

Did Jesus Die Spiritually?

Now it's February, 2007. I had an experience recently that convinced me that I should put the letter I wrote concerning this topic in September 1998 on the internet. I don't know how widespread the teaching that Jesus died spiritually, etc. is in February 2007, but my recent experience showed me that it's still very much alive (that was no surprise to me), and I assume that it's still being taught and held almost as much as it was ten years ago, which is a sad situation. We desperately need the balanced truth of what the Bible teaches regarding this topic of foundational importance. I'm quite sure that many of the people who are teaching this faulty doctrine are sincere born again Christians who believe in the deity of the Lord Jesus Christ, but I'm also quite sure that they are teaching a serious error.

In this internet version I am attaching several relevant pages from my July 2000 paper titled *Verse-by- Verse Studies of Ephesians Chapters 1 and 4; and Romans 8:16-39*. These added pages deal with the interpretation of Ephesians 4:8-10 and a section titled "A Discussion on the Meaning of the Word *Hades* in Acts 2:27, 31; the Meaning of *Paradise* in Luke 23:43; and the Meaning of *Abraham's Bosom* in Luke 16:23."

September 10, 1998

Dear Kenneth E. Hagin,

Thank you for your letter dated May 4, 1998 answering my question as to whether Kenneth Hagin Ministries, including Rhema, was still teaching that Jesus died spiritually. I don't know that Kenneth Hagin wrote the letter himself, but I assume he would agree with it, at least with most of it. (I'm attaching a copy of the letter.) My letter is written especially for Kenneth Hagin, but it's also written for Kenneth Hagin Jr. and the staff of K. H. M., including Rhema, for all who believe that Jesus died spiritually, and for all those interested in this important topic. Although I put off answering the letter for a few months because I was in the middle of a project, I consider this topic and this letter to be very important. First, I'll give a little background information so you can see where I'm coming from. I'm writing as a friend, as a brother in Christ who sincerely wants to see Kenneth Hagin's ministry maximized for the glory of God and for the good of the Body of Christ.

I became a born-again Christian in 1964 and have been involved in the charismatic renewal since early in 1966. It was in 1966 that I first came across Kenneth Hagin's ministry at a F. G. B. M. F. I. (Full Gospel Business Men's Fellowship International) convention in St. Louis, and he stayed over in St. Louis for a follow-up meeting at the hotel. I was very impressed with his ministry, with what God had given him. I started reading everything he wrote, and I started listening to his tapes. I have recommended his ministry to many and supported his ministry in several ways. After working for ten years as an engineer in the space field, I quit engineering in 1969. For one thing, I wanted to learn Biblical Greek and Hebrew. I

received an M. A. in Biblical studies in 1972 from a Bible-believing seminary in St. Louis. My primary ministry has always been as a Bible teacher.

It was about 1975 that I first heard anything from Kenneth Hagin, or from anything published by his ministry, about Jesus dying spiritually. I was very disappointed and somewhat shocked. It has always seemed clear to me that this view is wrong, and that it's a rather serious error. It hasn't surprised me that there has been so much reaction against this view over the past twenty plus years. I have been somewhat surprised that most of the ones teaching that Jesus died spiritually never seem to stop to consider that something might be very wrong with their view (a view that goes against what the Christian church has always taught, and, more importantly, a view that doesn't square with the Bible). Benny Hinn is the only well-known Christian leader I know of who has publicly stated that he was wrong when he taught that Jesus died spiritually. He impressed me in this, and I believe it will work for good in his ministry and in the Body of Christ. If Kenneth Hagin were to modify what he has taught on this topic, it would work for much good in the Body of Christ. For one thing, thousands of those who are teaching this view got it directly or indirectly from him (including Rhema graduates).

I didn't stop following, supporting, and recommending Kenneth Hagin's ministry back then, but I did back off some, and I always let it be known that I disagreed with the view that Jesus died spiritually. I still have substantial respect for Kenneth Hagin's ministry (e.g., I still listen to his tapes, and I loaned out some of his tapes last week), but, by now, I have had to back off somewhat more. (I had so much respect for Kenneth Hagin's ministry that I could back off quite a bit and still have substantial respect for his ministry.) For one thing, Kenneth Hagin didn't emphasize and push this doctrine as some others did; some even made it a test of orthodoxy, which is a very sad situation. (I have been rejected by many Christians over the years because I said this doctrine is wrong, a serious error.) I have found over the years, however, that Rhema graduates have been grounded in this doctrine.

I was disappointed a few months ago to learn from a Rhema student of the last school year that it is still being taught at Rhema that Jesus died spiritually. From the first time I heard it, I have always taught that it is wrong, and a serious error. I also wrote Kenneth Hagin a personal letter dealing with this topic many years back, a letter that wasn't answered, not that I had asked for an answer. That letter, by the way, was the first such letter I had ever written to anybody—this is the second. I'm not big on writing letters like this (two in thirty years), but I take a special interest in Kenneth Hagin's ministry. I have always believed that his ministry has much to offer to the Body of Christ, and I knew, for one thing, that the view that Jesus died spiritually would substantially hinder the acceptance of his ministry. That point is still true, but this teaching has now become a major divisive issue in the Body of Christ. And, more importantly, once you really understand what is being said, it's a serious error. This view has nothing good to offer to the Body of Christ, and it substantially distorts the foundational Christian doctrines that the Bible teaches regarding the Person of Jesus Christ and regarding His atoning death.

What's wrong with saying that Jesus died spiritually. (By the way, I'm not making an attempt to deal exhaustively with the topic of Jesus dying spiritually in this letter. I'm just dealing with the key foundational issues and a few key verses.) The major problem is that it

doesn't square with an adequate, Biblical understanding of the deity of the Son of God, which is a crucial, foundational Christian doctrine. The deity of Christ Jesus has been attacked, perhaps more than any other doctrine, throughout the history of the Christian church. (Sometimes it has been attacked in subtle ways; sometimes in ways not so subtle. Sometimes it has been attacked by enemies of Christ; sometimes by those who were attempting to be faithful to Christ and the gospel.) It's true that, because of our sins, Jesus was in some ways separated from God the Father, and we might even speculate that (in a worst-case scenario) He was separated from the Holy Spirit (cf. Matt. 27:46), but—and this is very important—this didn't leave Jesus just a man, a man who was spiritually dead like other men, a man whose nature had changed, a man who (like us) needed to be justified and born again. Those who are teaching that Jesus died spiritually typically include all these ideas in what spiritual death meant for Jesus, as it is easy to document. Kenneth Hagin, for example, on page 31 of *The Name of Jesus* says, “Spiritual death means something more than separation from God. **Spiritual death also means having Satan's nature** [his emphasis].” The Bible doesn't back up the idea that Jesus' nature changed. The things He said from the cross, for example, culminating with “Father, INTO THY HANDS I COMMIT MY SPIRIT” (Luke 23:46), certainly don't demonstrate a changed nature, Satan's nature.

Jesus wasn't just a man, a man who had a very special relationship with God the Father and God the Holy Spirit. He always was deity (God), and He didn't stop being deity when He became a man, or in His death on the cross. He still was the Son of God, who had been with the Father in the beginning, before creation began (cf., e.g., John 1:1-3, 14; 17:5). He temporarily laid aside His glory, as He humbled Himself to become a man (but not just a man; He became the unique God-man) in order to do the Father's will (Phil. 2:5-8), but He didn't cease being deity. To say He died spiritually demonstrates an inadequate appreciation of the Person of God the Son (and of His atoning death). Kenneth Hagin should know this. For one thing, I have a 1963 tape on which he says that Jesus told him that although He ministered on the earth (ministered healing for example) as a man anointed by the Holy Spirit, He died as the Son of God. He died in our place (in obedience to the Father's will [Phil. 2:8]) as the perfectly worthy sin offering, the sinless God-man, the Lamb of God.

It's very clear that E. W. Kenyon, who seems to be the source for the doctrine that Jesus died spiritually, had an inadequate view of who Jesus was. (I didn't say that E. W. Kenyon was an evil man, or that he wasn't a born-again Christian, or that he didn't have many things right, or that he didn't have much good fruit in his ministry. I don't know much about Kenyon, but I have read some good things that he wrote. I'm not his judge, and I have discovered over the years that many Christians who have been used by God didn't have all their doctrine straight. But, on the other hand, the Bible strongly warns against false doctrine. It could cost us our soul. Some of the doctrinal errors the apostle Paul forcefully wrote against were far less serious than teaching that Jesus died spiritually.) Kenyon's view of Adam before the fall is far too high and his view of the Lord Jesus Christ is far too low. He sees Jesus arriving at the place where Adam was before the fall. I'll quote part of what Kenyon says on pages 20, 21 (*The Bible in the Light of our Redemption*): He is speaking of Adam before the fall. “Man was an eternal spirit being in God's class, with an eternal human body. ... Man was created as nearly like the Father-God as was possible. Man was to be God's companion and under-ruler. His dominion reached to the utmost star and

planet. His dominion was as far reaching as Christ's rule shall be when He shall take over dominion of the universe. ... Hebrews 1:3 gives to us a suggestion as to the way Adam ruled God's creation. [I'll quote the first half of Heb. 1:3, "And He (the Lord Jesus Christ) is the radiance of His glory and the exact representation of His nature, and upholds all things by the word of His power..."] Jesus now upholds all things by the word of His power. Adam ruled creation by his word. His voice was like the voice of his Creator in its dominion over creation." This is serious error! I expanded this paragraph in Feb. 2012.

Then on page 151 Kenyon demonstrates that he doesn't adequately understand the incarnation of the Lord Jesus Christ. (Kenneth Hagin has followed Kenyon in this error in some of his writings.) He says, "Every man who has been born again is an Incarnation. The believer is as much an Incarnation as was Jesus of Nazareth." This teaching is very wrong, and it's a serious error. The incarnation of Jesus Christ meant that the eternal Son of God, the One who was with the Father in the beginning (before creation began), through whom all things were created (John 1:1-3), took a body/flesh (John 1:14) and become the very unique God-man. We are born again through union with Him, through His atoning death and resurrection, by the indwelling Spirit of God, but we don't become deity, as the Son of God always was and always will be—we don't become incarnations. The fact that the Spirit of God dwells in us as temples doesn't at all make us in a class with Jesus Christ who always was God (God the Son) and always will be God, and who will be worshiped as God forever. He, with God the Father, will be the temple and the light of new Jerusalem (Rev. 21:22, 23; 22:5). We will be glorified and reign with Christ, but there will be a gigantic difference between Christ and us—He is God! There was an even greater difference between Adam before the fall and the Lord Jesus Christ. After we're glorified, we'll be in a higher state than Adam was before the fall (cf., e.g., 1 Cor. 15:44-50). Adam had a natural, flesh and blood body before the fall.

The view that Jesus died spiritually goes against what the Christian church has always believed from the beginning. We had better have a very strong Biblical case for any teaching that goes against what the church has always believed, and especially when it deals with issues at the heart of Christianity like the Person of Christ and His atoning death. Those who teach that Jesus died spiritually have nothing to stand on beyond some misunderstood verses and faulty concepts.

As I mentioned I consider the major problem with the view that Jesus died spiritually to be that it doesn't square with His deity. Another problem almost as serious is that it teaches that we are saved because Jesus literally went to hell to be tormented. For one thing—and this is a serious problem—this goes against the clear teaching of the Bible that we are saved through the blood of Christ and His atoning death on the cross, not through His being tormented in hell. The Lord's Supper was given to commemorate His atoning death on the cross. I haven't studied this topic exhaustively, but I have studied it some, and I don't know of any Christians throughout the history of the Christian church who taught this erroneous viewpoint before Kenyon. We don't need such new doctrines. It's true that some Christians have taught (wrongly I believe) that Jesus, after His death, went to the unbelievers in hades/sheol who had died, but they didn't teach that He went to suffer—they taught that He went to preach. That's a big difference! I believe there's a better way to interpret 1 Peter 3:19, 20, but I won't get into that here since it's not relevant to the topic of this letter.

As far as I'm concerned, Jesus died and went to paradise, as He said He would (Luke 23:43). Paradise, as the word is used in this verse from Luke, speaks of that compartment of hades/sheol to which the Old Testament believers went at death. The King James translation confuses the issue by translating the Greek noun *hades* as hell in verses like Acts 2:27. Jesus died and went to hades, more specifically paradise, which was part of hades.

Over the years I have had several Rhema graduates (and, by the way, I consider them to be friends in Christ) tell me that at Rhema they were taught that John Calvin taught that Jesus died and went to hell. I was informed by a Rhema student of the past school year that this view was still being taught. This isn't what Calvin taught. I'll quote from two Calvinistic scholars. First I'll quote from J. O. Buswell (*Systematic Theology of the Christian Religion* [Zondervan, 1962], page 321), "Calvin interprets the phrase in the Apostle's Creed, 'He descended into hell [hades],' as a metaphorical expression describing the sufferings of Christ on the cross [my emphasis]." Calvin didn't teach that Jesus literally went to hell, and he certainly didn't teach that Jesus died spiritually. For the record, Buswell and Calvin taught (wrongly I believe) that Jesus went to heaven (not hades) right after His death.

I'll also quote from L. Berkhof (*Systematic Theology* [Eerdmans, 1939], page 342). He is discussing different interpretations of the words "He descended into hell (hades)" of the Apostle's Creed. "(1) The Catholic Church takes it to mean that, after His death, Christ went into the 'Limbus Patrum,' where the Old Testament saints were awaiting the revelation and application of His redemption, preached the gospel to them, and brought them out to heaven. (2) The Lutherans regard the descent into hades as the first stage of the exaltation of Christ. Christ went into the underworld to reveal and consummate His victory over Satan and the powers of darkness, and to pronounce their sentence of condemnation. Some Lutherans place this triumphal march between the death of Christ and His resurrection; others, after the resurrection. (3) The Church of England holds that, while Christ's body was in the grave, the soul went into hades, more particularly into paradise, the abode of the souls of the righteous, and gave them a fuller exposition of the truth. (4) Calvin interprets the phrase metaphorically, as referring to the penal sufferings of Christ on the cross [my emphasis], where He really suffered the pangs of hell. Similarly, the Heidelberg Catechism. According to the usual Reformed position the words refer not only to the sufferings on the cross, but also to the agonies of Gethsemane."

The May 4, 1998 letter (from Kenneth Hagin Ministries) mentions 2 Cor. 5:21. I don't believe this verse supports the idea that Jesus died spiritually, or that His nature changed, etc. I discussed this verse in a paper I wrote last year, *The Christian, The Law, and Legalism*. I'm attaching a copy of the two relevant pages. In that discussion I mentioned that when Col. 1:18 and Rev. 1:5 speak of Jesus as "the first-born from the dead," this speaks of His resurrection. (He was the first man, though He was much more than just a man, to leave death behind and be born into the fulness of eternal life with a glorified body.) This is confirmed by Acts 13:33, which quotes from Psalm 2:7, and interprets the birth (the being begotten) of Psalm 2:7 as being fulfilled in the resurrection of Christ. Hebrews 5:5 interprets the birth of Psalm 2:7 the same way. (Christ couldn't begin His ministry as our great high priest until after His atoning death and resurrection.) Also, Rom. 8:29 speaks of the resurrected, glorified Christ as "the first-born among many brethren." All true Christians will follow Him in this birth into the fulness of eternal life (either by resurrection for those who will have died before He returns, or by

transformation for those who will not have died). This is a glorious truth, but we must, of course, guard against a heretical overinterpretation: We will be glorified and reign with Christ, but we won't become deity in any sense, and we certainly won't be worshiped with God the Son.

The May 4, 1998 letter also says, "Romans 6:23 tells us that the wages of sin is death. This, as we know, is not referring to physical death or else any sinner following his death could say that he had paid the penalty for his sins." There's no doubting that the apostle Paul is speaking here of eternal death, of eternal separation from God. He is speaking of the eternal death, which equals the second death of Rev. 20:6, 14, 15, the eternal lake of fire. It doesn't follow, however, that Jesus Christ died spiritually, or that He experienced the second death. It took a whole lot more than the death of a sinful man to pay the penalty for sin. It took the death of the only sinless, worthy sacrifice, the death of the God-man, the Lamb of God. The orthodox view of the atoning death of Christ, by the way, doesn't at all limit what Christ did for us to suffering and dying in the physical dimension. He suffered intense warfare and agony in the spiritual dimension. Isaiah 53:11 (Amplified Bible) says, for example, "He shall see the fruit of the travail of His soul," and consider the view of Calvin mentioned above. No man could have done what He did, and especially not a spiritually dead, sinful man.

I believe Kenneth Hagin is trying to be faithful to God and to His Word (the Bible) and that he is concerned for the well-being of the Body of Christ. I believe he is trying to live right and that he has a healthy fear of God, which is a thing severely lacking in much of the church of our day. (For one thing, the Lord Jesus Christ has forced him to have a healthy fear of God. There were at least two occasions where the Lord took him to the edge of death and told him that he would have to repent and be faithful to the ministry he was called to, or die. And there were other similar, intense experiences. Thank God for such experiences!) I believe Kenneth Hagin believes in the deity of Christ but that he hasn't stopped to consider that some of the things he picked up from Kenyon (and perhaps others) are not compatible with the deity of Christ. I should also mention that I'm not endorsing everything else that Kenneth Hagin teaches. I believe there are other problem areas (some of them tracing back to Kenyon), but the topic dealt with in this letter is the most serious. Most Christians have problem areas in what they believe, and most are very reluctant to even consider the possibility.

Thanks for your prayerful consideration. May God's will be accomplished in the ministry of Kenneth Hagin, at Kenneth Hagin Ministries, at Rhema, in the Rhema graduates, and throughout the Body of Christ. I'll close this letter with the prayer that it accomplish the purpose of God.

Sincerely, in Christ Jesus,

Karl Kemp



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May 4, 1998

Dear Mr. Kemp:

Jesus said in John 14:19, “..because I live, ye shall live also.” Thank God that through the Resurrection of Jesus, life in all its fullness is ours! Believers have a great reason for rejoicing.

The question of whether or not Jesus died spiritually is really a very simple one to answer. 2 Corinthians 5:21 says that Jesus was made to be sin for us who knew no sin; that we might be made the righteousness of God in Him. Notice this verse does not say that Jesus committed any sin Himself. He was made sin with our sins.

Secondly, because Jesus was made sin with our sins He had to pay the penalty for sin. Romans 6:23 tells us that the wages of sin is death. This, as we know, is not referring to physical death or else any sinner following his death could say he had paid the penalty for his sins. The death referred to is spiritual death which is separation from God.

Remember that the same Spirit Who raised Jesus from the dead dwells in us, and is giving life to our mortal bodies. Live this day and every day in the strength of the Lord!

Yours in Christ,

Kenneth E. Hagin

Excerpts from my paper *The Christian, the Law, and Legalism*

I'll just include the excerpt for 2 Cor. 5:21 in this internet version of this letter.

2 Cor. 5:21. Before we quote and discuss this very important verse, I should point out that in 2 Cor. 5:20 Paul is dealing with the need for mankind to be reconciled to God through submission to the gospel. This exhortation applies to the Christians at Corinth to the extent they need to repent and begin to fully walk in righteousness before God. In 2 Cor. 6:1, the verse that follows 5:21, Paul exhorts the Christians at Corinth "not to receive the grace of God in vain." They would receive His grace in vain to the extent they weren't walking in the righteousness required of Christians, in accordance with the gospel.

He [God the Father] **made Him who knew no sin** [the sinless Lamb of God] **to be** [or, to become] **sin on our behalf** [These all-important words are often misunderstood. The Lord Jesus Christ did not become a sinner in any sense, or die spiritually, or have His nature changed, nor was He reduced to a state where He, like us, needed to be born again. (Jesus is called "the first-born of/from the dead" in Col. 1:18 and Rev. 1:5, but this speaks of His resurrection.) He never sinned, nor did He cease being God the Son, deity with the Father (cf., e.g., John 1:1-3, 14). He became sin only in the sense that He bore our sin with the guilt and the penalties in His atoning death.

The Hebrew noun *chattath* will help us understand this important concept. This noun is translated sin(s) 168 times in the Old Testament (NA SB). This very same noun for sin is also translated "sin offering(s)" 118 times. This makes perfect sense once we understand the important fact that the sin(s) of the Israelites (with the guilt and penalties) were literally transmitted to (put on) the sacrificial animals. In this sense they became sin, and they were even called by a word for sin (*chattath*); this enables us to understand the sense in which Jesus became sin. See the discussion of Lev. 16:20-22 on pages 15-18 of my book *Holiness and Victory Over Sin*. Leviticus chapter 16 deals with the sacrifices of the Day of Atonement. *Chattath* is translated sins in Lev. 16:16, 21, 30, and 34; it is translated "sin offering" in Lev. 16:3, 5, 6, 9, 11 (twice), 15, 25, and 27 (twice).], **that we might become [or, be] the righteousness of God in Him.** [In His atoning death, Jesus Christ, the Lamb of God, dethroned sin, Satan, and spiritual death; He provided forgiveness, the new birth, and the authority and power for believers to live/walk in righteousness, the very "righteousness of God." Sin, Satan, and spiritual death had gained authority over mankind through sin, especially the sin of Adam (and Eve). By bearing that sin, and all subsequent sin (with the guilt and penalties), the Lamb of God stripped sin, Satan, and spiritual death of their authority, and He saved all who submit to the gospel in faith. As I mentioned, Paul was concerned that some of the Christians at Corinth needed to repent and begin to walk in the righteousness of God by faith (this walk isn't automatic); this certainly wasn't an optional matter.]

Excerpts Regarding the Interpretation of Ephesians 4:8-10 and “A Discussion on the Meaning of the Word *Hades* in Acts 2:27, 31; the Meaning of *Paradise* in Luke 23:43; and the Meaning of *Abraham’s Bosom* in Luke 16:22”

Taken from my paper titled, *Verse-by-Verse Studies of Ephesians Chapters 1 and 4; and Romans 8:16-39.*

(8) Therefore it says, “WHEN HE ASCENDED ON HIGH, HE LED CAPTIVE A HOST OF CAPTIVES, AND HE GAVE GIFTS TO MEN.” [In verses 8-10 Paul makes an application of Psalm 68:18, which he loosely quoted here. He takes the words HE ASCENDED ON HIGH of the ascension of Christ back to glory after His atoning death (cf. Phil. 2:9-11). Christ had to descend before He could ascend. First He descended to the earth (from heaven) to be born of the virgin (e, g., Phil. 2:6, 7). Then, after His all-important death on the cross, His soul/spirit descended into Hades (“He...descended into the lower parts of the earth” [Eph. 4:9]). Compare Acts 2:27 (NKJV “Because You will not leave my soul in Hades...”); Acts 2:31 (NKJV “...His soul was not left in Hades...”). (See the discussion on the meaning of Hades, Paradise, etc., below.) In their original setting these words of Psalm 68:18 spoke of God’s ascending Mt. Zion (cf. Psalm 68:16) after defeating His opposition.

I’ll quote part of what Ralph Earle said on the meaning of “the lower parts of the earth” (*Word Meanings in the New Testament* [Baker, 1986], page 311). “This strange expression has provoked an endless amount of discussion, especially in the older commentaries. [I suppose this expression seems *strange* to Earle because he, in agreement with many, thinks this expression refers to Christ’s coming down to the earth in the virgin birth, not of His descent into Hades.] There are two main interpretations. The first would refer it to a descent into Hades (cf. the Apostles’ Creed). The second would apply it to the Incarnation. Some of the Early Church fathers, such as Irenaeus, Tertullian, Jerome, together with Erasmus, Bengel, Meyer, Alford, and others, took the former view. On the other hand, Calvin proposed the latter, and many modern commentators have followed him.”

Paul takes the words “HE LED CAPTIVE A HOST OF CAPTIVES” [I had a footnote here, “There’s a common view that is based on a misunderstanding of the KJV translation (“He led captivity captive”; the NASB has, HE LED CAPTIVE A HOST OF CAPTIVES). This view understands Paul to be saying that the captives were led from Hades to heaven, as if the meaning of the Greek verb here (*aichmalotizo*) were *set free* instead of *make captive/take captive*. I do believe it’s true, however (even though that’s not what Paul said here), that since Christ defeated sin, Satan, and death in His atoning death and resurrection, He was able to take the believers from earlier days from Hades (or you could say “from Paradise”) to heaven (cf. Heb. 11:39, 40; 12:23).”] of Christ's defeating sin, Satan, and spiritual death through His atoning death and resurrection (cf., e.g., John 12:31; Col. 2:15; and Heb. 2:14, 15). Having defeated them and taken them captive, so to speak, He could now give new-covenant salvation to those who submitted to Him and the new-covenant gospel in faith. He could now give new-covenant salvation to believers, which includes forgiveness and the indwelling Spirit to give them life and make them righteous and holy, and to distribute to them the grace/gifts to fulfill their measure in the body of Christ.

Taken in their fullest possible sense, Paul would be taking the words “HE GAVE GIFTS TO MEN” to refer to all that we Christians receive in union with Christ Jesus. But in this context, with Eph. 4:7, the gifts could just refer to the grace/gifts that God gives to each Christian (and

especially to those in the five-fold ministry), enabling them to fulfill their measure/ministry/assignments. It's also true that Paul spoke of Christ's giving the five-fold ministry to/for the church (Eph. 4:11). In the original setting of Psalm 68, the words "HE LED CAPTIVE A HOST OF CAPTIVES" spoke of the opponents who were subdued. And in the original setting of Psalm 68, the words "HE GAVE GIFTS TO MEN" spoke of God's sharing with His people (Israel) the spoils taken from those who were subdued.] **(9) (Now this expression "He ascended [cf. John 3:13]," what does it mean except that He also had descended into the lower parts of the earth? [See under Eph. 4:8.] (10) He who descended is Himself also He who ascended far above all the heavens [cf. Eph. 1:20-23; Heb. 4:14; and 7:26], so that He might fill all things [For the resurrected, glorified Christ to "fill all things" includes the idea that He has all authority everywhere. See under Eph. 1:23.] .)**

A Discussion on the Meaning of the Word *Hades* in Acts 2:27, 31; the Meaning of *Paradise* in Luke 23:43; and the Meaning of *Abraham's Bosom* in Luke 16:22

I assume, in agreement with many, that Jesus, after His death, went to that part (compartment) of *Hades* where the believers were. That same place is apparently called *Paradise* in Luke 23:43 ("And He [Jesus] said to him [the repentant man on the cross next to Him], 'Truly I say to you, today you shall be with me in Paradise.' " Luke 16:22 also speaks of that same place (Abraham would have been in Paradise) with the words *Abraham's bosom* ("Now the poor man [Lazarus] died and was carried away by the angels to Abraham's bosom...").

In accordance with the prophecy of Psalm 16:10, which was quoted in Acts 2:27, Jesus didn't remain in Hades/Sheol. (*Hades* is the Greek noun used in Acts 2:27, 31. *Sheol* is the Hebrew noun used in Psalm 16:10.) He was resurrected on the third day. I believe the translation of the NKJV "You will not leave my soul in Hades" (Acts 2:27) (or "thou wilt not leave" of the KJV) better communicates the meaning intended by Paul than the translation of the NASB ("YOU WILL NOT ABANDON MY SOUL TO HADES"). The translation of the NASB leaves some ambiguity: "ABANDON" could be understood (rightly I believe) to mean that His soul went to Hades/Sheol, but that He didn't stay there long; or it could (wrongly I believe) be understood to mean that His soul never went to Hades/Sheol (which is the viewpoint of many). The BAGD Greek Lexicon (under the Greek verb *egkataleipo*, which was translated "You will [not] leave" by the NKJV) has, "leave... allow to remain...the soul in Hades Acts 2:27..."

I'll quote part of what F. Godet said under Luke 16:22 and 23:43 (*Gospel of St. Luke* (Funk, 1881), pages 393, 494). "In Jewish theology, the angels are charged with receiving the souls of pious Israelites, and transporting them to that portion of Hades which is reserved for them. *Abraham's bosom*, a figure also common among the Rabbis [Rabbis], denotes either intimate communion in general (John 1:18), or more specially the place of honor at a feast (John 13:23); this is naturally assigned to the newly-arrived stranger.... Meyer concludes, from the fact that the internment [burial] of Lazarus is not mentioned, and from the object *auton* (Greek), *him*, that he was transported body and soul to Abraham's bosom. But so early as in the Targum of Canticles, we find the distinction between body and soul: 'The righteous whose souls are carried by angels to paradise.' The pronoun *auton* thus designates only his true self, the soul. The

burial of Lazarus is not mentioned, for it took place without ceremony.... The contrast to the rich man is evident. No angels to transport his soul; but for his body, on the contrary, a splendid funeral procession.” And under Luke 23:43, Godet said, “...this word *paradise* is applied to that part of Hades where the faithful are assembled; and even in the last writings of the N. T., the Epistles and the Apocalypse, to a yet higher abode...2 Cor. 12:4; Rev. 2:7. It is paradise as part of Hades which is spoken of here [in Luke 23:43].”

I’ll quote part of what Alfred Plummer said under Luke 16:22, 23 and 23:43 (*Gospel According to St. Luke* [T. & T. Clark, fifth edition, the third edition was dated in 1900], pages 393, 394, 536). “Lazarus in Sheol reposes with his head on Abraham’s breast, as a child in his father’s lap, and shares his happiness. Compare John 1:18. The expression [Abraham’s bosom] is not common in Jewish writings; but Abraham is sometimes represented as welcoming the penitent into paradise. [See] Edersheim *Life and Times of Jesus the Messiah*, [Vol.] 2, page 280. ... It [Abraham’s bosom] is not a synonym for paradise; but to repose on Abraham’s bosom is to be in paradise, for Abraham is there...”

Under Luke 16:23 Plummer said (in part), “That Hades does not mean ‘hell’ as a place of punishment is manifest from Acts 2:27, 31; Gen. 37:35; 42:38; 44:29; Job 14:13; 17:13; etc. That Hades includes a place of punishment is equally clear from this passage.”

And under Luke 23:43 Plummer said, “The word [Paradise], said to be of Persian origin, is used in various senses in Scripture: 1. ‘a park or pleasure-ground’ (Neh. 2:8; Cant. 4:13; Eccl. 2:5); 2. ‘the garden of Eden’ (Gen. 2:8-10, 15, 16; 3:1-3, 8-10; etc.); 3. ‘Abraham’s bosom,’ i.e. the resting-place of the souls of the just until the resurrection (the meaning here) [I had a footnote here, “I believe that the believers left Hades behind when Jesus did (about that time anyway); they are now in heaven, heaven in a preliminary (pre-resurrection) sense.”] 4. ‘a region in heaven,’ perhaps identical with ‘the third heaven’ (2 Cor. 12:4).

I’ll quote a sentence from what Henry Alford said on the meaning of the word *Paradise* under Luke 23:43 (*New Testament for English Readers*, Vol. 1 [Baker, 1983 reprint], page 442). “The word [Paradise] is used of the *garden of Eden* by the LXX [Septuagint], Gen. 2:8, etc., and subsequently became, in the Jewish theology, the name for that part of Hades, the abode of the dead, where the souls of the righteous await the resurrection.”

I’ll quote part of what James Orr said regarding the “Ideas of Sheol” circulating among the Jews in the times that Jesus lived (article titled “Eschatology of the Old Testament” in Vol. 2 of the *International Standard Bible Encyclopedia* [Eerdmans, 1939], page 978). “Generally, however, in the apocalyptic books, a marked change is seen in the ideas of Sheol. It is still the place of the dead, but is regarded more as a state intermediate between death and the resurrection for such as shall be raised; in which righteous and wicked are separated; in which the wicked suffer punishment. The Book of Enoch (I had a footnote here, “George Eldon Ladd [“Apocalyptic Literature,” *International Standard Bible Encyclopedia, Fully Revised*, Vol. 1 (Eerdmans, 1979), page 156] says, “most scholars believe [the books of Enoch] were written between 165 and 64 B.C., but conclusions vary considerably.”) distinguishes four abodes for the departed—two for the righteous, and two for the wicked (21 1-13). One class of the wicked (those already punished in this life) remain there forever, while the others are raised, and pass to the torment of Gehenna (17 2). The righteous are in Paradise—‘the garden of life’ (61 12), ‘the garden of righteousness’

(67 3).”

I'll also quote part of what G. R. Lewis said in his article on "Paradise." (*Pictorial Encyclopedia of the Bible*, Vol. 4 [Zondervan, 1975], pages 598, 599). First I'll give an excerpt from what he said under the heading "In later Jewish thought." "Stewart D. F. Salmond helpfully summarizes this material. 'In the Rabbinical literature the term [Paradise] has various senses.... Sometimes it is the general abode of the righteous dead; sometimes the happy side of sheol; sometimes the home of the specially privileged few, the abode of those who have never seen death, the place where Messiah Himself waits for the time of His manifestation.'"

Now I'll quote part of what Lewis said under the heading, "In the NT." He is speaking regarding Luke 23:43. "What meaning of 'Paradise' did Jesus intend the thief to understand? Alford, following Grotius, suggested that Jesus spoke to the thief in terms of the Jewish belief in a portion of Hades for the righteous dead, but spoke with a fuller meaning knowing that the same day he would open paradise at God's right hand. ...and some little time after on the same day was with the thief in the presence of God." I don't believe we should think of the believers being taken from Hades/Sheol/Paradise to heaven before Jesus was resurrected on the third day.

Matthew 27:53 shows that a select number of saints were resurrected bodily *after* Jesus was. (Surely Jesus was resurrected first [cf. 1 Cor. 15:20-23; Col. 1:18; Rev. 1:5; and Rom. 8:29]). Most of the believers dwelling in Hades/Paradise were not resurrected bodily at that time (they're still waiting, along with the Christians who have died the past two thousand years, for the resurrection at the time of Christ's return), but I believe (in agreement with many) that they were taken to Paradise in a higher sense. They were taken to heaven, to the place where true Christians go at death (cf. 2 Cor. 5:1-8; Phil. 1:21, 23; and 1 Thess. 4:13, 14). Hebrews 11:39, 40; 12:23 are important verses that help confirm that the believers from Old Testament days have now been taken to heaven through the victory gained by Christ Jesus. On these verses from Hebrews, see pages 166, 167 of my book, *Holiness and Victory Over Sin*.

I'll also quote from Lewis' last heading, "Doctrinal significance." "In defense of the view that paradise was originally a portion of Hades, Louis Sperry Chafer argued that 'An illustration of this belief is given by Christ in the account of the rich man and Lazarus' (Luke 16:19-31). That it [Paradise] was removed from Hades to the presence of God, he taught was indicated by Ephesians 4:8-10 (*Systematic Theology* VII, 247, 248). The note on Hades at Luke 16 in the original Scofield Bible distinguished between Hades before the ascension of Christ (which had a compartment called paradise, or Abraham's bosom) and Hades after the ascension.paradise has been removed from Hades and 'is now in the immediate presence of God.' It is believed that Ephesians 4:8-10 indicates the time of the change."