

# The Summation of All Things in Christ

Studies in Ephesians with a Local Church Emphasis

LESSON LXXVIII : UNITY AND DIVERSITY WITHIN THE CONGREGATION OF BELIEVERS (4:1-16)

**v. 7-10** — “But to each one of us grace was given according to the measure of Christ’s gift. Therefore He says: ‘When He ascended on high, He led captivity captive, And gave gifts to men.’ (Now this, ‘He ascended’ — what does it mean but that He also first descended into the lower parts of the earth? He who descended is also the One who ascended far above all the heavens, that He might fill all things.)” (NKJV) — “But grace was given to each one of us according to the measure of Christ’s gift. Therefore it says, ‘When he ascended on high he led a host of captives, and he gave gifts to men.’ (In saying, ‘He ascended,’ what does it mean but that he had also descended into the lower regions, the earth? He who descended is the one who also ascended far above all the heavens, that he might fill all things.)” (ESV) — Ἐνὶ δὲ ἑκάστῳ ἡμῶν ἐδόθη ἡ χάρις κατὰ τὸ μέτρον τῆς δωρεᾶς τοῦ Χριστοῦ διὸ λέγει Ἀναβὰς εἰς ὕψος ἠχμαλώτευσεν αἰχμαλωσίαν καὶ ἔδωκεν δόματα τοῖς ἀνθρώποις τὸ δὲ Ἀνέβη τί ἐστὶν εἰ μὴ ὅτι καὶ κατέβη πρῶτον εἰς τὰ κατώτερα μέρη τῆς γῆς ὁ καταβὰς αὐτός ἐστιν καὶ ὁ ἀναβὰς ὑπεράνω πάντων τῶν οὐρανῶν ἵνα πληρώσῃ τὰ πάντα [heni de hekastō hēmōn edothē hē charis kata to metron tēs dōreas tou Christou dio legei Anabas eis hupsos ēchmalōteusen aichmalōsian kai edōken domata tois anthrōpois to de Anebē ti estin ei mē hoti kai katebē prōton eis ta katōtera merē tēs gēs ho katabas autos estin kai ho anabas huperanō pantōn tōn ouranōn hina plērōsē ta panta]

## CHRIST DESCENT = INCARNATION

**THE REFERENCE TO EARTH COULD BE UNDERSTOOD AS ‘HE DESCENDED INTO THE LOWER REGIONS, THE EARTH’** — On this view the lower regions are not the lower parts of the earth but rather the lower parts of the cosmos (i.e., the earth). “*These words mean nothing more than the condition of the present life. To torture them so as to make them mean purgatory or hell, is exceedingly foolish. The argument taken from the comparative degree, ‘the lower parts,’ is quite untenable. A comparison is drawn, not between one part of the earth and another, but between the whole earth and heaven; as if he had said, that from that lofty habitation Christ descended into our deep gulf.*” [Calvin, 275] H. Bietenhard understands the descent not to hades for ‘such an idea would be superfluous in this context.’ [Harris, Descent of Christ, 16]

**PAUL USES THIS SAME GRAMMATICAL SYNTAX SIX OTHER TIMES IN EPHESIANS** — One of the reasons most modern Bible students prefer to understand Paul to be referring to the earth (the ‘genitive of apposition’ form) is that this form is common within Ephesians:

*‘For He Himself is our peace, who has made both one, and has broken down the middle wall of separation’ (2:14 NKJV, ‘the middle wall which is separation’)*

*‘the enmity in his flesh, the law of the commands in ordinances having done away, that the two he might create in himself into one new man, making peace’ (2:15 YLT, ‘the law which are the commandments’)*

*‘having been built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Jesus Christ Himself being the chief cornerstone’ (2:20 NKJV, ‘the foundation which are the apostles and prophets’)*

*‘of which I became a minister according to the gift of the grace of God given to me by the effective working of His power.’ (3:7 NKJV, ‘the gift which is the grace of God’)*

*‘Stand therefore, having girded your waist with truth, having put on the breastplate of righteousness’ (6:14 NKJV, ‘the breastplate which is righteousness’)*

*‘above all, taking the shield of faith with which you will be able to quench all the fiery darts of the wicked one’ (6:16 NKJV, ‘the shield which is faith’)*

*‘And take the helmet of salvation, and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God’ (6:17 NKJV, ‘the helmet which is salvation’)*

**“Grammatically there is nothing to choose between the two constructions, except that in the New Testament the partitive genitive, unsupported by preposition or noun of quantity, is rare, whereas the genitive of apposition is used frequently, and particularly so in this letter.”** [G. B. Caird, Paul’s Letters from Prison, 75] (It should be noted some would add to the above list 2:2; 3:4; 4:3 but I am not sure I would understand those verses in the manner in which they describe. Most of the commentators I have studied list 2:14,15,20; 6:14,16,17 only.)

**EPHESIANS USES A TWO STORY COSMOLOGY, NOT A THREE STORY COSMOLOGY** — Adding to the argument that the ‘lower parts’ refers to the earth in comparison with the heavens is the fact that a three story cosmology (heaven, earth, under the earth) does not fit the worldview we encounter elsewhere in Ephesians, where the cosmos is seen as simply having two main parts (heaven and earth). [Best, 384; see also Thielman, 270; Lincoln 245; W. H. Harris 179]

*‘that in the dispensation of the fullness of the times He might gather together in one all things in Christ, both which are*

in heaven and which are on earth – in Him.’ (1:10 NKJV)

‘For this reason I bow my knees to the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, from whom the whole family in heaven and earth is named’ (3:14,15 NKJV)

This is not to say a three tier cosmology does not exist in the New Testament; indeed, it does:

*‘who, being in the form of God, did not consider it robbery to be equal with God, but made Himself of no reputation, taking the form of a bondservant, and coming in the likeness of men. And being found in appearance as a man, He humbled Himself and became obedient to the point of death, even the death of the cross. Therefore God also has highly exalted Him and given Him the name which is above every name, that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, of those in heaven, and of those on earth, and of those under the earth, and that every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.’ (Phil 2:6-11 NKJV)*

Since the text in Philippians has been mentioned, the following quote seems apropos: **“The great paragraph in Phil. ii. 5-10, which is in some sense a parallel, has also to be taken into account. There again the whole statement turns upon the two great ideas of the incarnation with the humiliation involved in it and the exaltation, and nothing is said about any visit of Christ to the underworld.”** [Salmond, 327]

**IN EPHESIANS THE WARFARE WITH SATANIC HOSTS IS NOT IN HADES BUT IN THE HEAVENLIES —**  
**“Furthermore, no other passage elsewhere in Ephesians displays any interest in the effect of Christ’s work in the underworld.”**  
[Muddiman, 193; see also Best, 384; Hoehner, 534; Thielman, 270; Harris, 24]

*‘which He worked in Christ when He raised Him from the dead and seated Him at His right hand in the heavenly places, far above all principality and power and might and dominion, and every name that is named, not only in this age but also in that which is to come.’ (Eph 1:20,21 NKJV)*

*‘in which you once walked according to the course of this world, according to the prince of the power of the air, the spirit who now works in the sons of disobedience’ (Eph 2:2 NKJV)*

*‘For we do not wrestle against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this age, against spiritual hosts of wickedness in the heavenly places.’ (Eph 6:12 NKJV)*

**VICTORY OVER EVIL WAS ACCOMPLISHED ON THE CROSS, NOT IN HADES —** **“The place where Jesus had victory over evil powers and sin was not in Hades but at the cross where he stated, ‘it is finished.’”** [Hoehner, 534; see also Eadie, Commentary on Ephesians; Charles Hodge, Systematic Theology, vol 2; 616] **“Jesus finished His atoning work on the cross. The New Testament speaks of propitiation, the turning away of the Lord’s wrath, only in relation to Jesus shedding His blood on the cross (Rom. 3:25; Heb. 2:17; 9:1–10:18; 1 John 2:2; 4:10; 5:6–11). Moreover, our Savior’s last words on the cross were ‘It is finished’ (John 19:30). He saw His work as completed when He died.”**  
[[http://www.ligonier.org/learn/devotionals/christs descent into hell/](http://www.ligonier.org/learn/devotionals/christs%20descent%20into%20hell/), Nov 23, 2016]

*‘So when Jesus had received the sour wine, He said, ‘It is finished!’ And bowing His head, He gave up His spirit.’ (John 19:30 NKJV; ‘it is finished’ is one word in the Greek, τετέλεσται [tetelestai] which has the sense of ‘bringing something to an end, concluding, fulfill’ and could also be rendered ‘it is paid’)*

*‘and might reconcile us both to God in one body through the cross, thereby killing the hostility.’ (Eph 2:16 ESV)*

*‘by canceling the record of debt that stood against us with its legal demands. This he set aside, nailing it to the cross. He disarmed the rulers and authorities and put them to open shame, by triumphing over them in him.’ (Col 2:14,15 ESV)*

*‘Therefore, in all things He had to be made like His brethren, that He might be a merciful and faithful High Priest in things pertaining to God, to make propitiation for the sins of the people.’ (Heb 2:17 NKJV)*

*‘In this is love, not that we loved God, but that He loved us and sent His Son to be the propitiation for our sins.’ (1John 4:10 NKJV)*

**“Jesus’ spirit never went to hell, but on the cross He suffered the full wrath of God that is poured out in hell. True, the scourgings of the guards, the nails in Christ’s hands, and the other physical pains Jesus suffered manifested God’s wrath. Nevertheless, the most intense suffering Christ experienced was spiritual in nature, the hopelessness of losing the gaze of His Father’s blessing and the torment of experiencing God’s wrath for the sins of His people (Mark 15:34). John Calvin comments, ‘After explaining what Christ endured in the sight of man, the Creed appropriately adds the invisible and incomprehensible judgment which he endured before God, to teach us that not only was the body of Christ given up as the price of redemption, but that there was a greater and more excellent price – that he bore in his soul the tortures of a condemned and ruined man.’ (Institutes 2.16.10). Sin against an infinite being demands an infinite punishment in hell. In a few hours, Jesus suffered and exhausted the infinite punishment that impenitent people cannot exhaust even after an eternity in hell. He could do this because, in His deity as the Son of God, He is an infinite being. This is a great mystery, but as the Heidelberg Catechism states, it does assure us that we are fully delivered from the anguish and torment of hell in Christ (Q&A 44).”** [[http://www.ligonier.org/learn/devotionals/christs descent into hell/](http://www.ligonier.org/learn/devotionals/christs%20descent%20into%20hell/), Nov 23, 2016]

**THE EMPHASIS IN EPHESIANS OF CHRIST CONQUEST OF THE POWERS IS IN HIS ASCENSION, NOT THE DESCENT TO HADES —** Christ’s triumph over the powers, according to Ephesians, occurs not in a descent to the

underworld but in the course of his victorious ascent. In the words of Harris, ‘a reference to the conquest of the underworld would be alien to the context of Eph 4:9.’ [Harris, 24; see also O’Brien, 294; Best, 384; Thielman, 270]

*‘and what is the exceeding greatness of His power toward us who believe, according to the working of His mighty power which He worked in Christ when He raised Him from the dead and seated Him at His right hand in the heavenly places, far above all principality and power and might and dominion, and every name that is named, not only in this age but also in that which is to come. And He put all things under His feet, and gave Him to be head over all things to the church, which is His body, the fullness of Him who fills all in all.’* (Eph 1:19-22 NKJV)

**THE CONTRAST IN THESE VERSES IS BETWEEN AN ‘ASCENT INTO HEAVEN’ AND A ‘DESCENT FROM HEAVEN’** — *“But the contrast in these verses appears to be between an ascent to heaven and a descent from heaven, while the descent involved in the traditional view of a descent into Hades is not so much from heaven but from earth to the underworld or the realm of the dead.”* [Lincoln, 245; see also O’Brien, 294; Abbott, 115; Muddiman, 193; Salmond, 327]

**‘THE EARTH AS BENEATH’ IS USED ELSEWHERE IN SCRIPTURE IN CONTRAST TO HEAVEN** — *“R. N. Longenecker points out whatever Paul wrote was assumed by his readers, thus the descent / ascension reflected an earlier tradition not original with Paul. He believes the original motif probably was a reference to the humiliation of Christ’s incarnation, servitude, temptation and death, themes in a number of NT passages such as Phil 2:6-11, John 1:1-18, 3:13, 6:62, Heb 2:5-18 and 5:1-10.”* [Harris, Descent of Christ, 19]

*‘Therefore know this day, and consider it in your heart, that the LORD Himself is God in heaven above and on the earth beneath; there is no other.’* (Deut 4:39 NKJV)

*‘You shall not make for yourself a carved image – any likeness of anything that is in heaven above, or that is in the earth beneath, or that is in the water under the earth’* (Deut 5:8 NKJV; **note here ‘under the earth’ is not sheol / hades but rather the oceans upon the earth**)

*‘And as soon as we heard these things, our hearts melted; neither did there remain any more courage in anyone because of you, for the LORD your God, He is God in heaven above and on earth beneath.’* (Josh 2:11 NKJV)

*‘and he said: LORD God of Israel, there is no God in heaven above or on earth below like You, who keep Your covenant and mercy with Your servants who walk before You with all their hearts.’* (1Kings 8:23 NKJV)

*‘My frame was not hidden from You, When I was made in secret, And skillfully wrought in the lowest parts of the earth.’* (Ps 139:15 NKJV; poetic metaphor for the womb)

*‘Sing, O heavens, for the LORD has done it! Shout, you lower parts of the earth; Break forth into singing, you mountains, O forest, and every tree in it! For the LORD has redeemed Jacob, And glorified Himself in Israel.’* (Isa 44:23 NKJV)

*‘I will show wonders in heaven above And signs in the earth beneath: Blood and fire and vapor of smoke.’* (Acts 2:19 NKJV)

*‘Set your mind on things above, not on things on the earth.’* (Col 3:2 NKJV)

*‘This wisdom does not descend from above, but is earthly, sensual, demonic.’* (Jas 3:15 NKJV)

**IN THE GOSPEL OF JOHN THE DESCENT REFERS TO THE INCARNATION** — *“When our Lord speaks Himself of His descent and ascension, heaven and earth are uniformly the termini [‘the end or extremity of anything’] of comparison.... Christ’s ascension to heaven plainly implies a previous descent to this nether world. And it is truly a nether or lower world when compared with high heaven.”* [John Eadie, Commentary on Ephesians] *“This descent to earth is interpreted in its most comprehensive sense, namely, as an incarnation involving deep humiliation: ‘Jesus from his throne on high came into the world to die.’ Thus Calvin comments as follows on Christ’s descent to the earth: ‘And at what time did God descend lower than when Christ emptied himself (Phil. 2:7)? If ever there was a time when ... God ascended gloriously, it was when Christ was raised from our lowest condition on earth, and received into heavenly glory.’”* [Hendriksen, 193] *“Moreover, when the ascent and descent of Christ are discussed together in John’s Gospel, the ascent is Christ’s return to the place from which he had first descended. This was apparently the most common way in which early Christians spoke of the ‘ascent’ and ‘descent’ of Christ.”* [Thielman, 269; see also Hoehner, 535; Lincoln, 245f; O’Brien, 295; Alford, 116; Hendriksen, 193] *“The descent – ascent motif of John 3.13 is too close a parallel to be ignored, especially when it is remembered that it actually continues (v. 14) with a reference to Moses, whose ‘lifting up on high’ of the serpent in the wilderness is a type for the lifting up of Christ on the cross.”* [Muddiman, 195] *“In the Fourth Gospel the ascent is from earth to heaven and the preceding descent correspondingly from heaven to earth; and so it is here. That is to say, ‘the lower parts of the earth’ should be understood as meaning ‘the earth below.’”* [Bruce, 343]

*‘No one has ascended to heaven but He who came down from heaven, that is, the Son of Man who is in heaven.’* (John 3:13 NKJV)

*‘He who comes from above is above all; he who is of the earth is earthly and speaks of the earth. He who comes from heaven is above all.’* (John 3:31 NKJV)

*‘For the bread of God is He who comes down from heaven and gives life to the world.... The Jews then complained*

about Him, because He said, I am the bread which came down from heaven. And they said, Is not this Jesus, the son of Joseph, whose father and mother we know? How is it then that He says, I have come down from heaven? ... This is the bread which comes down from heaven, that one may eat of it and not die. I am the living bread which came down from heaven. If anyone eats of this bread, he will live forever; and the bread that I shall give is My flesh, which I shall give for the life of the world.... This is the bread which came down from heaven – not as your fathers ate the manna, and are dead. He who eats this bread will live forever.... What then if you should see the Son of Man ascend where He was before?’ (John 6:33,41,42,50,51,58,62 NKJV)

‘And He said to them, You are from beneath; I am from above. You are of this world; I am not of this world.’ (John 8:23 NKJV)

I came forth from the Father and have come into the world. Again, I leave the world and go to the Father.’ (John 16:28 NKJV)

‘And now, O Father, glorify Me together with Yourself, with the glory which I had with You before the world was.’ (John 17:5 NKJV)

‘Jesus said to her, Do not cling to Me, for I have not yet ascended to My Father; but go to My brethren and say to them, I am ascending to My Father and your Father, and to My God and your God.’ (John 20:17 NKJV)

**SINCE THE NT ALREADY SPEAKS OF A DESCENT IN THE INCARNATION, A DESCENT TO HADES WOULD BE A SECOND DESCENT** — “A descent into hades would be a second descent following Christ’s descent to earth, but nowhere is a two-stage descent taught.” [Harris, 24]

**IF PAUL HAD INTENDED HADES, HE WOULD HAVE USED A SUPERLATIVE (‘LOWEST’) RATHER THAN A COMPARATIVE (‘LOWER’)** — “If the apostle had meant to say that Christ descended to a depth below which there was no deeper, as He ascended to a height above which was none higher, he would doubtless have used the superlative.” [Abbott, 115; see also Salmond, 327] John Eadie makes the observation that *if in the OT the ‘superlative’ (‘lowest’) is used when speaking of sheol, “why should the comparative in the New Testament be thought to have the same reference?”* [John Eadie, Commentary on Ephesians] See the next point for comments on the OT usage.

**THE LXX USES THE SUPERLATIVE** — There are two passages in the Psalms (63:9 and 139:15) which talk about the underworld as the depths of the earth. In both instances they are translated in the LXX by the superlative τὰ κατώτατα τῆς γῆς [ta katōtata tēs gēs], ‘the lowest regions [of] the earth,’ not by the comparative. [Lincoln, 245; see also O’Brien, 294; Hoehner, 534; Salmond, 327; Harris, 24]

‘But those who seek my life, to destroy it, Shall go into the lower parts of the earth.’ (Psalms 63:9 NKJV) Note the Geneva translates this word as ‘lowest’, the RSV / NASV / NIV / ESV translates it as ‘go down to the depths of the earth.’ The LXX translates it as the superlative, ‘lowest.’ According to Bibleworks, the Hebrew word could be translated either ‘lower’ or ‘lowest’.

‘My frame was not hidden from You, When I was made in secret, And skillfully wrought in the lowest parts of the earth.’ (Psalms 139:15 NKJV)

John Eadie comments that if Paul had any specific LXX reference in mind if he wanted to express Christ’s descent into hades, it would have probably been these two verses:

‘For Thy kindness is great toward me, And Thou hast delivered my soul from the lowest Sheol.’ (Ps 86:13 YLT)

‘For a fire is kindled in My anger, And burns to the lowest part of Sheol, And consumes the earth with its yield, And sets on fire the foundations of the mountains.’ (Deut 32:22 NASV)

*That raises the question why Paul would not have used the superlative (‘lowest’) had he wished to give it prominence? Per Eadie, ‘unmistakeable phraseology was provided for him, and sanctioned by previous usage.’ Why then would Paul not use the superlative (‘lowest’) but the comparative (‘lower’)?* [John Eadie, Commentary on Ephesians]

**JESUS DID NOT ASCEND FROM HADES BUT FROM THE EARTH** — “It is also to be considered that, granting it is the Ascension and not merely the Resurrection of Christ that is expressed by the [Greek word ‘ascended’], **it was not from Hades, but from earth that He did ascend.**” [Salmond, 327] No where (unless Eph 4:9 is the exception) is there any indication that Jesus ascended from Hades. On the other hand, there are references indicating his ascension from the earth. [Hoehner, 534; see also Eadie, 292; Thielman, 270] **It is the resurrection and not the ascension which is normally associated with Hades. In apocryphal and secular accounts of the journeys to Hades the return is normally made to earth and not heaven.** [Best, 384]

‘And He led them out as far as Bethany, and He lifted up His hands and blessed them. Now it came to pass, while He blessed them, that He was parted from them and carried up into heaven.’ (Luke 24:50, 51 NKJV)

‘Now when He had spoken these things, while they watched, He was taken up, and a cloud received Him out of their sight.’ (Acts 1:9 NKJV)

I came forth from the Father and have come into the world. Again, I leave the world and go to the Father.’ (John 16:28 NKJV)

*Even those contending for the theory that Christ's descent was to hades admits the long interval of forty days between resurrection and ascension is historically very problematic.* [Heinrich Meyer's Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament; <http://m.studylight.org/commentaries/hmc/ephesians 4.html>; Nov 24, 2016]

**THE INCARNATION WAS IMPORTANT TO THE EARLY CHURCHES** — One argument which may have some validity by those who believe this refers to Christ's descent into hades is why Paul would bring up the incarnation while it is not mentioned elsewhere in Ephesians. "A. T. Hanson says that Paul never uses [the Greek word *katabaino*, 'to go down'] to refer to the incarnation; this is true, but Paul does not refer to the incarnation very often and could have varied his terms." [Best, 384] It must be remembered the importance the early churches placed on the incarnation. *"Even more than the descent into hell, the doctrine of the incarnation preoccupied theological interest in post-apostolic times."* [Muddiman, 193]

**PAUL COULD HAVE MORE EASILY REFERRED TO HADES THAN THIS MYSTERIOUS REFERENCE** — As argued above, it is true Paul could have used simpler terms to express Christ's descent to the earth if he were talking about the incarnation; but on the other hand he also could have used specific terms referring to Hades or the abyss instead of this cryptic reference. [Hoehner, 534f] If hades had been intended, it is strange that Paul did not select one or other of the more familiar and quite unambiguous phrases which are used elsewhere, e.g., *'brought down to hades'* (Matt 11:23), *'in hades'* (Acts 2:27), *'in the heart of the earth'* (Matt 12:40) or *'in the abyss'* (Rom 10:7). [Salmond, 327]

**PAUL REFERENCES CHRIST'S DESCENT / ASCENT TO ASSOCIATE HIM WITH THE PS 68 PASSAGE** — So whether Paul was speaking of the incarnation or hades, why would he have used such cryptic language? Some have suggested Paul wrote as he did here because he wanted to tie Christ's descent / ascent into the quote he had just given as Scriptural support (v. 8). "The original implication of Psalm 68, that Yahweh must have first descended to help defeat Israel's enemies before he ascended in triumph to Zion, then becomes the model for the descent and subsequent ascent of the incarnate Christ." [Muddiman, 193; see also O'Brien, 295] *"As this was his office, the Scriptures speak of him as a conqueror laden with spoils, enriched by his victories, and giving gifts to men. That the Psalmist had reference to the Messiah, is evident, because the passage speaks of his ascending. But for a divine person to ascend to heaven, supposes a previous descent to the earth. It was the Son of God, the Messiah, who descended, and therefore it was the Son of God who ascended, and who is represented by the sacred writer as enriched by his triumphant work on earth, and distributing the fruits of his conquest as he pleased. This seems to be the general sense of the passage in the connection, although it is replete with difficulties. The great truth is, that Christ's exaltation is the reward of his humiliation. By his obedience and sufferings he conquered the prince of this world, he redeemed his people, and obtained the right to bestow upon them all needed good. He is exalted to give the Holy Ghost, and all his gifts and graces, to grant repentance and remission of sins. This great truth is foreshadowed and foretold in the Old Testament Scriptures....* [A]scension in the case of a divine person, a giver of spiritual gifts to men, implies a previous descent. It was Christ who descended, and therefore, it is Christ who ascended. It is true the Old Testament often speaks of God's descending, and therefore they may speak of his ascending. But according to the apostle, the divine person intended in those representations was the Son, and no previous descent or ascent, no previous triumph over his enemies, included all that the Spirit of prophecy intended by such representations. And, therefore, the Psalmist must be understood as having included in the scope of his language the most conspicuous and illustrious of God's condescensions and exaltations. All other comings were but typical of his coming in the flesh, and all ascensions were typical of his ascension from the grave. The apostle, therefore, here teaches that God, the subject of the sixty eighth Psalm, descended 'into the lower parts of the earth,' that 'he ascended up above all heavens,' and that this was with the design 'that he might fill all things.'" [Hodge, 151f, 156]

**PAUL'S EMPHASIS UPON THE ASCENT / DESCENT IS NOT LOGICAL WERE HE NOT HIGHLIGHTING THE INCARNATION** — *The logic that the ascent demands a descent is emphasized here by Paul, but the mere fact of Christ's ascent does not in fact demand a previous descent. Why then does Paul make this emphasis but to highlight the deity of our Lord Jesus Christ and His descent from heaven in the incarnation? "An ascent does not necessarily presuppose a previous descent. The fact, for example, that Elijah ascended to heaven does not mean that he had previously come down from heaven. The solution lies in the fact that Paul is not stating a general law but is speaking about Christ, and is saying that in his case ascent implied (previous) descent. This is true, for, as we have seen, Christ's ascension was glorious. He was welcomed back by his Father into heaven (John 20:17; Acts 1:11), and at his entrance into glory all heaven rejoiced (Rev. 12:5, 10). Now this ascension whereby he, as Victor over Satan, sin, and death, re-entered heaven in the full merits of his atoning sacrifice would never have been possible had he not first descended from the glories of heaven to earth's shame and suffering. This is simply another way of saying that Christ's exaltation resulted from his humiliation, a humiliation so deep and ineffable that the apostle characterizes it by saying that he 'descended into the regions lower than the earth.'" [Hendriksen, 191f; see also Albert Barnes' NT Notes] "Now this expression, He ascended, what is it, but that he descended – That is, does it not imply, that he descended first? Certainly it does, on the supposition of his being God. Otherwise it would not: since all the saints will ascend to heaven, though none of them descended thence."* [Wesley, John, Commentary on Ephesians 4:9 / John Wesley's Explanatory Notes on the Whole Bible]

**CHRIST WENT TO PARADISE (= HEAVEN) AT HIS DEATH** — One of the arguments we considered from the opposing viewpoint was the fact that Jesus declared to the thief on the cross that they would be in *'paradise'*:

*'Then he said to Jesus, Lord, remember me when You come into Your kingdom. And Jesus said to him, Assuredly, I say to you, today you will be with Me in Paradise.'* (Luke 23:42,43 NKJV)

This of course rests upon the assumption that Jesus was not referring to heaven when He said *'paradise'* but (as they would argue)

to 'Abraham's bosom.' But let us look at this word 'paradise' [references: Friberg Lexicon; Louw-Nida Lexicon; Gingrich, Greek NT Lexicon; Liddell-Scott Greek Lexicon; Thayer's Greek Lexicon; Moulton-Milligan, Vocabulary of the Greek NT; Kittel-Bromiley, Theological Dictionary of NT Abridged].

The Greek word for 'paradise' used in Luke 23:43 by Jesus is παραδείσω [paradeisō], making this yet another Greek word that we knew but did not know we knew! The Greek Lexicons almost unanimously considers this a word from the Old Persian meaning originally 'a grand enclosure or preserve, hunting-ground, a shady and well-watered park in which wild animals were kept for the hunt; often enclosed by walls.' It is used by Jewish secular writers as 'a garden, pleasure-ground, grove, orchard, park.' It is used in the OT (LXX) to mean 'garden, park, paradise' and is the word used every time for the Garden of Eden in the LXX (Gen 2:8,9,10,15,16; 3:1,2,3,8 2x, 10,23,23; 13:10; note the English word 'paradise' itself is not used in the KJV OT).

The word is only used 3x in the NT, one of them being the verse in Luke given above. The other places this word is used is as follows:

*'I know a man in Christ who fourteen years ago – whether in the body I do not know, or whether out of the body I do not know, God knows – such a one was caught up to the third heaven. And I know such a man – whether in the body or out of the body I do not know, God knows – how he was caught up into Paradise and heard inexpressible words, which it is not lawful for a man to utter.'* (2 Cor 12:2-4 NKJV)

*'He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches. To him who overcomes I will give to eat from the tree of life, which is in the midst of the Paradise of God.'* (Rev 2:7 NKJV)

While not without exception, most would equate 'paradise' in 2 Cor 12:4 with 'the third heaven' in v. 2. While the reference in Revelation does not give an actual location, it does mention the 'tree of life.' We find this tree mentioned again twice later in the book of Revelation:

*'And he showed me a pure river of water of life, clear as crystal, proceeding from the throne of God and of the Lamb. In the middle of its street, and on either side of the river, was the tree of life, which bore twelve fruits, each tree yielding its fruit every month. The leaves of the tree were for the healing of the nations.... Blessed are those who do His commandments, that they may have the right to the tree of life, and may enter through the gates into the city.'* (Rev 22:1,2,14 NKJV; the city' in v. 14 is a reference to the city mentioned in vv. 1-5)

So the 'tree of life' is in the city with the throne of God and of our Lord Jesus Christ, obviously a reference to heaven. (Interesting side note: many commentators believe it appropriate to translate the word 'the paradise of God' in Revelation 2:7 as 'the garden of God,' especially since the context references the 'tree of life' which was last seen in the Garden of Eden. [Louw Nida Lexicon] "According to the opinion of many of the church Fathers, the paradise in which our first parents dwelt before the fall still exists, neither on earth nor in the heavens, but above and beyond the world." [Thayer's Greek Lexicon] "If the paradise of the first age is to return, it still exists in hidden form.... Suggested locations are on earth, on a high mountain reaching up to heaven, or in heaven." [Kittel-Bromiley, Theological Dictionary of NT Abridged] )

***For these reasons many understand Jesus' reference to paradise to be a reference to heaven. If the reference to paradise by Jesus on the cross is indeed heaven, that would destroy any three-day visit to hades.*** "We know from Jesus' statement to the thief that when one dies they enter the presence of God immediately. Luke 23:42 states, 'Truly I say to you, today you shall be with Me in Paradise.' This statement also tells us that Jesus went to His Father upon death." [Randy Alcorn, "What happened after Jesus died?", [http://www.jesus.org/death and resurrection/the crucifixion/did jesus descend into hell.html](http://www.jesus.org/death%20and%20resurrection/the%20crucifixion/did%20jesus%20descend%20into%20hell.html), Nov 23, 2016]

**SYNOPSIS: PAUL WAS DRAWING ATTENTION TO THE PRE-INCARNATE GLORY OF CHRIST —** "The Divinity and heavenly abode of Christ are clearly presupposed. His ascension implies a previous descent. He could never be said to go up unless He had formerly come down. If He go up after the victory, we infer that he had already come down to win it. But how does this bear upon the apostle's argument? ... [T]he ascension described implies such a descent, warfare, and victory, as belong only to the incarnate Redeemer.... He was born into the world, and that in a low condition; born not under fretted roofs and amidst marble halls, but He drew His first breath in a stable, and enjoyed His first sleep in a manger. As a man, He earned His bread by the sweat of His brow, at a manual occupation with hammer and hatchet, 'going forth to His work and to His labour until the evening.' The creatures He had formed had their house and haunt after their kind, but the Heir of all things had no domicile by legal right; for 'the foxes have holes, and the birds of the air have nests, but the Son of man hath not where to lay His head.' Reproach, and scorn, and contumely followed Him as a dark shadow. Persecution at length apprehended Him, accused Him, calumniated Him, scourged Him, mocked Him, and doomed the 'man of sorrows' to an ignominious torture and a felon's death. His funeral was extemporized and hasty; nay, the grave He lay in was a borrowed one. He came truly 'to the lower parts of the earth.'" [John Eadie, Commentary on Ephesians] "Paul in this verse made an argument to the effect that the ascension of Christ proved that Christ had also descended to the earth.... Paul, along with the whole New Testament church, believed in the pre-existence of Christ with God, before the world was, worshipping him as Lord, Saviour, King, Creator of the universe, Sustainer of the universe, or as Paul himself titled him, King of kings and Lord of lords (1 Timothy 6:15). Now, when it is declared of Jesus Christ the Lord that he ascended, the inescapable and necessary deduction is imperative: that he also descended! How otherwise could a member of the Godhead ascend? How could the Holy One, with God in the beginning, 'the same was God'; how could he have ascended without first descending? This verse, therefore, far from being 'pure midrash,' is one of the most eloquent passages in the New Testament touching upon the glorious Christian doctrine of the Ascension of Jesus Christ and of his pre-existence from all eternity with the Father." [Coffman, James Burton, Commentary on Ephesians 4:9 / Coffman Commentaries on the Old and New Testament]