Session 38 - Descent into Hell

Question: *Did Christ descend into Hell and why? What did He do there? Who are the spirits held there?*

1. *Did Christ descend into Hell?*
   1. Yes, 1 Peter 3:19-20 “being put to death in the flesh but made alive in the spirit, **19** in which[[c](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=1%20Peter+3&version=ESV#fen-ESV-30427c)] he went and proclaimed[[d](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=1%20Peter+3&version=ESV#fen-ESV-30427d)] to the spirits in prison, **20** because[[e](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=1%20Peter+3&version=ESV#fen-ESV-30428e)] they formerly did not obey, when God's patience waited in the days of Noah,”
   2. He did so literally, not simply figuratively
      1. Some interpret the descent into hell as Christ “suffered the pain and torment of hell”. He most certainly did, but that was in the body on the cross.
         1. The Creed confesses a literal descent into hell, and if we didn’t believe that, we should omit it or change it to say “suffered the pangs of hell”.
   3. He did so after he rose from the dead, but before he appeared to the women and his disciples.
      1. 1 Peter said he proclaimed victory. The victory is the resurrection which is our justification. (Romans 4:25).
      2. We assume he descended before his resurrection appearances because
         1. 1 Peter says that he proclaimed to the spirits in prison after he was “put to death in the flesh but made alive in the spirit”
         2. The scriptures suggest a progressive exaltation from the depths to the right hand of God.
            1. In saying, “He ascended,” what does it mean but that he had also descended into the lower regions, the earth? Ephesians 4:9
         3. The creed has it in that order.
   4. Our Lutheran Confessions / Solid Declaration has an article on Christ’s descent into hell.
2. *Why did he descend into Hell?*
   1. To proclaim victory over satan and the spirits there in “prison”.
   2. To establish that he conquered hell and it’s power. And claimed the keys to death and Hades (Rev. 1:18).
   3. To make a public spectacle of evil spirits.
3. *What did Christ do in Hell?*
   1. He proclaimed his victory.
   2. Crushed the Devil (Genesis 3:15). Disarm the prince and authorities of this world and made a public spectacle of them (Col. 2:15)
   3. He did NOT release imprisoned souls.
   4. He did NOT suffer there.
      1. “It is finished”
4. *Who are the spirits held there?*
   1. The wicked world that perished in the flood.
      1. This must be the departed souls, located in the same place as the Rich Man who neglected Lazarus.
   2. Perhaps other fallen angels/demons/devils, though 1 Peter doesn’t name them
   3. Satan?
      1. Hard to understand how Satan can be in prison, and prowling around like a roaring lion, and, at least in the days of Job, also in heaven.
      2. Hard to understand the multi-presence of Satan to begin with.