



# His Word Is Truth!

This article is written by Pastor Tom Eckstein of Concordia Lutheran Church in Jamestown. "His Word is Truth" will appear in this paper every 3rd Monday.



humiliation or His exaltation – *His exaltation being His victory over sin, death and the power of the devil.*

Some Christians have suggested that after Jesus died His spirit then descended into hell to continue His suffering for our sin. The problem with this view is that Jesus' own words before His death ("It is finished!" and "Father, into your hands I commit my spirit") make it clear that this did NOT happen.

Other Christians have suggested that the words "He descended into hell" are a figurative way of describing Jesus' suffering on the cross. The problem with this view is that the statements in this part of the Creed are not figurative but instead describe literal events that actually took place. In addition, the words "He descended into hell" appear *after* the words "was buried" and so they can't refer to Jesus' suffering on the cross.

Therefore, many other Christians have correctly understood "He descended

into hell" as the first stage in Jesus' exaltation – *His victory over sin, death and the devil. But what was the nature of this victory? What did Jesus accomplish when He descended into hell?*

First, we must understand that the English word "hell" actually translates a Latin term which refers to the biblical terms "Sheol" (Old Testament Hebrew) and "Hades" (New Testament Greek). Both "Sheol" and "Hades" refer to the place where the spirits of the dead reside until the resurrection of the body on the Final Day. However, "Sheol" or "Hades" has 2 sections – the one for the spirits of BELIEVERS (called "Abraham's bosom" or "Paradise" – see Luke 16:22a and 23:43), and the other for the spirits of UNBELIEVERS (called "Hades" or "The Prison" – see Luke 16:23 and 1st Peter 3:19).

Therefore, when Jesus "descended into hell" He preached to the spirits of the dead by proclaiming His

victory over sin, death and the devil – **which was GOOD news for the believers but BAD news for those who rejected the Word of Christ** (see Ephesians 4:8-9 and 1st Peter 3:18-22). *This is why Scripture teaches that when we hear God's Word we should repent of our sin and trust in Jesus NOW!* (See John 3:17-18, John 5:24-27, 2nd Corinthians 6:1-2 and Hebrews 9:27-28).

The next stage in Jesus' exaltation took place when He rose from the dead on the "third day" after His death (the 1st day of the week, Sunday). Simply put, early on the "third day" Jesus' spirit entered His body which had been placed in the tomb of Joseph of Arimathea (see John 19:38-42). After Jesus' body came to life He then "descended into hell" in bodily form to proclaim His victory to those who had died. *Jesus then came back to the world of the **living** to reveal Himself to many people* (see 1st Corinthians 15:1-8).

Therefore, the angel did NOT roll the stone away from Jesus' tomb so He could come out. **Jesus had already left the tomb! Stones or walls can't stop the risen Jesus!** (See John 20:19). The reason the angel rolled the stone from the entrance of the tomb was to show Jesus' followers that His body was not there! (See Matthew 28:1-7 and Luke 24:1-8)

When The Apostles' Creed says that Jesus "descended into hell" and "rose from the dead" it is speaking about Jesus' exaltation – His victory over sin, death and the power of the devil. Those who hear God's Word, repent of their sin and trust in Jesus for salvation also share in His victory! (See Colossians 1:13-14, 1st Thessalonians 4:13-18 and 1st John 3:8) God continues to speak His Word to you today as His people preach "repentance and the forgiveness of sins" in Jesus' Name (see Luke 24:45-48). God also speaks

to you as hear and read Holy Scripture. God speaks to you so that He might give you a new heart filled with conviction over your sin and faith in Jesus as your Savior *who died for your sin and conquered death!!*

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*Please read the next "His Word is Truth" on Monday, June 18th! Pastor Eckstein will continue his series on the Apostles' Creed with the following section of the 2nd article: "He ascended into Heaven and sits at the right hand of God the Father Almighty. From thence He will come to judge the living and the dead."*

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*For more resources about Christian teaching and issues, go to Concordia Lutheran's webpage: [www.concordiajt.org](http://www.concordiajt.org)*

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