

Spirits in Prison - cont.

... (who once existed in the days of Noah, now in Tartarus) between his death and ascension into heaven. The following passages are cited to defend this interpretation: Genesis 6:1-4; Ephesians 4:8-10; Colossians 2:15; 2 Peter 2:4; Jude 6; Revelation 20:7. While it is true that Jesus' death and resurrection proclaimed victory to others, there is no evidence that this proclamation was limited to souls who once lived in the days of Noah (Colossians 2:15).

3. One final interpretation says that Christ, through Noah, preached salvation to the spirits of men before the flood came. This interpretation best fits with what Peter wrote about Christ and Noah in both 1 Peter and 2 Peter. Let us now explain this interpretation greater detail.

Verse 18

Because Christ also suffered for sins once, the righteous for the unrighteous, that he might bring us to God; being put to death in the flesh, but made alive in the spirit

Here, Peter made a contrast, or antithesis, between Christ being put to death and being made alive. Christ was put to death "in the flesh" (*sarki*, in the

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realm of the physical), "but" made alive "in the spirit" (*pneumati*, in the realm of the spiritual). Note the Greek case here is locative, not instrumental: it is "in the spirit," not "by the Spirit;" see Matthew 5:3). Compare the same Greek construction, "in the flesh ... in the spirit" in 4:5-6. Peter is saying that Christ did his preaching in the realm of the spiritual. He did not do this particular preaching in the physical realm, but in the spiritual realm.

- Chris Reeves -

[concluded next week]

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For though we walk in the flesh, we do not war according to the flesh, for the weapons of our warfare are not of the flesh, but divinely powerful for the destruction of fortresses.
- 2 Corinthians 10:3-4 -

The Spirits in Prison - Part I

In 1 Peter 3:18-20, the Apostle Peter wrote about Christ preaching to the spirits in prison. This passage has generated a lot of interest and debate as to its meaning. What does it mean that Christ went and preached to the spirits in prison? When did Christ do this, who are these spirits, and where are they located?

Like any Bible passage, whether challenging or not to understand, it is always best to examine the context first, then look at the grammar of the text under discussion, and finally compare what is said with Bible passages elsewhere. Let us now turn our attention to this much-discussed Bible passage.

The Context

The immediate context for this particular passage begins back in 3:8-12, where Peter wrote about living the good life. When a Christian lives the good life (3:8-12), he or she may still have to suffer for righteousness' sake (3:13-17). When Peter brought up the matter of Christians suffering, this led him to talk about the suffering of Christ himself. Jesus suffered (3:18; 4:1) and his followers will have to suffer also (3:13-17; 4:1-6). Christians suf-

fer as Christ suffered.

A part of Christ's suffering was to die "in the flesh" for the sins of the world (3:18). But, not only did Jesus die, he also was raised from the dead and made alive "in the spirit" (3:18).

Here, Peter made the point that even though Jesus suffered, he accomplished great things for God. First, his suffering led to death for sin (3:18). Second, his resurrection led to him ascend to the right hand of God and rule over all things (3:22).

In 1 Peter 3:13-22, Peter is using the suffering of Christ to encourage Christians in their suffering. He is saying: Christ suffering and accomplished great things for God, so you too will suffering and you can accomplish great things as you "live according to God in the spirit" (4:6).

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Now to the verse in question. What does it mean that Christ went and preached to the spirits in prison? As mentioned above, when Peter wrote about Christ's suffering, this introduced a thought about Christ's preaching (vv. 18-20). Here are the key questions that have to be answered in this passage to understand it properly:

- Who did the preaching and what was preached?
- How did the preaching take place?
- When and where did the preaching take place?
- To whom did the preaching take place?

Three Common Interpretations

1. One common interpretation of this passage says that Christ preached salvation to spirits of men in the Hadean realm during the time his body was in the grave (also called the "second chance" view). According to this view, Christ preached to lost souls and gave them another chance to be saved. The main problem with this view is that there is no other Bible teaching to confirm this and no other passage that teaches a "second chance" doctrine of salvation. All of the rest of scripture indicates that obeying the preaching of salvation is to be done in this life alone, not the next life.

2. Another common interpretation of this passage is that Christ proclaimed triumph and victory to evil spirits ...
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