

□Understanding the Question

Before Jesus rose from the dead, some of the saints who had died were also raised back to life (Matthew 27:52–53). But where exactly were they before their resurrection? Had they already gone to *Paradise*, or were they somewhere else?

Let's explore what the Bible teaches about the condition and place of the dead before Christ's resurrection, and what changed after He rose.

« Where Did the Dead Go Before Jesus Came?

Before the atoning work of Christ on the cross, everyone who died went to the realm of the dead, referred to in Hebrew as Sheol and in Greek as Hades. This was not yet “Heaven” or “Hell” in the full eternal sense but a temporary holding place for souls—both the righteous and the wicked—awaiting redemption or final judgment.

David, under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, spoke prophetically:

Where Were the Saints Who Rose with Jesus Before Their Resurrection? Were They in Paradise or Somewhere Else?

"For You will not leave my soul in Sheol, Nor will You allow Your Holy One to see corruption."
(Psalm 16:10)

While David said these words, they were ultimately fulfilled in Jesus Christ, not David himself. Peter explained this clearly at Pentecost:

"For David did not ascend into the heavens... his tomb is with us to this day."
(Acts 2:29-31)

This means David died and remained in the grave, like others before Christ. His words were prophetic of the Messiah, whose soul would not remain in Hades, and whose body would not decay.

Was Sheol/Hades a Peaceful Place?

The realm of the dead had two compartments, as implied in Jesus'

teaching about Lazarus and the rich man (Luke 16:19-31):

1. Abraham's Bosom / Paradise – a place of comfort for the righteous.
2. A Place of Torment – where the wicked were held.

Between these two, a great chasm prevented crossing from one side to the other (Luke 16:26).

However, even this arrangement was not perfect peace. Due to Adam's fall (Genesis 3:17-19), humanity came under the dominion of death and darkness. Satan had limited authority over death:

“...through death He [Jesus] might destroy him who had the power of death, that is, the devil.”
(Hebrews 2:14)

That is why, before Jesus' resurrection, even the righteous were held in Sheol, not yet brought into God's full presence in Heaven.

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□ What Changed When Jesus Died and Rose Again?

When Jesus died on the cross, He descended into Hades (the realm of the dead) and proclaimed victory over death:

“...by whom also He went and preached to the spirits in prison...”

(1 Peter 3:19)

These “spirits” were those who had died long ago, including those in Noah’s time (1 Peter 3:20). Jesus did not go to offer salvation again, but to proclaim His victory—and to separate the righteous from the wicked.

Jesus declared:

“I am He who lives, and was dead, and behold, I am alive forevermore. Amen. And I have the keys of Hades and of Death.”

(Revelation 1:18)

He took authority over death, defeating Satan's dominion.

From then on, Satan no longer has access to or control over the souls of the righteous dead. No one—not demons, not spirits, not Satan himself—can communicate with the dead anymore. Any spiritual encounters people claim to have with their deceased relatives are deceptive demonic manifestations (2 Corinthians 11:14).

□ The Saints Who Rose with Jesus

After Jesus rose, many saints also rose from the dead:

“...and the graves were opened; and many bodies of the saints who had fallen asleep were raised; and coming out of the graves after His resurrection, they went into the holy city and appeared to many.”

(Matthew 27:52-53)

This showed that Christ had opened the way out of Sheol for the righteous, bringing them into the presence of God—what Jesus called Paradise (Luke 23:43).

Since that moment, when a righteous person dies:

“...to be absent from the body [is] to be present with the Lord.”

(2 Corinthians 5:8)

They now go directly to Paradise, awaiting the resurrection of their bodies at the return of Christ (1 Thessalonians 4:16-17).

□ What About the Wicked Dead?

Those who died in sin remain in a place of torment within Hades, as shown in Jesus' parable:

“And being in torments in Hades, he lifted up his eyes and saw Abraham afar off, and Lazarus in his bosom.”

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(Luke 16:23)

They are awaiting the Final Judgment:

“Then I saw a great white throne and Him who sat on it... And the dead were judged...”

(Revelation 20:11-15)

After judgment, the wicked will be cast into the Lake of Fire, which is the second death.

□ What Does This Mean for Us Today?

This teaching gives us a powerful reminder: life is short, and eternity is real.

Jesus warned:

“For what profit is it to a man if he gains the whole world, and

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loses his own soul?"

(Matthew 16:26)

The story of the rich man and Lazarus (Luke 16) reminds us that once we die, our eternal destiny is sealed. There is no second chance. If we are not right with God before death, we will face eternal regret and separation.

Now is the time to make peace with God. Salvation is still freely offered to anyone who will believe:

"Behold, now is the accepted time; behold, now is the day of salvation."

(2 Corinthians 6:2)

† Your Invitation to Eternal Life

If you have not given your life to Jesus Christ, today is the day. He loves you, He is gentle and full of mercy, and He has promised to receive anyone who comes to Him:

Where Were the Saints Who Rose with Jesus Before Their Resurrection? Were They in Paradise or Somewhere Else?

“The one who comes to Me I will by no means cast out.”
(John 6:37)

Don't wait until it's too late. If you miss salvation today, you may seek it tomorrow with tears and not find it (Luke 13:24-28).

Make the decision now—surrender your life to Jesus, and you will have the hope of eternal life with Him in Paradise.

God bless you.

May this message lead you into truth, repentance, and eternal hope in Christ Jesus.

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