let us view a few verses where the word rendered "soul" or "souls" by the King James translators actually means "the physical being." Remember, the Hebrew word **nephesh**, which is translated as "soul" in our King James English Version, has two very distinct and opposite definitions: "a breathing creature," or "physical life," and also "the soul, the inner being of man." Now how do we know when the word **nephesh** means the "physical life" and when it means "the soul"? By viewing it in its context and in the scheme of the Scriptures.

Scriptural examples of "soul" meaning the physical being:

- **Genesis 12:5**—"And Abram took Sarai his wife, and Lot his brother's son, and all their substance that they had gathered, and the souls that they had gotten in Haran; and they went forth to go into the land of Canaan." Certainly, this is not a reference to the inner being of man, the immortal soul, for it would not be possible to pick up some souls and take them somewhere. This Scripture is talking about people; it is not speaking of that eternal quality.
- **Genesis 34:3**—"And his soul clave unto Dinah the daughter of Jacob, and he loved the damsel, and spake kindly unto the damsel." It was not his immortal soul, his internal being, that was in love. This verse is speaking of human passions, of conjugal love.
- **Genesis 46:25-26**—"These are the sons of Bilhah, which Laban gave unto Rachel his daughter, and she bare these unto Jacob: all the souls were seven. [What is it talking about? All of the children.] All the souls that came with Jacob into Egypt, which came out of his loins, besides Jacob's sons' wives, all the souls were threescore and six." This is not talking about souls, in the sense of an immortal soul at all; it is merely talking about people.
- **Leviticus 5:1-2**—"And if a soul sin, and hear the voice of swearing, and is a witness, whether he hath seen or known of it; if

he do not utter it, then he shall bear his iniquity. Or if a soul touch any unclean thing, whether it be a carcase of an unclean beast, or a carcase of unclean cattle, or the carcase of unclean creeping things" The immortal, internal soul is not going to be touching carcasses.

- **Leviticus 5:4**—"Or if a soul swear, pronouncing with his lips to do evil, or to do good, whatsoever it be that a man shall pronounce with an oath, and it be hid from him; when he knoweth of it, then he shall be guilty in one of these." Again, this is not talking about a soul, because lips are not on the soul. It is talking about a person.
- **Leviticus 22:5-6**—"Or whosoever toucheth any creeping thing, whereby he may be made unclean, or a man of whom he may take uncleanness, whatsoever uncleanness he hath; The soul which hath touched any such shall be unclean until even, and shall not eat of the holy things, unless he wash his *flesh* with water." You cannot purify your soul by washing your flesh with water. First, how does a soul touch an unclean thing? This is not talking about the soul at all, in the sense of the immortal being; but it is talking about a person.
- **Leviticus 22:11**—"But if the priest buy any soul with his money" Souls cannot be bought with money. However, when people are regarded as chattels and property, one can buy people.
- **Numbers 19:22**—"And whatsoever the unclean person toucheth shall be unclean; and the soul that toucheth it shall be unclean until even." The soul cannot touch things in a literal sense. It is talking about the person.
- **Psalms 22:20**—"Deliver my soul from the sword." The soul cannot be killed with a literal sword. It is not talking about the soul as we think of it, but talking about the person, talking about the life, talking about the body.
- **Psalms 30:3**—"O LORD, thou hast brought up my soul from the grave." The body goes to the grave, not the soul.

So we see that often these words that were translated by the 1611 translators were words that in that day, many times, had a different meaning or attachment to them than they do now in the twenty-first century or were not contextually translated. We can readily see that these passages do not refer to the inner man at all.

Numbers 9:6-7 tells us: "And there were certain men, who were defiled by the dead body of a man, that they could not keep the passover on that day: and they came before Moses and before Aaron on that day: And those men said unto him, We are defiled by the dead body of a man: wherefore are we kept back, that we may not offer an offering of the LORD in his appointed season among the children of Israel?" Both verses talk about "the dead body of a man," and the word *body* in both verses is the same Hebrew word **nephesh**; but here it is translated as "body" and correctly so. This further proves that the word **nephesh** used in Psalm 16:10, does not refer to the inner man at all, but rather to the body. "For thou wilt not leave my soul [**nephesh**, or body] . . ." We know where his soul went; it went to Paradise.

Let us look further into this text. "For thou wilt not leave my soul in hell." The Hebrew word for *hell* is the word **sheol**. It appears sixty-five times in the Old Testament. It also has a dual meaning. It is rendered thirty-one times by the King James translators as "hell" and thirty times as "grave." How do we know the proper distinction? Again, go back to the two rules:

- 1) View it in the context of its usage
- 2) View it in harmony with the greater scheme of the Scriptures

There are places in the Scriptures where the King James translators used the word "hell," but it does not mean hell such as we know it. We commonly associate the thought of hell as a place beyond this veil of flesh in a nether world—a burning, flaming place of torment and suffering. But not all references to hell are referring to this place of torment. Let us look at some examples. Isaiah 5:14 says, "Therefore hell hath enlarged herself, and opened her mouth without measure: and their glory, and their multitude, and their pomp, and he that rejoiceth, shall descend into it." If this indeed is hell, in the sense that we commonly consider hell, if indeed the place of torment had to enlarge itself, what does that say about God's foreknowledge? It implies that God did not know how big to make hell.

The Prophet Isaiah wrote in Isaiah 46:9-10: "Remember the former things of old: for I am God, and there is none else; I am God, and there is none like me, Declaring the end from the beginning, and from ancient times the things that are not yet done, saying, My counsel shall stand, and I will do all my pleasure." God declared "the end from the beginning." He knows it before it ever occurs. The Psalmist said that His understanding is infinite (Psalm 147:5). With His infinite foreknowledge, is it reasonable to think that God did not know how large to build the place of torment and punishment? Think of the ramifications of such a theology, if indeed the place of torment was too small and God did not have enough foresight to know how large to build it! In reality, the Prophet Isaiah was not speaking of hell at all; he was talking about the grave. Because so many people were being overcome with disobedience and rebellion, God was putting judgment on them; and they had to enlarge the graves to make ample room for the people that God was putting judgment on.

Let us lift another verse. Ezekiel 32:27 reads, "And they shall not lie with the mighty that are fallen of the uncircumcised [in other words, not be buried in the same place; not occupy the same graves], which are gone down to hell with their weapons of war

[one cannot take weapons of war to hell]: and they have laid their swords under their heads [their heads were not in hell, but in the grave], but their iniquities shall be upon their bones [their bones were not in hell, but in the grave]" This verse is not talking about hell. You do not take "weapons of war" to hell. Their heads were not in hell, neither were their swords in hell. This is speaking of the grave.

Look at Jonah's prayer while in the fish's belly (Jonah 2:1): "I cried by reason of mine affliction unto the LORD, and he heard me; out of the belly of hell" Jonah was in the belly of a fish, but he called it the "belly of hell." In other words, he was in a watery grave; he was in a fish's belly at the bottom of the sea. He was not in a devil's hell. The word **sheol** refers to being in a watery grave, in the midst of the bottom of the earth. Verses 5-6 continue: "The waters compassed me about, even to the soul: the depth closed me round about, the weeds were wrapped about my head. I went down to the bottoms of the mountains; the earth with her bars was about me for ever." Again, Jonah was not in a devil's hell. This word **sheol** describes his predicament, the grave that he had made for himself by disobeying God. Also, the waters did not compass his soul but his body.

Look at the words of the Prophet Amos: "Though they dig into hell" (Amos 9:2). Man cannot literally dig into hell. Hell is a spiritual place, and digging is a physical activity. So when the Psalmist wrote in Psalm 16:10, "For thou wilt not leave my soul in hell," in reality he was saying, "For thou wilt not leave my body in the grave."

Peter, preaching on the Day of Pentecost, was quoting Psalm 16:10 in Acts 2:27, which says, "Because thou wilt not leave my soul in hell, neither wilt thou suffer thine Holy One to see corruption." Then in verse 31 he reiterated this thought, saying, ". . . that his soul was not left in hell, neither his flesh did see corruption." Both verses say "soul" and "hell." The same Greek words are used in both verses. The word "soul" is the Greek word **psuche** (pronounced sokay), and it has a dual meaning as well. *Strong's Greek Dictionary of the New Testament* defines it as "breath" and "the immortal soul." *Thayer's Greek-English Lexicon* says it is "the vital force which animates the body and shows itself in breathing a living being." This Greek word **psuche** appears 105 times in the New Testament: thirty-nine times it is translated as "soul" and thirty-six times it is translated as "life." Again, each verse must be viewed in context to know the proper application.

Let us look at some instances where **psuche** does not mean the immortal soul.

- **Acts 7:14**—"Then sent Joseph, and called his father Jacob to him, and all his kindred, threescore and fifteen souls." Here Stephen, speaking to the counsel, was not talking about immortal souls, but he was referring to them as people.
- **Acts 27:37-38**—"And we were in all in the ship two hundred threescore and sixteen souls. And when they had eaten enough, they lightened the ship" This account refers to when Paul was on the ship and there was the tremendous storm. Who "lightened the ship"? The souls did, not talking about the immortal portion of man but talking about people, their bodies.
- **1 Peter 3:20**—"Which sometime were disobedient [speaking of the antediluvian world], when once the longsuffering of God waited in the days of Noah, while the ark was a preparing, wherein few, that is, eight souls were saved by water." Their souls were not saved by being in the ark; their bodies were saved.

So this word *souls* does not always refer to the inner man, and it does not in our text.

In Acts 2:27 and 31, both verses speak of "in hell." This is the Greek word **hades**, and it is the Greek counterpart for the Hebrew word **sheol**. The Old Testament Scriptures were predominantly written in Hebrew and the New Testament Scriptures in Greek. When Old Testament Scriptures were quoted in the New Testament, there had to be somewhat of an accommodation to bring them over into the Greek language. Thus the Greek word **hades** is the counterpart for, or corresponds to, the Hebrew word **sheol**. It, too, has a dual definition: it means either hell or the grave.

The Apostle Paul wrote in 1 Corinthians 15:55: "O death, where is thy sting? O grave, where is thy victory?" The word here that is rightly translated "grave," which is exactly what Paul was talking about, is the Greek word **hades**. So the word **hades** does not always refer to hell. Many times it refers to the grave.

Keeping that truth in mind, when Acts 2:27 says, "Because thou wilt not leave my soul in hell," in reality it is saying the same thing in the Greek that Psalm 16:10 said in the Hebrew: "Because thou wilt not leave my body in the grave." To be certain this is so, let us look a little further at this passage. Remember, the Apostle Peter was preaching to an entirely Jewish audience, and he was predominantly quoting the Psalms. In the Book of Psalms, one of the most common forms of expression is a style known as *parallelism*. According to scholars, the most common form of parallelism is what is known as *synonymous parallelism*. This is where an idea is expressed in the first line, and then that idea is echoed in different, more explicit language in the second line.

Let us view some examples of this type of writing. This teaching style was common amongst the Hebrews and particularly accented in the Psalms. Psalm 15:1 reads, "LORD, who shall abide in thy tabernacle [this is the first line, or the first expression]? who shall dwell in thy holy hill [here the second line, or the second expression, is speaking the same thing as the first, only making it more explicit]?" The first phrase asks "who shall abide," and the second phrase asks "who shall dwell"; the first line says "in thy tabernacle," and the second line says "in thy holy hill" (referring to the tabernacle in David's day which was built on a holy hill, on Mount Zion). So it is a parallelism. A thought is stated in one manner, and then the second expression comes through, making it more

explicit and clear, saying the same thing in a mirroring expression.

We read in Psalm 22:22, "I will declare thy name unto my brethren: in the midst of the congregation will I praise thee." How do you declare His name? By praising Him. That is how you declare it to the brethren. When do you declare it to the brethren? When you are in the congregation. It is a parallelism.

Psalm 33:16 states, "There is no king saved by the multitude of an host [there is the first phrase]: a mighty man is not delivered by much strength [there is the second phrase]." What is this talking about? The first phrase says "there is no king saved," and the second expression says "a mighty man is not delivered." The first phrase says "by the multitude of an host," and the second phrase explains it by saying "by much strength." Both phrases are speaking the same truth; only one phrase expands upon and clarifies the other.

Let us consider two more examples found in the Psalms. Psalm 38:1 says, "O LORD, rebuke me not in thy wrath: neither chasten me in thy hot displeasure." One phrase expands the other. Psalm 119:130 reads, "The entrance of thy words giveth light; it giveth understanding unto the simple." The first phrase alone is very unclear. The second phrase explains what light is.

Let us apply this common Hebrew teaching style to our lesson text, Acts 2:27, and see what it says. "Because thou wilt not leave my soul in hell [that is the first phrase], neither wilt thou suffer thine Holy One to see corruption [that is the second phrase]." Reading it in this manner explains what Peter was talking about. Both phrases are saying the same thing; it is a parallelism.

Acts 2:31 says, "He seeing this before spake of the resurrection of Christ, that his soul was not left in hell, neither his flesh did see corruption." The second phrase explains the first. When Peter spoke about the "soul in hell," he was talking about the flesh not seeing corruption. He was talking about the body being in the grave. Christ's body was not left in the grave. He was resurrected after three days and three nights. Thus, when verse 27 says, "Thou wilt not leave my soul in hell," we can correctly say, "Thou wilt not leave my *body* in the *grave*." Two different renderings say it in this manner: "Thou wilt not leave me in the grave. You will not let your Holy One rot"; another translation says "to decay." The same truth is revealed in both expressions. It was a parallelism; he stated it in one manner and then clarified it in the second expression, or in the second line.

Someone might say, "Man is a three-fold being," and he is; but Ecclesiastes 12:7 tells us that "the spirit shall return unto God who gave it." What were Jesus' last words on Calvary's Tree? "Father, into thy hands I commend my spirit." The Spirit is our God consciousness. When one enters into the realm beyond life, into the eternal realm, he no longer needs a God consciousness. So the Spirit goes back to God who gave it. The flesh, or the body, goes back to the earth. And the soul goes to either Paradise or Hades. In the case of Christ, He expressly told us where His soul was going: ". . . thou be with me [or with My soul] in paradise."

To see if this is prophetically what the Psalmist was speaking of and Peter was substantiating, let us look at the greater context. In Psalm 16:10 notice the contrast: "For thou wilt not leave my soul in hell; neither wilt thou suffer [old King James English, meaning permit; see Matthew 19:14 and 3:15] thine Holy One to see corruption." How is the word *corruption* used in the Scriptures? What part of man is corruptible? First Corinthians 15:50-54 says: "Now this I say, brethren, that flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God; neither doth corruption inherit incorruption. Behold, I shew you a mystery; We shall not all sleep [die or be in the grave], but we shall all be changed [when?], In a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trump: for the trumpet shall sound, and the dead shall be raised incorruptible, and we shall be changed. For this corruptible must put on incorruption, and this mortal must put on immortality.

"So when this corruptible shall have put on incorruption, and this mortal shall have put on immortality, then shall be brought to pass the saying that is written, Death is swallowed up [What is it that dies? What is it that is mortal? What is it that is corruptible? The body.] . . ."

So when Peter said "thou wilt not . . . suffer thine Holy One to see corruption" (Acts 2:27), he was talking about Jesus' physical body. God was not going to leave it in the grave to rot and decay and corrupt. Notice the contrast in the Psalmist's words in Psalm 16:10 and in 16:11. Verse 10 speaks of the grave and corruption. Verse 11 reads, "Thou wilt shew me the path of life: in thy presence is fulness of joy; at thy right hand there are pleasures for evermore [alluding to the Resurrection and the Ascension of Christ, when Christ went back to the right hand of the Father; read Romans 8:34]."

Notice also the contrast that the Apostle Peter made in Acts 2:29, when he said, "Men and brethren, let me freely speak unto you of the patriarch David, that he is both dead and buried, and his sepulchre is with us unto this day." As if to say, "He is dead, he is buried, and his body, or what remains of it, is still in the grave, the sepulchre." But he continued in verses 30-31: "Therefore being a prophet, and knowing that God had sworn with an oath to him, that of the fruit of his loins, according to the flesh, he would raise up Christ to sit on his throne; He seeing this before spake of the resurrection of Christ . . ." Peter was contrasting Christ with David. In verse 29 we read that David is still dead and buried; his sepulchre is with us. Peter was contrasting the natural process (death, burial, and corruption) against the supernatural process (death, burial, and resurrection). What a contrast!

As great a man as David was—a man after God's own heart, a type of Christ (prophet, priest, and king)—he is still dead, buried, and his sepulchre is with us. If you could find his grave and get into it, all that would be left would be those decayed remains. That is the natural process. But Jesus Christ was not natural; He was supernatural, and He had a supernatural process. He was dead and buried, but He resurrected. He did not decay. God did not leave His body in the grave to see corruption. He resurrected Him. I trust

that you can see that these texts in Psalm 16 and Acts, Chapter 2, do not teach that Christ descended into hell. While His body was reposing in the tomb, He was in Paradise, just as He said He would be. He never descended to hell. It is sad that there are multiplied millions who embrace the false teachings that are propagated by sectarian religion. Many of them never stop to examine it, but they just mindlessly repeat what some man teaches. Thank God for truth. John 17:17 tells us that "thy word is truth," and when we rightly divide the Word, it will still reveal truth in such a manner that it will be harmonious throughout the entire scheme of the Scriptures.

In the next chapter we will look at some Old Testament types and prophecies that are mistakenly used and misapplied to attempt to foster this erroneous teaching.

CHAPTER TWO

1 Corinthians 5:7 For even Christ our passover is sacrificed for us.

In this chapter we will look at another approach that some advocates of this persuasion use to substantiate their claim—Old Testament types, performances, or ceremonies under the Old Testament Levitical Law, as well as some prophetic utterances.

In our Scripture text Paul spoke of Christ our Passover. The argument is used that because the pascal lamb was roasted with fire (a type), then Jesus had to descend into hell fire. Let us begin to examine this type. Certainly, we recognize that Old Testament occurrences do, indeed, serve as types (1 Corinthians 10:11), but we must view them in the entire scheme of the Scriptures. In Exodus 12:1-11 we read the literal account where the Passover was instituted, prior to the children of Israel leaving Egypt.

From our lesson text we see that Christ is the reality, or the antitype, of this type. This representation was pointing forward to Jesus Christ and the work that He would accomplish. Let us begin to examine it. Exodus 12:5 says, "Your lamb shall be without blemish," and in 1 Peter 1:19 the Apostle Peter penned, "But with the precious blood of Christ, as of a lamb without blemish and without spot." So this lamb, male and without blemish, is a type of Jesus Christ.

Exodus 12:6 says, "And ye shall keep it up until the fourteenth day of the same month: and the whole assembly of the congregation of Israel shall kill it in the evening." If you read the Gospel accounts, you will see the antitype. Luke 22:7 states, "Then came the day of unleavened bread, when the passover must be killed." If you continue reading this chapter, you will see that Christ and His disciples observed this meal and that it was night (Luke 22:39; Matthew 26:31).

The Lamb of God, Christ, was slain by the "whole assembly" (Exodus 12:6) of Israel ("all the people," Matthew 27:25; "the whole multitude," Luke 23:1), just as the type, and He was crucified on the fourteenth of Nisan, just as prophecy said He would be. Also, the Crucifixion was in the evening, because Matthew 27:46 says, "And about the ninth hour . . ." The ninth hour would be three o'clock in the afternoon—the time of the evening sacrifice. Right at the time when the evening sacrifice was offered, Christ, our Sacrifice, was offered.

Exodus 12:7 tells us that the Israelites were to take the blood of the lamb and to apply it to the doorposts. This was called the "LORD'S passover" (Exodus 12:11), because when that death angel came through, if he saw the blood applied, he passed over; he did not strike them dead. Because of what Jesus Christ did as our Sacrifice, if we have the blood applied by faith believing, "we have passed from death unto life" (1 John 3:14). We are no longer under a sentence of death—we have passed from death unto life.

So we see that the lamb is definitely a type. Exodus 12:8 reads, "And they shall eat the flesh in that night, roast with fire." Yes, this lamb was roasted with fire, but notice that it was not being punished for it was already dead. Why was the lamb to be roasted? The answer is found in verse 9, "Eat not of it raw." The reason it was roasted was to make it palatable, or edible. It was not roasted for any other reason. The lamb was roasted so that people could take it in, digest it, make it part of them without wanting to spit it out.

Verse 11 gave further instructions, "And thus shall ye eat it; with your loins girded, your shoes on your feet." What are we to be girded with today? The Apostle Paul said: "Stand therefore, having your loins girt about with truth . . . And your feet shod with the preparation of the gospel of peace" (Ephesians 6:14-15). What enables us to have our loins girded and be prepared to travel and convey the Gospel? Only one thing—by eating the Lamb. Until Old Testament Israel ate the lamb, they were not fully prepared for their journey; their loins being appropriately girded, their feet being shod, or prepared, are all types of that which enables us to have our loins girded and our feet prepared yet today. What is that? Eating the Lamb.

To understand how one "eats" the Lamb, look at what Jesus said in John 6:53-54: "Verily, verily, I say unto you, Except ye eat the flesh of the Son of man, and drink his blood, ye have no life in you. Whoso eateth my flesh, and drinketh my blood, hath eternal life; and I will raise him up at the last day." When Jesus spoke of eating His flesh and drinking His blood was He preaching cannibalism? Drop down to verse 63. It says, "It is the spirit that quickeneth; the flesh profiteth nothing: the words that I speak unto you, they are spirit, and they are life." Jesus was talking about eating His Word and drinking in of His Spirit. That is what produces spiritual life. To have our loins girded about and to be properly prepared to communicate the Gospel requires that we have eaten the Spirit-anointed, quickened Word that brings and sustains life.

This lamb, roasted with fire, is a type of the Word under the anointing of the Spirit. The Word by itself can be mighty hard to swallow sometimes. But when the Spirit of God anoints it and enlightens the eyes of your understanding, then it is not too hard to swallow and make a part of your life.

Did you ever try to eat something dry without having something to drink? I do not know about you, but I cannot eat a meal without having something to drink. After a few bites, I need something to drink to wash it down. The Word of God can also be dry if you do not have something to wash it down with. Did you ever listen to somebody try to preach who did not have the Spirit of God anointing? No doubt, it seemed dry and hard to swallow. This lamb roasted with fire is a picture of the Word under the fiery anointing of the Spirit. That is what makes it tasty, able to be eaten, and made a part of us. Without the anointing of the Spirit, the Word is just a dead letter.

In 2 Corinthians 3:6 the Apostle Paul wrote, "Who also hath made us able ministers of the new testament; not of the letter, but of the spirit: for the letter killeth, but the spirit giveth life." Thank God for the letter, but it is the Spirit quickening, making it a living Word, that feeds the souls of men. Romans 7:6 tells us, "But now we are delivered from the law, that being dead wherein we were held; that we should serve in newness of spirit, and not in the oldness of the letter." When something is cold and hard, it is hard to chew, hard to swallow; we cannot take it in and make it a part of us as we ought. Speaking of the lamb that was to be roasted with fire, Exodus 12:9 says, "Eat not of it raw, [Why? Because when it is raw, it is hard to chew and swallow.] nor sodden at all with water [God does not want a watered-down Gospel; this was not to be a soup, but a lamb], but roast with fire." Fire is a type of the Holy Spirit. This is proved in Acts 2:3-4 ("And there appeared unto them cloven tongues like as of fire . . . And they were all filled with the Holy Ghost") and in Revelation 4:5 (" . . . there were seven lamps of fire burning before the throne, which are the seven Spirits of God"). This thought of the lamb being roasted with fire is a picture of being anointed with the Holy Spirit.

Jeremiah 15:16 clearly states, "Thy words were found, and I did eat them; and thy word was unto me the joy and rejoicing of mine heart . . ." This type portrays our partaking of Christ through His Word under the anointing of the Spirit. Look again at our text in 1 Corinthians 5:7-8, which says: "Purge out therefore the old leaven, that ye may be a new lump, as ye are unleavened. For even Christ our passover is sacrificed for us: Therefore [or because our Passover is sacrificed for us] let us keep the feast . . ." To "keep the feast" means to keep eating the Lamb, or keep eating Christ. How? Through His Word under the anointing of the fire of the Holy Ghost.

Let us view another event that is used to support this doctrine of Jesus descending into hell. The law of the burnt offering is used to prove that the atonement lamb was a burnt offering. This law is described in Leviticus 1:1-9. The last phrase of verse 4 reads, ". . . it shall be accepted for him to make atonement for him." This verse, describing this legal performance, is said by some to be a type of our atonement through Jesus Christ. Then they reference Romans 5:8-11: "But God commendeth his love toward us, in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us. Much more then, being now justified by his blood, we shall be saved from wrath through him. For if, when we were enemies, we were reconciled to God by the death of his Son, much more, being reconciled, we shall be saved by his life. And not only so, but we also joy in God through our Lord Jesus Christ, by whom we have now received the atonement."

Certainly, we do not dispute that Christ is our atonement and that these Old Testament occurrences serve as types of our atonement. But as we study the Levitical Law, we must be mindful of the words of the Hebrew writer in Hebrews 10:1: "For the law having a shadow of good things to come, and not the very image of the things [the Amplified Bible says it was 'merely a rude outline'], can never with those sacrifices . . ."

When this Scripture speaks of "not the very image of the things," what does it mean? A shadow is not exact. Those sacrifices were not the exact image of the reality. How do we know that? The Old Testament sacrifices did not have a power of choice; ours did. They were not willing sacrifices; ours was. They did not have souls; ours did. Hebrews 10:1 tells us that they were "offered year by year continually." But Hebrews 9:28 says Christ was "once offered." The Old Testament sacrifices were not the very image, or the exact image, of Christ's sacrifice. If you continue to read in Leviticus, you will find that the sacrifices were flayed; the body was cut up in pieces. Yet not one of Christ's bones was broken. It is not the very image.

With this in mind, let us look again at Leviticus, Chapter 1. Verse 9 tells us, "But his inwards and his legs shall he wash in water: and the priest shall burn all on the altar, to be a burnt sacrifice . . ." This, again, reiterates that the Old Testament sacrifice was not a perfect image. Christ's body was not burned; His body went to the tomb.

Exodus 29:18 says, "And thou shalt burn the whole ram upon the altar: it is a burnt offering unto the LORD." Then Leviticus 6:8-11 reads: "And the LORD spake unto Moses, saying, Command Aaron and his sons, saying, This is the law of the burnt offering: It is the burnt offering, because of the burning upon the altar all night unto the morning, and the fire of the altar shall be burning in it. And the priest shall put on his linen garment, and his linen breeches shall he put upon his flesh, and take up the ashes which the fire hath consumed with the burnt offering on the altar, and he shall put them beside the altar. And he shall put off his garments, and put on other garments, and carry forth the ashes without the camp unto a clean place."

Keep in mind, we are looking at why this cannot be a picture, in type, of Christ going to hell. Verse 10 talks of taking up the ashes "which the fire hath consumed." This cannot be a picture of Christ going to hell, for this speaks of a sacrifice being consumed. All that was left was ashes. But when Christ talked about hell, He did not talk about being consumed or being burnt up. He spoke of it being of everlasting duration.

Look at the words of Jesus in Matthew 18:8-9: "Wherefore if thy hand or thy foot offend thee, cut them off, and cast them from thee: it is better for thee to enter into life halt or maimed, rather than having two hands or two feet to be cast into everlasting fire. And if thine eye offend thee, pluck it out, and cast it from thee: it is better for thee to enter into life with one eye, rather than having two eyes to be cast into hell fire." When Jesus spoke of it being "everlasting fire," He was speaking of everlasting duration, of something after the Judgment scene. How do we know? Because hands, feet, and eyes were mentioned. Those members will be in the grave until after the resurrection. The word *hell* in these verses is the Greek word **Gehenna**, which is talking about the place of torment, the place of punishment. After the Judgment scene, man's body will be reunited with his soul, and if the soul is not in

a proper state, both soul and body will go into hell.

We read in Mark 9:43, "And if thy hand offend thee, cut it off." Jesus was not talking about literally maiming yourself, but those things that offend and work against your salvation, you had best cut them off. One could literally cut off their hands and still have a heart full of sin, because the body is a reflection of the state of the soul. If you read further, you will notice three times (verses 44, 46, and 48) it says, "Where their worm dieth not." To understand what the worm is, let us look at Job 25:6. It says, "How much less man, that is a worm? and the son of man, which is a worm?" This expression *worm* refers to man. Hell fire will not consume man. Hell fire will not consume the soul of man. Man will have a glorified, immortal body, and hell fire will not consume that body.

In Exodus, Chapter 3, you can read of a fire that did not consume a bush, the same type of fire. While it is not uncommon in a hot, raging desert to see some sage brush actually ignite and burn up, it is unusual to see a bush ignite and not be consumed. The natural order of things would have been for the bush to be consumed, but this bush was not. The natural order of things would be if someone went to hell that he would be consumed, but that is not the supernatural order of things. It is a supernatural fire. God makes the laws of nature; He can suspend the laws of nature. When Christ splits the clouds, Peter said, those elements are going to melt with the fervent heat. Fire is an element, and here is a fire that is going to melt fire. It is a supernatural fire.

We read in Luke 16:22-24: "And it came to pass, that the beggar [the Greek says poor man] died, and was carried by the angels into Abraham's bosom: the rich man also died, and was buried [his body was buried, probably had quite a funeral; he was a rich man]; And in hell [the Greek word **hades**] he lift up his eyes, being in torments, and seeth Abraham afar off, and Lazarus in his bosom. And he cried and said, Father Abraham, have mercy on me, and send Lazarus, that he may dip the tip of his finger in water, and cool my tongue; for I am tormented in this flame." The rich man was not burned up, incinerated, or consumed. He had all of his faculties, and his body was still in the grave. That is how we know this levitical sacrifice (a burnt offering that was consumed with fire) is not a type, whatsoever, of Jesus supposedly descending into hell. Hell has a quality where it does not consume. It torments, but the fire in Gehenna does not consume.

Let us look closer at the lesson of the burnt sacrifice. Exodus 29:18 tells us, "And thou shalt burn the whole ram upon the altar . . ." There were occasions when other sacrifices were brought to the priest and the priest took part of it as his living, but not so with this sacrifice. The whole ram was to be offered. This was to be a complete sacrifice. Under the old economy, those sacrifices gave all, but all they could do was produce ashes (Leviticus 6:10). However, our Sacrifice ("the better sacrifices"; Hebrews 9:23) did not produce ashes, but He produced "beauty for ashes" (Isaiah 61:3). What kind of beauty? "He will beautify the meek with salvation" (Psalm 149:4). Christ produced an experience of salvation. All those animals could produce was ashes. That was the result of death, but Jesus produced life. There was remembrance made every year by those Old Testament sacrifices (Hebrews 10:3), because they were inadequate, insufficient, incapable. But when Jesus came, He was the sufficient, capable Sacrifice. What a contrast between the sacrifice of the old covenant and the far superior sacrifice of this new covenant! Just as the old was a whole or complete sacrifice, so was ours a whole and complete sacrifice. But rather than produce dead, powerless ashes as the old sacrifice did, Jesus gave beauty for ashes and brought the beauty of salvation to mankind.

What does Hebrews 9:23 mean when it speaks of "better sacrifices [plural] than these"? Hebrews 9:14 tells us that He offered His blood, and Hebrews 10:10 says that He offered His body; but so did those Old Testament sacrifices, and they were insufficient. One great distinction between those sacrifices and our Sacrifice is that Jesus Christ poured out His soul. Animals do not have souls. Isaiah 53:10 says, "Yet it pleased the LORD to bruise him; he hath put him to grief: when thou shalt make his soul an offering for sin . . ." Jesus not only offered His blood and His body, but He also offered His soul. That is why Hebrews called it "the sacrifice of himself" (Hebrews 9:26). He was a complete, entire, whole sacrifice.

How did Christ give "his soul an offering for sin" (Isaiah 53:10)? Look at Isaiah 53:12: "Therefore will I divide him a portion with the great, and he shall divide the spoil with the strong; because he hath poured out [the word *poured* in the Hebrew is **arah**, and it means 'leave destitute or empty'] his soul unto death: and he was numbered with the transgressors; and he bare the sin of many . . ." When this verse says He was "numbered with the transgressors," that is not telling us that He went to hell. No, Mark 15:27-28 lets us know when He was numbered with the transgressors. It was on the Cross of Calvary. Verse 28 reads, "And the scripture [referring to Isaiah 53:12] was fulfilled, which saith, And he was numbered with the transgressors." When did this happen? When He was crucified between two thieves. This was said before He gave up the Ghost, before His Spirit left His body. The Scripture was quoted while He was hanging in place on Calvary's Tree.

Some use Isaiah 53:12 and say that Jesus poured out His soul unto death and was numbered with the transgressors. They claim that is when He descended into hell. Nay, dear heart! Jesus was numbered with the transgressors on Calvary's Tree. That is where He poured out His soul, emptied Himself out of God, and felt the pangs of hell and the death of the damned seizing upon His soul. Why did Jesus pour out His soul unto death? It was to "bare the sin of many" (Isaiah 53:12). Second Corinthians 5:21 says, "For he hath made him to be sin for us, who knew no sin." When did He become sin for us? It was when He uttered those words, "My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?" (Mark 15:34).

Why did God turn His back on His own Son? It was because Jesus had emptied Himself out of God; He became destitute and took on Himself the sins of the world. He felt the pangs of hell and the death of the damned. Where? On Calvary's Tree. When the

measure of the cup was full, He said, "Tetelestai, It is finished." It was then, when He gave up the Ghost and the veil of the temple rent in twain, that God was able to come out and fellowship with man again.

Some might believe that Jesus had to go to hell to suffer for us. To suffer for us and to pay the full measure, He would have had to spend eternity in hell. Going to hell for a three-day period of time would have just been a token. What would it have accomplished? The price was paid on Calvary's Tree. There was no necessity of His descending into hell. Those in hell certainly needed no preaching. The rich man did not; he became a missionary as soon as he arrived.

Descending into hell would not have satisfied any justice, for if indeed it was for penalty and punishment, justice would have demanded that He stay there throughout the ceaseless ages of eternity. Psalm 116:3 says, "The sorrows of death compassed me, and the pains of hell gat hold upon me." Jesus felt those pains of hell. This is why He cried out in Matthew 27:46, "My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?"

Jesus said, in John 19:30, "It is finished." We read that "he bowed his head, and gave up the ghost." From there, according to Luke 23:43, He went to Paradise. In Luke 16:26 Jesus, relating Abraham's words, said, "And beside all this, between us and you there is a great gulf fixed: so that they which would pass from hence to you cannot; neither can they pass to us, that would come from thence." Jesus said He went to Paradise. He could not have gone from Paradise to Hades, and He could not have gone from Hades to Paradise. It violates the scriptural premise revealed by Jesus in this passage.

As we previously studied, man is a three-fold being: body, soul, and spirit (1 Thessalonians 5:23). We know where Christ's body went. Luke 23:52-53, speaking of Joseph of Arimathaea, states: "This man went unto Pilate, and begged the body of Jesus. And he took it down, and wrapped it in linen, and laid it in a sepulchre that was hewn in stone, wherein never man before was laid." Jesus' body went to the tomb, the sepulchre. We know where His soul went, because Jesus said to the thief in Luke 23:43, "To day shalt thou be with me in paradise." We found that the real "me" is the soul. To see where His Spirit went, consider Ecclesiastes 12:7, which says, "Then shall the dust return to the earth as it was: [The body is just our world consciousness. When we leave this world, we do not need a world consciousness anymore; so the body goes back to the dust from where it came.] and the spirit shall return unto God who gave it." After death we enter into a spiritual realm. In that realm we do not need God's Spirit to have God consciousness. So the Spirit goes back to God who gave it. That is exactly what Jesus said in Luke 23:46, before yielding up the Ghost: "Father, into thy hands I commend my spirit: and having said thus, he gave up the ghost." His Spirit went back to God who gave it. He did not need it any longer. The body went to the sepulchre; the soul went to Paradise; and the Spirit went back to God who gave it.

When death seizes us, there is no more need for His Spirit. Romans 6:23 says, "For the wages of sin is death." What death is it speaking of? Ezekiel 18:4 tells us, "Behold, all souls are mine; as the soul of the father, so also the soul of the son is mine: the soul that sinneth, it shall die." This is not physical death, but rather a separation from God. How do we know that? In Genesis 2:17 God warned Adam not to eat of the fruit of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, for "thou shalt surely die." This could not have been physical death, because Genesis 5:5 tells us that Adam lived 930 years after eating this fruit. Also, physical death was always in the plan of God. Before a commandment was given and before sin was committed, God said, "Be fruitful, and multiply, and replenish . . ." (Genesis 1:28). Something does not need replenished unless there is something working to cause it to be depleted. Physical death was already in the plan of God. Sin did not activate it. Hebrews 9:27 tells us, "And as it is appointed unto men once to die . . ." and Psalm 119:89 says, "For ever, O LORD, thy word is settled in heaven." It was settled in the council halls of eternity in Heaven before it was written down by man.

What kind of death occurred in the Garden of Eden? If you will read Genesis 3:6-8, you will find that after Adam and Eve sinned, they hid from God's presence. Why? Sin brings separation. Sin cannot fellowship a holy God, and when sin entered in, their fellowship was broken. God came through the garden as usual, but guilt and sin caused Adam and Eve to hide themselves.

This death is a separation from God. Christ experienced that separation when He became sin for us. Sin required a price be paid to provide a ransom. And as the body is the instrument of the soul, it required both the body and the soul to be offered. Christ gave His life, soul, and body, "a ransom for many" (Matthew 20:28).

CHAPTER THREE

1 Peter 3:15 But sanctify the Lord God in your hearts: and be ready always to give an answer to every man that asketh you a reason of the hope that is in you with meekness and fear:

16 Having a good conscience; that, whereas they speak evil of you, as of evildoers, they may be ashamed that falsely accuse your good conversation in Christ.

17 For it is better, if the will of God be so, that ye suffer for well doing, than for evil doing.

18 For Christ also hath once suffered for sins, the just for the unjust, that he might bring us to God, being put to death in the flesh, but quickened by the Spirit:

19 By which also he went and preached unto the spirits in prison;

20 Which sometime were disobedient, when once the longsuffering of God waited in the days of Noah, while the ark was a preparing, wherein few, that is, eight souls were saved by water.

21 The like figure whereunto even baptism doth also now save us (not the putting away of the filth of the flesh, but the answer of a good conscience toward God,) by the resurrection of Jesus Christ:

22 Who is gone into heaven, and is on the right hand of God; angels and authorities and powers being made subject unto him.

In this chapter we will look at a passage that is taught erroneously by many proponents of the persuasion that Jesus descended into hell. One of the supposed proof texts is verse 19, which says, ". . . he went and preached unto the spirits in prison." By the help of God, let us examine this verse in the light of truth and see what it is actually teaching.

As we begin to examine this text, we must first notice that verses 18 through 20 are all one sentence. Verse 17 ends with a period, verse 18 begins a new sentence, and the sentence does not conclude until the end of verse 20. Therefore, these verses are vitally connected; a common vein runs throughout these verses.

In Romans 6:3-4 Paul said: "Know ye not, that so many of us as were baptized into Jesus Christ [the word baptized means 'immersed, submerged into'; Paul was depicting the spiritual baptism, or spiritual experience] were baptized into his death? Therefore we are buried with him by baptism into death: that like as Christ was raised up from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life." Jesus died, was buried, and resurrected. Verse 21 tells us baptism is a figurative expression. It portrays that we have had that same experience as Jesus transpire in our soul. He died for sin; we died to sin. Just as He was buried, our sins are buried in God's sea of forgetfulness, never to be remembered against us. Jesus Christ was resurrected by the glory of the Father, and the same Spirit that resurrected Him, resurrected us. Physical baptism is just a symbol, showing you have been purged from your conscience of sins to be able to serve the Living God.

In our Scripture text verse 16 speaks of "having a good conscience," verse 15 says to "be ready always to give an answer," and then in verse 21 Peter spoke of "the answer of a good conscience." In the earlier verses he gave admonition, in the latter verses he gave substantiation, and in the middle verses he presented his argument, or example.

To understand what produces a good conscience, turn to Hebrews 9:14, which reads, "How much more shall the blood of Christ, who through the eternal Spirit offered himself without spot to God, purge your conscience from dead works to serve the living God?" We have a good conscience only through Jesus Christ and the work that He wrought through His sacrifice—not only His blood but His life: "offered himself." What type of conscience does an unsaved individual have? Hebrews 10:2 says, "For then would they not have ceased to be offered? because that the worshippers once purged should have had no more conscience of sins." Every unsaved individual has a "conscience of sins." That is what pricks them on their beds at night and convinces them of their need of salvation. When the sinner comes to Jesus Christ, he can have that conscience purged to where he can serve the Living God. Jesus, our Sacrifice, has made this possible, and when you accept that Sacrifice, He will take away that conscience of sins and replace it with a good conscience, one that will not accuse you and remind you of your guilt and your sin.

The ultimate victory of our Sacrifice is found in Hebrews 10:12. It states, "But this man [verse 10 tells us this is Jesus Christ], after he had offered one sacrifice for sins for ever, sat down on the right hand of God." The ultimate victory was the fact that Jesus resurrected and ascended to the right hand of God. This is the same thing that verse 22 of our text says: "Who is gone into heaven, and is on the right hand of God." How did this occur? The last phrase of verse 21 tells us "by the resurrection of Jesus Christ." Had He not resurrected, He would never have ascended. So it was through that work wrought by Christ through His death, burial, and resurrection that we receive a good conscience. The first part of verse 21 says, "The like figure whereunto even baptism doth also now save us . . ." Literal baptism does not save anyone. There is no regenerating power in the water or in that baptismal pool. The verse continues, speaking of "the answer of a good conscience," representing the death, burial, and resurrection of Jesus Christ. That is what baptism is a figurative expression of.

As we begin to look at our Scripture text more closely, we find that Peter contrasted "that ye suffer" (verse 17) with verse 18, which speaks of how Christ suffered. Christ's suffering, according to verse 18, was for sins, "that he might bring us to God." How did He do that? Verse 18 continues, ". . . being put to death in the flesh, but quickened [or made alive] by the Spirit." It all occurred

so that He could purge our conscience of sins. Peter was writing to some people who were suffering, going through difficult times. They were a people who had good conscience, who had availed themselves of the sacrificial work of Jesus Christ, but because of their suffering, they were losing perspective. So Peter had to bring it back into perspective by showing them what Christ suffered, saying, in essence: "If you think you are suffering unjustly, what about what Jesus suffered? He was the just for the unjust." Why? ". . . that he might bring us to God . . ." (verse 18). How does He bring us to God? "By the Spirit."

Notice that there is a colon at the end of verse 18. This ties in with verse 19, which begins "by which." By what? "By the Spirit" (verse 18). The verse continues, telling us that "he went and preached unto the spirits in prison." How did He go? Not personally, but "by the Spirit." The type of language employed here by Peter reflects a common figure of speech in the Bible known as prolepsis, which is bringing two time frames together in one expression. It is a technique often used in common, everyday language today. One might say, "President Abraham Lincoln was born in Kentucky." That is a true statement, but it is a prolepsis: it brings two time frames together. He was not President when he was born in Kentucky, and when he was President, he was not in Kentucky. But two time frames are brought together in a common statement.

Who are the spirits spoken of in verse 19? Verse 20 begins, "Which sometimes were disobedient, when once the longsuffering of God waited in the days of Noah . . ." Peter was talking about the antediluvian world—disobedient ones who lived in Noah's day. Verse 19 tells us that "also he went and preached." How did he preach? To answer that let us consider Noah, spoken of in verse 20. What was Noah known as? Second Peter 2:5 tells us that he was "a preacher of righteousness." The message was preached to that antediluvian world "by the Spirit" through Noah. Noah preached to them, not Jesus. Noah was the preacher for that era. We read in 2 Peter 1:21, "For the prophecy came not in old time by the will of man: but holy men of God spake as they were moved by the Holy Ghost." Noah was a prophet, warning people to flee from the wrath to come. What was Noah's message? If you want to be saved from the wrath to come, you had better take faith in God's Word. That is the same message we have today. This is why Peter equated Noah's message with our experience. Noah took faith in God's Word, acted on it, and was saved from destruction. Also our salvation comes from taking faith in God's Word and acting on it. It produces a good conscience and a resurrected life.

Let us study who these "spirits in prison" (verse 19) are. These are not disembodied spirits in hell. Verses 19-20 tell us who they are: "By which [reverting back to the prior clause, 'by the Spirit'; verse 18] also he [Christ] went and preached [through Noah by the Spirit] unto the spirits in prison; Which sometime were disobedient [the spirits in prison are those who were disobedient], when once the longsuffering of God waited in the days of Noah." Who are those "spirits in prison"? Those who were disobedient "in the days of Noah." Why are they described as "spirits in prison"? There is a spirit behind disobedience that binds people. When people get under a disobedient spirit, they are in slavery. People will say, "I am never going to do that again," but they do because they are bound. Paul said in Romans 7:15, "For that which I do I allow not: for what I would, that do I not; but what I hate, that do I." In other words, "I say, 'I am never going to do that again,' but I find myself going right back and doing it. And the things I know I should do, I don't do." Paul explained it further in verse 17, saying, "Now then it is no more I that do it, but sin that dwelleth in me." Paul was revealing to everyone in sin that the power that is in you is the power of sin, and that is what has you bound. You need Christ to set you free.

If you will read the accounts of the lives of Samson and King Saul, you will see how binding disobedience is. If you rebel and reject God's Word, a spirit is going to bind you. There is a spirit that comes with rebellion and rejection. When the Word is preached, it brings light, or understanding (Psalm 119:130). Whether it was in Noah's era or is in our era today, when light or understanding comes, it brings responsibility; it requires action. Although people did not have much truth in Noah's day, they had enough light to have saved them from the Flood. This message does not have to be complex and complicated. The Bible talks about the simplicity that is in Christ (2 Corinthians 11:3). You do not have to understand all of the theology. All you have to understand is that you need to flee from the wrath to come (Matthew 3:7). If you do not believe God's Word and act on it, you are going to perish! If you refuse, as the antediluvians did, Jesus warned that "darkness [will] come upon you" (John 12:35); and that darkness has a binding power.

Thus when our lesson text speaks of "spirits in prison," it is not talking about people who are dead and in hell. It is talking about people who were bound with a disobedient spirit, people who would not respond to the preaching of Noah, while God was longsuffering with them for a hundred years. Their disobedience held them captive as if they were in prison.

What liberates one from bondage, or this "prison"? The Prophet Isaiah said in Isaiah 61:1, "The Spirit of the Lord GOD is upon me; because the LORD hath anointed me to preach good tidings [the Gospel is good news] unto the meek; he hath sent me to bind up the brokenhearted, [How do you bind up the brokenhearted? By preaching under the anointing of the Holy Spirit.] to proclaim liberty to the captives, and the opening of the prison to them that are bound." The Spirit uses preachers. Romans 10:14-15 confirms this: ". . . how shall they hear without a preacher? And how shall they preach, except they be sent?" Who sends the preachers? Acts 13:2 tells us that "the Holy Ghost said, Separate me Barnabas and Saul." Preachers are sent by the Holy Ghost.

This is not something that happened over in eternity somewhere. Jesus quoted Isaiah 61:1 in the account found in Luke 4:16-21: "And he came to Nazareth, where he had been brought up: and, as his custom was, he went into the synagogue on the sabbath day, and stood up for to read. And there was delivered unto him the book of the prophet Esaias [Greek for the Hebrew Isaiah]. And when he had opened the book, he found the place where it was written [Isaiah 61:1], The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he hath anointed me to preach the gospel to the poor; he hath sent me to heal the brokenhearted, to preach deliverance to the captives, and recovering of sight to the blind, to set at liberty them that are bruised, To preach the acceptable year of the Lord. And he closed the

book, and he gave it again to the minister, and sat down. And the eyes of all them that were in the synagogue were fastened on him. And he began to say unto them, This day is this scripture fulfilled in your ears."

Jesus did not say, "After I die and descend to hell," but "This day is this scripture fulfilled." He was talking about what preaching prompted by the Holy Spirit will produce. Again, Isaiah 61:1 tells us that it will "bind up the brokenhearted," bring "liberty to the captives," and provide "opening of the prison to them that are bound."

Our text in no way is talking about Christ going into some realm beyond time and preaching to disembodied spirits. The Apostle Peter began this text (verses 15-16) trying to help a people who were struggling with the sufferings they were experiencing, telling them to always be ready to give an answer and to remember their good conscience, regardless of what others say. He admonished them to consider Christ and His sufferings. Peter concluded this chapter by substantiating the answer of a good conscience, and how we show a figure of that conscience and that spiritual work by baptism. It is a symbol of the spiritual work that was wrought.

In the interim Peter spoke of the antediluvian world and the preaching of Noah to show two things: 1) By responding appropriately to the Word we have good consciences; and 2) The antediluvians who did not respond appropriately to the Word are the ones who caused Noah great sufferings. Likewise, the world is going to cause you and me great sufferings, but do not let those things move you, because in the end we will be vindicated, just as Noah and his family were.

Why did God have Noah preach? We read in 2 Peter 3:9, He is "not willing that any should perish." Ezekiel 33:11 tells us, "I have no pleasure in the death of the wicked"; and Lamentations 3:23 speaks of "great is thy faithfulness." God was being faithful to these souls because He has no pleasure in the death of the wicked. God, in His fairness and faithfulness, presents every man, woman, and child who comes to the age of accountability with opportunity. Now many will not properly avail themselves of that opportunity, but He gives them opportunity so He has a witness against them on the Day of Judgment. God sent Ezekiel to a rebellious house. Ezekiel 2:3-5 reads: "And he said unto me, Son of man, I send thee to the children of Israel, to a rebellious nation that hath rebelled against me: they and their fathers have transgressed against me, even unto this very day. For they are impudent children and stiffhearted. I do send thee unto them; and thou shalt say unto them, Thus saith the Lord GOD. And they, whether they will hear, or whether they will forbear, (for they are a rebellious house,) yet shall know that there hath been a prophet among them."

Someone may ask, "Is there a spirit with rebellion?" Read on in verse 6: "And thou, son of man, be not afraid of them, neither be afraid of their words, though briars and thorns be with thee, and thou dost dwell among scorpions: be not afraid of their words, nor be dismayed at their looks, though they be a rebellious house." Here God referred to this "rebellious house" as "scorpions." Luke 10:19 tells us that God will "give unto you power to tread on serpents and scorpions, and over all the power of the enemy" Verse 20 says, "Notwithstanding in this rejoice not, that the spirits are subject unto you." These "scorpions" are spirits, the power of the enemy. What type of spirits? Ezekiel, Chapter 2, tells us they are rebellious spirits. There is a spirit that goes with rebellion, and God knew these people were under that spirit.

If these "spirits in prison," as our text denotes them in verse 19, were souls in hell, would they need preached to? If you will read Luke 16:27, where Jesus gave us a small glimpse of eternity, you will find that the rich man did not need preached to. The purpose of preaching is to cause men to be moved to take action. What action could people take once they are in hell? Can man's spiritual state be altered after death? The Scriptures are very clear. Ecclesiastes 11:3 says, "If the clouds be full of rain, they empty themselves upon the earth: and if the tree fall toward the south, or toward the north, in the place where the tree falleth, there it shall be." There are only two ways you can fall: north or south, saved or unsaved. Whatever way the tree falls, that is how it is going to lie. There is no alteration of man's state after death. Death does not change man's spiritual state; it only amplifies it.

Luke 16:26 makes it very clear that man's state or destiny cannot be changed after death. Abraham, speaking to the rich man, said, "And beside all this, between us and you there is a great gulf fixed: [There is always a great gulf between the saved and the unsaved; but when your eyes close in the finality of death, that gulf is forever fixed. Read on to understand what the word *fixed* means.] so that they which would pass from hence to you cannot; neither can they pass to us, that would come from thence."

This is why the Scriptures admonish us as in 2 Corinthians 6:2, ". . . now is the accepted time; behold, now is the day of salvation." Now is the only time you or I know anything about. We do not know if there will be a tomorrow, or if we will rise to see it. The rich man did not plan on being in hell. Thus the urgency of dealing with your soul now while there is time. Life is very fleeting and very fragile.

I trust that you can see that our Scripture text is speaking of Noah preaching to the antediluvian world and comparing how they could have been saved physically with how we are saved spiritually. It is not a reference whatsoever to Christ's supposedly descending into hell and preaching to "spirits in prison." God's ordained manner of preaching to people bound by disobedient spirits is to have men under the anointing of the Spirit to preach the Gospel. Dear one, do not be ensnared with the erroneous teachings of men. Behind this doctrine of Christ supposedly descending into hell is the insidious thought that man can have another opportunity. Life is the only opportunity afforded to man to get in right standing with God. There are no second chances.

Sadly, after one hundred years of preaching from faithful Noah, the antediluvians, Jesus said, knew not (Matthew 24:38-39). Their minds were blinded. When they saw the light, they refused to walk in it, and darkness came upon them. In the end they perished because they did not accept God's Word. God has sent His Word and has sent anointed preachers to bring the Word to show the way of salvation. God is not willing that you perish. He takes no pleasure in the death of the wicked. He is not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance. But you have to be the one that comes. Christ is a divine gentleman. He may stand

at the door and knock (Revelation 3:20), but He is never going to force entry. If you will open to Him, yield to Him, you can be saved and have this clear and good conscience that Peter talked about, a conscience void of offense toward God and toward man.

I trust the truths of these passages that we have considered in these chapters has become clear. It has been our burden to lay forth the truth concerning the Scripture texts that proponents of this erroneous teaching utilize. Jesus said in John 8:32, "And ye shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free." If you have been in confusion or have questions concerning this subject or these Scriptures, it is our hope that through the truth expounded in these chapters, you have been made free.