

HARD SAYINGS

SESSION #15: “Did Jesus descend into hell?” (1 Peter 3)

Text

1. What does it actually say?
2. Is it descriptive or prescriptive?
3. What is hard about this passage?
4. What are we looking to understand about this passage as we begin to examine it?

Historical Context

“A wonderful text is this, and a more obscure passage perhaps than any other in the Testament, so that I do not know for a certainty just what Peter means.... I cannot understand and I cannot explain it. And there has been no one who has explained it.” –*Martin Luther*

Literary Context:

1 Peter

1. 2:13 Be subject for the Lord's sake to every human institution
2. 2:18 Servants, be subject to your masters with all respect
3. 3:1 Likewise, wives, be subject to your own husbands
4. 3:7 Likewise, husbands, live with your wives in an understanding way, showing honor to the woman as the weaker vessel, since they are heirs with you

Intertextual/Verbal Context (*from Hard Sayings by R.C. Sproul*)

“... at the conclusion of the experience of crucifixion, Jesus spoke aloud to the Father, saying ‘Father into your hands I commit my spirit!’ (Luke 23:46). That doesn’t mean that the Father necessarily took His spirit at that moment, but the suggestion is, at least, that Jesus finished His work on the cross. “

“Jesus does say ‘It is finished’ (John 19:30), and when He says that, He uses a word borrowed from the economic language of the day that means He made the final payment. Therefore REformed theology teaches that Jesus fulfilled all the requirements of redemption and of atonement while He was on the cross”

“...we need to hold onto a couple of things tenaciously. The first is that no matter how we interpret this text, it's clear to us in Scripture that everything that was required of Christ to effect our redemption was, in fact, performed. Second, whether Peter was referring to the people who were held captive and were walking Israel during Jesus' earthly ministry, people who were in limbo, or people in this present age, we know that all of us, apart from the work of Christ, are indeed lost souls and lost spirits. We are in this kind of imprisonment, and the only One who has the power within Himself to release people from that kind of captivity is Christ, and he does that through the same power , the power of the Holy Spirit, by which His body in the tomb was raised from the dead.”

From Sound Interpretation to Useful Application

1. What do we learn about God?
2. How does this passage shape our hearts to glorify God?
3. What do we learn about people?
4. How does this passage change how we live as citizens of God’s Kingdom? How can we live in its light today?