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## Preaching To The Spirits In Prison

### Kevin Kay

#### Introduction:

- I. In 2 Peter 3:15-16, Peter says that Paul wrote some things that were **hard to understand**
- II. The same could certainly be said about some of **Peter's own writings**, especially the passage in 1 Peter 3:18-22
- III. This is **one of the most difficult passages**, not only in this epistle, but in the entire NT
  - A. **Martin Luther**: "This is a more wonderful text and a darker saying than almost any in the New Testament, so that **I do not rightly know what St Peter means.**" (Bold emphasis added, quoted in Hanson, 93:100)
  - B. **John Feinberg**: "As one approaches the commentaries on this passage, he is met by a **veritable maze of positions**. Not only is there **variation in understanding of the overall meaning of the passage**, but there is also **variety in interpretation of almost every element in it.**" (Bold emphasis added, 48:306)
  - C. **R. T. France**: "The whole passage has given rise to **more monographs, additional notes, and excursuses than almost any other**. Yet there is probably no more agreement about its exegesis now than there ever has been." (Bold emphasis added, 264)
- IV. The passage has been **variously translated** in our English versions, and the NKJV and the NASB are representative of **the basic differences**
  - A. NKJV: <sup>18</sup>For Christ also **suffered** once for sins, the just for the unjust, that He might bring us to God, being put to death in the flesh but made alive **by the Spirit**, <sup>19</sup>**by whom** also He went and **preached to the spirits in prison**, <sup>20</sup>who formerly were disobedient, when once the Divine longsuffering waited in the days of Noah, while *the* ark was being prepared, in which a few, that is, eight souls, were saved through water. [cf. KJV, NIV]
  - B. NASB: <sup>18</sup>For Christ also **died** for sins once for all, *the* just for *the* unjust, so that He might bring us to God, having been put to death in the flesh, but made alive **in the spirit**; <sup>19</sup>**in which** also He went and **made proclamation to the spirits now in prison**, <sup>20</sup>who once were disobedient, when the patience of God kept waiting in the days of Noah, during the construction of the ark, in which a few, that is, eight persons, were brought safely through *the* water. [cf. YLT, ASV, ESV, RSV, NRSV]
- V. As we try to understand this difficult passage, we must remember that **its context** deals with the subject of **suffering**
  - A. 1 Peter was written to **suffering saints** to encourage them in the midst of their afflictions (1 Pet. 2:19-21; 4:12-16, 19; 5:8-10)
  - B. 1 Pet. 3:13-17 clearly speaks about **suffering as a righteous person**
  - C. 1 Pet. 3:18 then turns to Christ as **the supreme example** in suffering
  - D. 1 Pet. 4:1-6 gives an **exhortation to suffering saints** on the basis of what has just been said
- VI. Therefore, any interpretation of this passage that does not **fit this context** cannot possibly be correct
  - A. **R. T. France**: "**Our exegesis must then be consistent with this context. Verses 18-22 must have something relevant to say to those facing fierce hostility in the name of Christ** It is the fault of many interpretations of the passage that they ignore this requirement, and so accuse the author of inserting an irrelevant doctrinal digression in the middle of his exhortation." (Bold emphasis added, 265-266)

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**VII.** There are several **important questions** that must be answered if this perplexing passage is to be interpreted correctly

**A.** Who are the “**spirits**”?

**1. The spirits of men**

**a.** Men who **repented** before they were killed in the flood

**b.** Men who **sinned** in the days of Noah

**c.** Righteous **OT saints**

**1)** As incredible as this seems, since the “spirits” are “**disobedient**” and in “**prison,**” some interpreters have “found” **righteous OT saints** in this passage

**d.** Righteous **Jews and Gentiles** before Christ

**e.** **All men** who lived before Christ (Roberts, 2)

**2. Angelic spirits**

**3. Both**

**B.** Who did the **preaching**?

**1. Christ**

**2. Noah** (inspired by Christ)

**3. Enoch**

**4. The apostles** (while living or after death)

**C.** **When** was this preaching done?

**1.** In Christ’s **preexistent state** in the days of Noah

**2.** Between Christ’s **death** and **resurrection**

**3.** After Christ’s **resurrection**

**4.** During Christ’s **ascension**

**D.** What was **the content** of this preaching?

**1.** A proclamation of **release** from Purgatory, Limbo, or Hades

**2.** A proclamation of **salvation** (*i.e.* a “second chance”)

**3.** A proclamation of **repentance** or **judgment** (for the antediluvians)

**4.** A proclamation of **judgment** and **condemnation** (for wicked men and/or fallen angels)

**5.** A proclamation of **triumph** and **victory**

**E.** Where was **the prison**?

**1.** The **physical body**

**2.** **Sin** and **ignorance**

**3.** **Limbo**

**4.** **Purgatory**

5. **Hades** (Lk. 16:23; Acts 2:27, 31)
6. **Tartarus** (2 Pet. 2:4; cf. Jude 6)
7. The **abyss** (Lk. 8:31; Rom. 10:7; Rev. 9:1-2, 11; 11:7; 17:8; 20:1, 3)
8. The **lower heavens**

F. What is **the relevance** to the context?

VIII. In this study, we want to:

- A. Exegete the passage
- B. Explain, examine, and evaluate the **major interpretations**

### An Exposition Of 1 Peter 3:18 – 4:6:

#### I. Christ's suffering (1 Pet. 3:18a)

##### A. "For Christ also suffered"

1. The word "**for**" (*hoti*) indicates that v. 18 gives a **reason** to support v. 17 or vv. 13-17
2. The word "**also**" ties Christ's suffering to the suffering of Christians as well
3. There is a **textual variation** in the Greek MSS
  - a. The majority of Greek MSS read "**died** (*apethanen*)"
    - 1) **J.N.D. Kelly**: "The fact is that **died** is, in view of the writer's predilection for 'suffer', the more difficult reading and as such would have strong claims even without the weight of MS testimony." (148)
    - 2) Some English translations follow this rendering [NASB, NIV, RSV]
  - b. Other Greek MSS (*e.g.*, B, K, & P) read "**suffered**" (*epathen*)
    - 1) Perhaps this rendering was influenced by **Peter's use of "suffered"** elsewhere in the letter (1 Pet. 2:21; 4:1)
    - 2) And the word "suffered" seems to **better fit the context**
      - a) To say "**For Christ also suffered,**" instead of "**For Christ also died,**" seems to better fit what immediately precedes and follows (1 Pet. 3:17; 4:1)
    - 3) Several English translations follow this rendering [YLT, KJV, NKJV, ASV, ESV, NRSV]
  - c. However, **the sense** of the passage is **essentially the same** regardless
    - 1) **Christ's suffering** certainly involved **His death** (cf. Lk. 22:15; Acts 17:3)
4. Just as Jesus suffered, although innocent, Christians must be **willing to accept undeserved suffering** (cf. 1 Pet. 2:18-23)

##### B. "Once"

1. The rendering "**once for all**" [NASB, NIV, RSV, NRSV] does not mean "**for all people,**" but rather "**for all time**" (the words do not represent an additional phrase in the Greek text but are simply part of the translation of *hapax*, "once")
2. Unlike the repeated and ineffective animal sacrifices of the old covenant, **Jesus' one-time sacrifice** is **abundantly effective** for all time (Rom. 6:10; Heb. 7:26-27; 9:12, 25-28; 10:10, 12)

### C. “For sins”

1. Peter has already emphasized the **redemptive nature** of Christ’s death (1 Pet. 1:18-19; 2:24-25)
2. Jesus made **the perfect offering for sin** (cf. Heb. 9:11-14; 10:1-10), perfectly **fulfilling the requirements** of God’s law, and **paying the penalty** for our sins
3. Peter’s statement “highlights the **absolute sufficiency** and **unique value** of Christ’s sacrifice” (Bold emphasis added, Kelly, 148)

### D. “The just for the unjust”

1. Peter has already emphasized **Christ’s innocence** (1 Pet. 1:19; 2:21-24)
2. His language is reminiscent of Isaiah’s description of the **Suffering Servant** (Isa. 53:5-6, 11-12)
3. “*The righteous* implies that his suffering was **propitiatory** (satisfying all God’s own demands), while *for* (lit. ‘on behalf of’) shows that it was also **vicarious**.” (Bold emphasis added, Wheaton, n.p.)
4. This language “continues the sacrificial allusion by reminding [us] of the **substitutionary principle**, which required an **unblemished animal**, and also very likely alludes to Is. 53:11....” (Bold emphasis added, France, 267)
5. **David Wheaton**: “The one person whose perfect righteousness meant that he **never deserved to die** endured the pains of death on behalf of all who **did deserve to die**. In this way Jesus **took our place** and **endured our punishment**.” (Bold emphasis added, n.p.)

### E. “Bring us to God”

1. The verb “**bring**” (*prosago*) “is found in classical Greek, where it can mean the bringing of a person before a tribunal, or the presentation of a person at a royal court” (Dalton, 135)
2. MSS evidence is divided between “**you**” (*humas*) and “**us**” (*hemas*) in this clause
  - a. Several MSS (B, C, P<sup>72</sup>, etc.) read “**you**”, but “**us**” has better MSS authority (Kelly, 149)
3. The death of Christ gives men **access to God** (Rom. 5:2; Eph. 2:18; 3:12)

## II. Christ’s Triumph (1 Pet. 3:18b-22)

### A. “Put to death in [the] flesh but made alive in [the] spirit”

1. What does Peter mean when he contrasts “**flesh**” and “**spirit**”?
  - a. Jesus’ **physical body** vs. His **spirit** or **soul**
    - 1) **Flesh & spirit** often refers to the **body & soul** (cf. Num. 16:22; Eccl. 12:7; Mt. 26:41; Mk. 14:38; Lk. 24:39; Jn. 3:6?; Rom. 8:1, 4-5, 9, 13?; 1 Cor. 5:5?; 2 Cor. 7:1; Gal. 5:16-17?; 6:8?; Col. 2:5?; 1 Tim. 3:16?; 1 Pet. 4:6)
    - 2) Compare “**body**” and “**spirit**” (Rom. 8:10, 13, 23; 1 Cor. 5:3; 6:20?; 7:34; 1 Th. 5:23; Jas. 2:26)
    - 3) Note: In Greek philosophy, “**flesh and spirit**” would refer to the **material** and **immaterial** “parts” of a man
  - b. Jesus **physical body** vs. the **Holy Spirit**
    - 1) **Flesh & spirit** sometimes refers to the **body & the Holy Spirit** (cf. Jn. 3:6?; Rom. 8:1, 4-5, 13?; 2 Cor. 3:3; Gal. 5:16-17?; 6:8?; 1 Tim. 3:16?)

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c. Jesus' **human nature** vs. Jesus' **divine nature**

- 1) **R. T. France:** “[T]he New Testament never speaks of two natures in Christ, let alone using *sarx* and *pneuma* to describe them.” (267)

d. The **physical realm** vs. the **spiritual realm**

- 1) **Flesh & spirit** sometimes contrasts the **physical realm and the spiritual realm** (cf. Rom. 1:3-4; Gal. 3:3?; 4:29; 1 Tim. 3:16?)
- 2) **R. T. France:** “*sarx* in the New Testament denotes **the natural human sphere of existence**, and *pneuma* in contrast with it denotes **the supernatural sphere**.” (Bold emphasis added, 267)
- a) **R. T. France:** “The closest parallel to the present use is Paul’s careful distinction between two modes of existence, *psuchikos* and *pneumatikos*, in 1 Corinthians 15:42ff. **His distinction there is not between ‘body’ and ‘soul’, but between two types of body**, adapted to two different modes of existence. So here the contrast is between **Christ’s death in the natural sphere**, and **his risen life in the eternal, spiritual sphere**. His earthly life ended, but that was succeeded by his heavenly life. Thus the second phrase does not refer to **Christ disembodied**, but to **Christ risen** to life on a new plane.” (Bold emphasis added, 267)
- 3) **J.N.D. Kelly:** “By **flesh** is meant Christ in His human sphere of existence, considered as a man among men. By **spirit** is meant Christ in His heavenly, spiritual sphere of existence, considered as divine spirit...; and this does not exclude His bodily nature, since as risen from the dead it is glorified....regarded as man, Christ was done to death, but, regarded as eternal spirit, that same Christ in the fullness of His being, His body of course included, has been restored to life by God’s power.” (151)
- 4) **William J. Dalton:** “The contrast of flesh-spirit appears often in the New Testament: Mt 26:41; Mk 14:38; **Jn** 3:6; 6:63; Rom 1:4; 8:4,5,6,9.13; 1 Cor 5:5; 2 Cor 7:1; Gal 3:3; 4:29; 5:16,17 (2), 19; 6:8; Col 2:5; 1 Tim 3:16; Heb 12:9; 1 Pet 3:18; 4:6. Putting aside for the moment the two examples from 1 Peter which are under discussion, it can be said with confidence that **in none of the cases given above is the flesh-spirit distinction to be taken as a distinction between body and soul**. In most cases the distinction is quite clear: it refers to two orders of being, **the flesh representing human nature** in its weakness, its proclivity to evil, its actual evil once it opposes the influence of God; **the spirit representing the consequence of God’s salvation**, the presence and activity among us of the Spirit of God.” (Bold emphasis added, 138)
- a) Note: I don’t agree with Dalton’s analysis, but I may be wrong

2. What does Peter mean when he contrasts “**put to death**” and “**made alive**”?

a. Jesus' **physical death** vs. His “**vivification**”

- 1) “**Vivification**” is the term used by some writers to describe some kind of an **energizing of Jesus’ spirit** while disembodied (cf. Psa. 38:7; Rom. 4:17)
- 2) This is not the same thing as “**resurrection**” which would involve the **re-embodiment of Jesus’ soul in His body** (cf. 1 Ki. 17:21-23; Lk. 8:55)

b. Jesus' **physical death** vs. His **resurrection**

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- 1) **Resurrection** would involve the **reuniting of Jesus' spirit or soul with His body** (cf. Rom. 8:11; 1 Cor. 15:22)
  - 2) In other passages, “**raised**” (*egeiro*) and “**give life**” (*zoopoieo*) are used interchangeably (cf. Rom. 8:11; 2 Cor. 1: 9 & Rom. 4:17; Jn. 5:21; 1 Cor. 15:22, 35, 42-44, 52)
  - 3) Note: The untranslated **men-de construction** in the Greek text (“on the one hand – on the other hand”) emphasizes “**made alive**”
3. Note: **The datives** in v. 18 should be **translated the same**
- a. Either: “**by [the] flesh**” and “**by [the] Spirit**”
    - 1) **Gareth Reese**: “If both are taken as a **dative of means**, it says that Christ was put to death **by means of ‘flesh’** (i.e., by men), and made alive (probably speaking of His resurrection) **by means of the Holy Spirit.**” (Bold emphasis added, 86)
    - 2) Note: This is a translation that few, if any, have suggested
  - b. Or: “**in [the] flesh**” and “**in [the] spirit**” (cf. ASV, NASB, RSV, NRSV, YLT)
    - 1) **Gareth Reese**: “If both are taken as a **dative of sphere**, then the verse says **Christ’s flesh was put to death** (He was put to death in the sphere of flesh), but **His spirit continued to live on** (He was energized in the sphere of spirit).” (Bold emphasis added, 86)
  - c. Not: “**in [the] flesh**” and “**by [the] Spirit**” (KJV, NKJV)
    - 1) **Wayne Grudem**: “It would...be somewhat unusual if the same grammatical structure used in parallel parts of the same sentence were meant to be understood differently (*i.e.* put to death *in* the body but made alive *by* the Spirit).” (226)
    - 2) **Wayne Grudem**: “Moreover, a different grammatical construction (*hypo* with genitive, as in 2 Pet. 1:21, ‘moved by the Holy Spirit’; also in 1 Pet. 2:4; 2 Pet. 1:17; 3:2) would have been more normal – and certainly clearer – if Peter had wanted to say ‘made alive *by* the Spirit’.” (226)
    - 3) **R. T. France**: “The datives *sarki* and *pneumati* are usually, and rightly, taken as ‘**datives of reference**’, meaning ‘**as to the flesh**’, ‘**as to the spirit**’. *Pneumati* alone could be taken as instrumental, ‘made alive *by* the spirit’, but it would make little sense to speak of Jesus being ‘put to death *by* the flesh’, and the two balancing phrases may be assumed to have the same grammatical structure.” (280, n. 35)
    - 4) **William J. Dalton**: “The majority of authors, with good reason, seen [*sic*] in both cases a **dative of reference** (or adverbial dative). In that case, it could be translated ‘**with regard to**’, or better ‘**in the sphere of**’. Thus the term ‘spirit’ in the second half of the antithesis would more naturally be taken impersonally.” (Bold emphasis added, 141)

## B. “In which”

### I. “In which (spirit)”

- a. The relative pronoun “**in which**” (*en ho*) refers back to the antecedent “**spirit**” (*pneuma*)
  - 1) Objection: Nowhere else in the NT is an adverbial dative (“in the spirit”) the antecedent of a relative pronoun (“in which” or “by whom”)
    - a) Reply: There are **several “adverbial datives”** in the NT which serve as **antecedents to a relative pronoun** (Acts 2:8; Eph. 2:2, 3; 2 Pet. 1:4; 2 Pet. 3:1) (Grudem, 227-228)

b) Reply: The early Church Fathers, such as Clement of Alexandria and Origen, who were certainly skilled in Greek, **understood “spirit” to be the antecedent of “in which”** (Dalton, 145; Kelly, 152; France, 280, n. 37)

1) **William J. Dalton**: “[A]ll of the ancient Greek interpreters understood the relative in 3:19 as referring directly to ‘spirit’.” (145, n. 9)

b. **John Feinberg**: “If one treats *pneumati* as the referent of *en ho*, then one of four possible ways are available for translating it, viz., ‘**in which,**’ ‘**by which,**’ ‘**in whom,**’ or ‘**by whom.**’” (Bold emphasis added, 319)

c. “**In which spirit**” has been interpreted as:

1) “In which **spirit**”

2) “In which **spiritual realm**”

3) “By which **Spirit**”

d. Note: If “**in which**” (v. 19) is a relative pronoun and “**spirit**” (v. 18) is its antecedent, they must both refer to the same thing. One cannot interpret “spirit” to mean a “**disembodied spirit**” or the “**realm of the spirit**” and “in which” to mean the **Holy Spirit** (Roberts, 4)

## 2. “On which occasion”

a. There is **no antecedent**; *en ho* means “**when**” (*i.e.* in the course of the events previously mentioned – the death-resurrection sequence) (France, 268)

1) *En ho* occurs in **this sense** elsewhere in the NT (Mk. 2:19 // Lk. 5:34; Lk. 19:13; Jn. 5:7) and in 1 Peter (1 Pet. 1:6; 2:12; 3:16; 4:4)

2) Objection: In none of these cases is there **any masculine or neuter noun** in the preceding clause which could be taken as **the antecedent**. Such is not the case here

a) **R. T. France**: “Here the presence of an eligible antecedent *immediately* before *en ho* places a strong presumption in favour of its translation as a straightforward relative.” (269)

b) **William J. Dalton**: “There seems to be no reason why an adverbial dative cannot be used, like any other dative, as the antecedent for a relative pronoun.” (145)

## C. “Also He went”

1. This has been interpreted basically in three different ways:

a. Christ’s **preexistence** (1 Pet. 1:10-11)

b. Christ’s **descent** to Hades (Lk. 23:43; Acts 2:25-32)

c. Christ’s **ascension** (Mk. 16:19; Lk. 24:50-51; Acts 1:9-11; 2:33)

## D. “Preached to the spirits in prison”

1. “**Preached**” (*kerusso*)

a. In the **LXX**, *kerusso* is used of:

1) A **crying aloud** (cf. Hos. 5:8; Zeph. 3:14; Zech. 9:9)

2) A proclamation of **judgment** (Hos. 5:8; Joel 2:1; Jon. 1:2; 3:2, 4)

3) A proclamation of **salvation** (Isa. 61:1)

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- b.* In the NT, *kerusso* is used of:
- 1)* A proclamation of **the gospel** (Mt. 26:13; Mk. 13:10; 14:9; 16:15; Gal. 2:2; 1 Th. 2:9)
    - a)* **Repentance** (Mt. 3:1-2; 4:17; Mk. 1:4, 14; 6:12; Lk. 3:3; 24:47)
    - b)* **The gospel of the kingdom** (Mt. 4:23; 9:35; 24:14; Mk. 1:14; Lk. 8:1)
    - c)* **The kingdom of heaven** (Mt. 10:7)
    - d)* **Baptism of repentance** (Mk. 1:4; Lk. 3:3)
    - e)* **Liberty** to the captives (Lk. 4:18)
    - f)* **The acceptable year** of the Lord (Lk. 4:19)
    - g)* **The kingdom of God** (Lk. 9:2; Acts 20:25; 28:31)
    - h)* **Repentance and remission of sins** (Lk. 24:47)
    - i)* **Christ** (Acts 8:5; 9:20; 1 Cor. 15:12; Phil. 1:15)
    - j)* **The word** (Acts 10:37; 2 Tim. 4:2)
    - k)* **Jesus** (Acts 19:13)
    - l)* **The word of faith** (Rom. 10:8)
    - m)* **Christ crucified** (1 Cor. 1:23)
    - n)* **The Son of God, Jesus Christ** (2 Cor. 1:19)
    - o)* **Christ Jesus, the Lord** (2 Cor. 4:5)
    - p)* **The hope of the gospel** (Col. 1:23)
  - 2)* A proclamation of **other things**:
    - a)* **Secrets** (Mt. 10:27?; Lk. 12:3)
    - b)* **Healings** (Mk. 1:45; 5:20; 7:36; Lk. 8:39)
    - c)* **Moses** (Acts 15:21)
    - d)* **A moral principle** (Rom. 2:21)
    - e)* **Another Jesus** (2 Cor. 11:4)
    - f)* **Circumcision** (Gal. 5:11)
    - g)* **A question** (Rev. 5:2)
- c.* **R. T. France**: “The verb means **‘to act as herald’**; and so is **essentially neutral as to the content of the message.**” (Bold emphasis added, 271)
- 2.* **“Spirits”** (*pneuma*):
- a.* This term has been interpreted basically in three different ways:
    - 1)* **The spirits of men**
    - 2)* **Angelic spirits**
    - 3)* Both **fallen angels** and **wicked men** (Reicke, 59)
- 3.* **“Prison”** (*phulake*):
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- a. This word can refer to a **condition** or a **place** of imprisonment. In this context, it obviously refers to a **place of imprisonment**
  - b. This place of imprisonment has been interpreted as:
    - 1) The figurative prison of **ignorance and sin**
    - 2) The figurative prison of **the physical body**
    - 3) **Hades**: The place of disembodied spirits
    - 4) **Tartarus**: The prison of disobedient angels (2 Pet. 2:4)
    - 5) **The heavenlies** (cf. Eph. 3:10; 6:12)
      - a) Note: Jewish pseudepigraphal literature speaks of a **prison** for disobedient angels in **various locations**
        - 1) In the **depths** of the earth (Jubilees 5:5-7, 10)
          - a) Note: Satan's "**prison**" (Rev. 20:7) was the "**abyss**" (Rev. 20:1, 3)
        - 2) In "**bonds of the earth**" (1 Enoch 14:5)
        - 3) In **darkness** (1 Enoch 10:4-7)
        - 4) In the **valleys of the earth** (1 Enoch 10:11-14)
        - 5) At the "**end of heaven and earth**" (1 Enoch 18:12-14)
        - 6) In the **abyss** (1 Enoch 21:1-7)
        - 7) A "**deep valley** with burning fire" (1 Enoch 54:1-5)
        - 8) In a "**burning valley**...in the **west** among the mountains of gold" (1 Enoch 67:4)
        - 9) The **second** heaven (2 Enoch 7:1-3; cf. 2 Cor. 12:2)
        - 10) The **fifth** heaven (2 Enoch 18:1-6) (Karris, 148)
      - b) Note: There may be **allusions to 1 Enoch** in the NT (cf. Jude 4, 6, 13; 2 Pet. 2:4; 3:13)

#### E. "Who formerly were disobedient"

- 1. The adverb "**formerly**" (*pote*) can be used for something that occurs:
  - a. In the **future** (Lk. 22:32; Rom. 1:10)
  - b. In the **past** (Jn. 9:13; Rom. 7:9; 11:30; Gal. 1:13, 23; Eph. 2:2-3, 11, 13; 5:8; Col. 1:21; 3:7; Tit. 3:3; Phile. 11; 1 Pet. 2:10; 3:5, 20; 2 Pet. 1:21)
  - c. **At any time** (1 Cor. 9:7; Eph. 5:29; 1 Th. 2:5; Heb. 1:5, 13; 2:1)
  - d. **At last** (Phil. 4:10)
- 2. But in this context, it almost certainly refers to something that has **occurred in the past**
  - a. The **disobedience** under consideration occurred before, and resulted in, the **imprisonment**, which occurred before **the preaching**

- I) **Note:** Some argue on the basis of Greek grammar (*i.e.* the Greek participle translated “disobedient” without the article “the”) that **the time of the disobedience and the preaching were coextensive** (See Brown, 98-99)
3. This **disobedience** has been interpreted as:
- a. The **sins of the antediluvians** (Gen. 6:5, 11-13)
  - b. The sin of **angels intermarrying with humans** (Gen. 6:1-2, 4)
    - I) **William J. Dalton:** “This interpretation of Gen 6:1-4 prevailed in Jewish and Christian circles until the beginning of the fourth century.” (167, n. 9)
  - c. **Both**
  - d. **Some other sin of angels** at the time of the flood (2 Pet. 2:4-5)
- F. **“When once the longsuffering of God waited in the days of Noah, while the ark was being prepared”**
1. This identifies the **time of disobedience as the time before the flood**
  2. This reminds us that God is **patient with sinners**, not willing that any perish (2 Pet. 3:9), always allowing the **cup of iniquity to overflow** before bringing judgment (Gen. 15:16; Dan. 8:23; Mt. 23:32-36)
- G. **“In which a few, that is eight souls, were saved through water”**
1. **“Eight persons”** [NASB, ESV, RSV, NRSV] is literally **“eight souls”** [YLT, KJV, NKJV, ASV]
    - a. Sometimes the word **“soul”** (*pseuche*) is used to stand for **the whole person** (cf. Acts 2:41; 27:37; Rom. 13:1)
  2. Peter probably mentions the salvation of Noah’s family in the ark to **encourage the suffering saints** in Peter’s day who were a **small minority** when compared to the unbelievers and persecutors that surrounded them
- H. **“There is also an antitype which now saves us, namely baptism”**
1. **Gareth Reese:** “Does the word ‘figure’ refer back to ‘ark’ or ‘water’? The relative pronoun is neuter. *Antitupon* is neuter. ‘Ark’ is feminine. ‘Water’ is neuter. The question is settled! The water of the flood and the water of baptism correspond as type and antitype.” (94)
  2. **Noah’s salvation** through the waters of the flood (Gen. 7:17-18) is a type of **our salvation** through baptism
- I. **“(Not the removal of the filth of the flesh, but the answer of a good conscience toward God)”**
1. Baptism is not an **outward cleansing** of dirt from the body
  2. Baptism involves an **inward cleansing** of the soul
  3. The word **“answer”** (*eperotema*) has been translated as:
    - a. **“Question”** (YLT)
    - b. **“Answer”** (KJV, NKJV)
    - c. **“Interrogation”** (ASV)
    - d. **“Appeal”** (NASB, ESV, RSV, NRSV)

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1) **William J. Dalton:** “There is no other example of the noun used with this meaning [‘request’] in the whole of ancient Greek literature.” (208)

2) But the verb [*eperotao*] is translated “ask” 53x in the KJV (*Enhanced Strong’s Lexicon*)

e. “Pledge” (NIV)

1) **D. Edmond Hiebert:** “The papyri show that the noun *eperotema* was at times used in a technical sense to denote **the question-and-answer process in establishing a formal agreement**. In usage this term, which denotes only the asking of a question, also came to include the response. In juristic language it was used to denote a legal contract. This usage made the term suitable to the solemnities in connection with Christian baptism, involving the questions asked of the baptismal candidate and his personal response concerning his faith and commitment.” (Bold emphasis added, 155)

2) **William J. Dalton:** “[T]he earliest use of the verb with this meaning [‘pledge’] was about C.E. 170; the earliest corresponding use of the noun belongs to about the same period.” (208)

4. I believe Peter is saying that in baptism, the sinner is **calling on the Lord for salvation** (Acts 22:16). Thus in effect, baptism is the “**Sinner’s Prayer**”

a. In baptism the sinner says: “Please, God, as I enter this baptism which will cleanse my body outwardly I am asking you to cleanse my heart inwardly, forgive my sins, make me right before you.” (Grudem, 163)

J. “Through the resurrection of Jesus Christ”

1. Our salvation from sin is made possible through Christ’s resurrection, because that enabled Him to ascend to the right hand of God where **He presented His blood** in the Most Holy Place (Heb. 9:11-14, 24-26; 10:11-14)

K. “Who has gone into heaven and is at the right hand of God”

1. **Wayne Grudem:** “In the ancient world, to sit at the right hand of a king signified that **one acted with the king’s authority and power** (cf. Ps. 110:1 and Eph. 1:20-21, with similar emphasis on authority).” (Bold emphasis added, 165)

2. Christ sitting (or standing) at the right hand of God is often mentioned in the NT (Mt. 22:44; 26:64; Mk. 12:36; 14:62; 16:19; Lk. 20:42; 22:69; Acts 2:33-34; 5:31; 7:55-56; Rom. 8:34; Eph. 1:20; Col. 3:1; Heb. 1:3, 13; 8:1; 10:12; 12:2; 1 Pet. 3:22)

3. Christ’s ascension **foreshadows** our own future ascension (1 Th. 4:17)

L. “Angels, and authorities and powers having been made subject to Him”

1. **Christ’s exaltation and the subjugation of all supernatural powers** (Col. 2:9-10, 14-15; Eph. 1:20-21) would be a **great source of encouragement** for persecuted Christians to persevere in the knowledge of ultimate victory

III. The Christian’s Attitude Toward Suffering (1 Pet. 4:1-6)

A. The Attitude Christians Should Adopt (4:1)

B. The Christians’ Former Life In Sin (4:2-3)

C. The Reaction Of Unbelievers To The Christian’s New Life (4:4)

D. The Judgment Of These Unbelievers (4:5)

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- I. The unbelievers will **give an account** on Judgment Day, especially for their treatment of Christians
  2. **“The living and the dead”** are not those who are **spiritually alive or dead**, but those who are **physically alive or dead** (cf. Acts 10:42; Rom. 14:9; 2 Tim. 4:1)
    - a. On Judgment Day, **Jesus will judge all of humanity** (Mt. 25:31-33; Acts 17:30-31): those who are **alive on the earth** when He returns and those who have **already died** (cf. 1 Cor. 15:51-52; 1 Th. 4:15-16)
    - b. **No one will escape** this judgment
- E. The Preaching Of The Gospel To The Dead** (4:6)
1. **“The gospel was preached”**
    - a. This (*euangelizo*) is the technical term in the NT for the **preaching of the gospel** which calls for a **response of faith and obedience** resulting in **conversion**
  2. **“Those who are dead”**
    - a. Peter is not trying to explain **why Christ can judge not merely the living but also the dead** (*i.e.* because the gospel was preached in Hades to those who didn’t have an opportunity to hear it while alive on earth)
    - b. He is trying to **encourage and strengthen Christians** who are being derided and persecuted by their pagan neighbors
  3. **“Be judged according to men in the flesh”**
    - a. This is not talking about **final judgment**. This is a judgment of **men** in the **flesh**, not a judgment of **Christ** on His **throne** (Mt. 25:31-33)
      - 1) **“Judged”** [aorist tense] points to **some definite act**
      - 2) This judgment by men could involve:
        - a) Judgment by **law** (Jn. 7:51; 18:31; Acts 13:27)
        - b) **Criticism** (Rom. 2:1, 3; 14:3, 10, 13; cf. 1 Pet. 4:4)
        - c) **Passing judgment** upon or **expressing an opinion** (Mt. 7:1; Jn. 7:24; 8:15)
          - 1) “This is perh. the place for 1 Pt 4:6...” (BAGD, 452)
          - 2) **Death** (cf. Jn. 5:24) [?]
          - 1) Unbelievers were evidently saying something like this: “You Christians give up the pleasures of this life; you suffer; you look for an inheritance to be revealed; but you die and disappear from the scene like anybody else” (Dalton, 229)
    - b. **“According to”** (*kata*) could mean:
      - 1) **“In the eyes of”** or **“in the opinion of”**
      - 2) **“Like”** or **“as”**
        - a) **William J. Dalton**: “In this case the contrast would be somewhat different: **though judged in the flesh like human beings** (in keeping with the common human lot), **they might live in the spirit like God**, sharing the life of God himself.” (Bold emphasis added, 238-239)

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#### 4. “Live according to God in the spirit”

- a. **William J. Dalton:** “Although **condemned (in death) in the eyes of human beings**, they will **live in the eyes of God**. For the pagans the order of the flesh is the final order: death is the final verdict on human destiny; but for God the believer ‘does not come into judgment (condemnation), but has passed from death to life’ (Jn 5:24).” (Bold emphasis added, 238)
- b. *Wisdom of Solomon* 3:1-5: “But the souls of the righteous are in the hand of God, and no torment will ever touch them. <sup>2</sup>**In the eyes of the foolish they seemed to have died, and their departure was thought to be a disaster,** <sup>3</sup>and their going from us to be their destruction; **but they are at peace.** <sup>4</sup>For though **in the sight of others they were punished, their hope is full of immortality.** <sup>5</sup>Having been disciplined a little, they will receive great good, because God tested them and found them worthy of himself;” (Bold emphasis added, NRSV)

### Interpretations Of 1 Peter 3:18-22

#### I. Interpretation #1: Enoch Preached In The Underworld

##### A. Explanation:

1. [See Appendix A: Getting It At A Glance]
2. Enoch was translated so that he **did not see death** (Gen. 5:24; Heb. 11:5)
  - a. Thus the **situation of Enoch** in his new heavenly existence paralleled the **new existence of Christ** (1 Pet. 3:18b)
3. Enoch prophesied about **ungodly false teachers** (Jude 3-4, 12-15)
4. Extra-biblical Jewish literature depicts **Enoch preaching to fallen angels** (1 Enoch 12:1-6; 13:1-10; 14:1-8; 16:1-4)
5. This pseudepigraphal material serves as **the background** for Peter’s perplexing passage

##### B. Argumentation:

1. The text should be **emended** so that instead of reading *en ho* in verse 19, one should read ***Enoch* or *en ho kai Enoch***
  - a. **A.T. Robertson:** “But, a number of modern scholars have followed Griesbach’s conjecture that the original text was either *Nōe kai* (Noah also), or *Enōch kai* (Enoch also), or *en hōi kai Enōch* (in which Enoch also) which an early scribe misunderstood or omitted *Enōch kai* in copying *homoioteleuton*.” (6:116-117)
2. Moffatt and Goodspeed have both **emended the text** in their translations
  - a. **Moffatt:** “<sup>18</sup>Christ himself died for sins, once for all, a just man for unjust men, that he might bring us near to God; in the flesh he was put to death but he came to life in the Spirit <sup>19</sup>(It was in the Spirit that **Enoch also went and preached** to the imprisoned spirits who had disobeyed at the time when God’s patience held out during the construction of the ark in the days of Noah....”
  - b. **Goodspeed:** “<sup>18</sup>For Christ himself died once for all, for sin, an upright man for unrighteous men, to bring us to God, and was physically put to death, but he was made alive in the Spirit. <sup>19</sup>**In it Enoch went and preached** even to those spirits that were in prison, who had once been disobedient, when in Noah’s time God in his patience waited for the ark to be made ready....”

**B. Evaluation:**

1. There is **no textual evidence** in any MSS of 1 Peter to sustain this conjectural emendation
2. The allusion to Enoch would make **little if any sense** in this context
  - a. **F. W. Beare:** “[I]t is hard to account for the sudden introduction of Enoch into an exposition of the work of Christ. ‘Christ was made alive in the spirit; Enoch went in spirit to preach to the spirits in prison’. **This is an unimaginable sequence**; he is not discussing activities of various personalities ‘in the spirit’, but the work of Christ, in the spirit as in the flesh. It is impossible to see what relevance Enoch’s visit to Hades could have for him in this connection.” (Bold emphasis added, 145)
  - b. **William J. Dalton:** “If Enoch is the person who makes the proclamation to the spirits, then the transition of thought from 3:18 to 3:19 is abrupt in the extreme. In any case, looking to the context, **it is hard to see how this ancient story about Enoch bears on the situation of the persecuted Christians.**” (Bold emphasis added, 144)
3. Enoch is represented in the *Book of Enoch* and elsewhere as **proclaiming doom** and nothing else on the fallen angels (1 Enoch 12:1-6; 13:1-4)

**II. Interpretation #2: Christ Preached In Limbo****A. Explanation:**

1. Between His death and resurrection, in His disembodied state, Christ went to **Limbo** to **release the souls of the righteous** who repented and were converted just before they died in the flood

**B. Argumentation:**

1. **In Catholic theology, “limbo” is the place between heaven and hell, where the souls of the OT saints were kept**

**C. Evaluation:**

1. **Robert Bellarmine** (AD 1542-1621) was apparently the first to propose this interpretation
2. The Bible is silent about such a place as **Limbo**
3. The spirits that Christ preached to were “**disobedient...in the days of Noah**” (1 Pet. 3:19-20)
4. The Genesis account indicates that **only Noah and his family were righteous** (Gen. 6:5, 11-13; 7:1)
5. There is no evidence in the Bible of any “**last minute conversion**” of any who died in the flood. In fact, the opposite is implied (cf. 2 Pet. 2:5, 9; 3:5-7)

**III. Interpretation #3: Christ Preached Through His Apostles**

A. Explanation:

1. After His resurrection and ascension, in His exalted state, **Christ preached the gospel to unbelievers through the apostles** after Pentecost
2. **B. C. Caffin:** “Some commentators, as Socinus and Grotius, refer St. Peter’s words to the preaching of Christ through the apostles. These writers understand *phulake* of the prison of the body, or the prison of sin; and explain St. Peter as meaning that Christ preached through the apostles to the Jews who were under the yoke of the Law, and to the Gentiles who lay under the power of the devil; and they regard the disobedient in the time of Noah as a sample of sinners in any age.” (22:136)

B. Argumentation:

1. Christ preached the gospel to **the Gentiles** (Acts 26:23; Eph. 2:17)
2. Since Jesus confined His Public Ministry to “**the lost sheep of the house of Israel**” (Mt. 15:24), His preaching to the Gentiles had to be done **through the apostles**

C. Evaluation:

1. The apostles are **not even mentioned** in this passage
2. The preaching in this passage was to “**the spirits in prison**” who had been “**disobedient...in the days of Noah,**” not first-century Gentiles
3. This interpretation unjustifiably views the “**prison**” figuratively as **the prison of the body** or **the prison of sin and ignorance**
4. Christ’s preaching through the apostles after Pentecost does not fit the **apparent chronological sequence** in the passage
  - a. **Death** (“put to death in the flesh”) (3:18b)
  - b. **Vivification** or **Resurrection** (“made alive in the spirit”) (3:18b)
  - c. **Descent** or **Ascension** (“He went”) (3:19a)
  - d. **Preaching** (“preached to the spirits in prison”) (3:19b)
  - e. **Ascension** (“who has gone into heaven”) (3:22a)
  - f. **Coronation** (“at the right hand of God”) (3:22b)

**IV. Interpretation #4: Christ Preached In Hades**

A. Explanation:

1. Between His death and resurrection, in His disembodied state, Christ went to **Hades** and **preached** to the **disembodied spirits of human beings**
2. The nature of **Christ’s preaching** is variously explained:
  - a. A proclamation of **salvation**
    - 1) **William Dalton:** “It is reasonably clear that, if it can be shown that both 1 Pet 3:19 and 4:6 refer to the same activity of Christ in his descent to the abode of the dead, then we are dealing with a **proclamation of salvation**. In 4:6 **the gospel is preached to the ‘dead’ in order that they might live!**” (Bold emphasis added, 34)
  - b. A proclamation of **release**

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c. A proclamation of **condemnation**

**B. Argumentation:**

1. The contrast between “**put to death in flesh**” and “**made alive in spirit**” would seem most naturally to refer to **Christ’s body** vs. **Christ’s spirit** (cf. Mt. 26:41 // Mk. 14:38; Lk. 24:39; Jn. 3:6; 2 Cor. 7:1; 1 Tim. 3:16)
  2. The word “**spirits**” can refer to the **souls** of men (Lk. 23:46; Acts 7:59; Heb. 12:9; Num. 16:22; 27:16)
  3. The word “**spirits**” can refer to the **disembodied souls of men** (Eccl. 12:7; Heb. 12:23; cf. Rev. 6:9; 20:4)
  4. The disembodied spirits of the dead go to *Sheol* or *Hades* (1 Sam. 2:6; Psa. 89:48; Pr. 9:18; 23; Isa. 14:9; Lk. 16:23)
    - a. Note: Some question whether **righteous souls go to Hades** at death (Roberts, 6-7)
  5. The **ungodly** are **reserved under punishment** for the day of judgment (Lk. 16:19-31; 2 Pet. 2:9)
  6. The inhabitants of Hades are **conscious** and able to **communicate** (Isa. 14:9-11; Lk. 16:19-31)
  7. **Christ’s spirit** went to *Hades* while His body was in the tomb (Acts 2:26-27, 29-32)
    - a. There are **two possible objections** to the idea of Christ’s descent to Hades
      - 1) It is possible to understand Acts 2:27, 31 as meaning “**You will not let me go to Hades**” (cf. NASB, ESV, RSV, NRSV)
      - 2) Some scholars have argued that *Sheol* in the OT always means “grave”; therefore this OT quotation (Psa. 16:10) simply means that Jesus’ body was not left in the tomb (cf. NIV) (Roberts, 7)
    - b. Christ descended into **the abyss** (Rom. 10:6-8)
    - c. Christ has **the keys of Death and Hades** (Rev. 1:17-18)
    - d. Christ was raised, not merely from death, but “**from the dead**” (cf. Mt. 17:9; Acts 4:10; Rom. 4:24; 1 Cor. 15:20)
    - e. Jesus prophesied that the Son of Man would be “three days and three nights in **the heart of the earth**” (Mt. 12:40)
    - f. Some Bible passages may indicate that the **abode of the dead** is in the **depths of the earth** (Psa. 30:3; Isa. 14:15; Lk. 10:15; Phil. 2:10; Rev. 5:13)
  8. The spirits in prison were those who “**formerly were disobedient**” in the days of Noah (1 Pet. 3:19-20)
  9. The gospel was **preached to the dead** (1 Pet. 4:6)
    - a. This passage is obviously referring to **human beings**
    - b. **John S. Feinberg:** “If the *pneumasin* [spirits] of 3:19 are the same as the beings mentioned in 4:6, then one must identify the *pneumasin* [spirits] of 3:19 as **disembodied spirits of human beings**.” (Bold emphasis added, 320-321)
  10. The **Syriac Peshito’s translation** of 1 Peter 3:19 supports this interpretation
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- a. “And He preached (there) to the souls who were **shut up in Sheol**, those who had before been disobedient in the days of Noah.” (Quoted in Reicke, 34)
11. The early “**Church Fathers**” interpreted 1 Peter 3:19 as a reference to Christ’s descent to Hades to preach to its inhabitants
- a. **Melito** [AD 170] (*On Faith*, V, ANF, 8:757)
- b. **Irenaeus** [ca. AD 180] (*Against Heresies* 3:20:4, ANF, 1:451; 3:22:4, ANF, 1:455; 4:22:1, ANF, 1:494; 4:27:2, ANF, 1:499; 4:23:1, ANF, 1:506; 4:33:12, ANF, 1:510; 5:31:1, ANF, 1:560)
- c. **Clement of Alexandria** [AD 190] (*The Stromata*, 6:6, ANF, 2:490-492)
- d. **Hyppolytus** [ca. AD 200] (*Treatise On Christ And Antichrist*, 26, ANF, 5:209; 45, ANF, 5:213; *On Psalm CIX. Or CX*, 1, ANF, 5:170; *On Luke*, 23, ANF, 5:194)
- e. **Tertullian** [AD 210] (*A Treatise On The Soul*, 55, ANF, 3:231)
- f. **Origin** [ca. AD 228] (*De principiis* 2:5, ANF, 4:279; *Against Celsus*, 2:43, ANF, 4:448)
- g. **Alexander of Alexandria** [ca. 324] (*Epistles On The Arian Heresy*, 5, ANF, 6:301)
- h. **B. C. Caffin**: “The early Greek Fathers appear to have held, with one consent, that Peter is here speaking of that descent into Hades of which He had spoken in His first great sermon (Acts ii:31).” (22:135)
12. The nature of Christ’s preaching is variously interpreted:
- a. He proclaimed **the gospel**, offering a “**second chance**” to unbelievers
- 1) Because the contemporaries of Noah were proverbial for **extreme wickedness**, some believe that in this text they represent **the wicked in general**
- 2) The word “**preached**” (*kerusso*) is commonly used for **the proclamation of the gospel**  
[See above p. 56]
- 3) Peter’s description of Noah as a “**preacher (kerux) of righteousness**” (2 Pet. 2:5) would suggest a **call to repentance**
- 4) Some of the early “**Church Fathers**” believed that Christ preached the gospel in Hades
- a) **B. C. Caffin**: “Hence Jerome, Ambrose, Augustine, and others were led to suppose that the Lord not only raised the holy dead to a higher state of blessedness, but preached also to the disobedient, and that some of these believed; and were by his grace delivered from ‘prison.’” (22:136)
- b) **B. C. Caffin**: “Some few, as Cyril of Alexandria, held that the Lord spoiled the house of the strong man armed..., and released all his captives. This Augustine reckoned as a heresy.” (22:136)
- b. He announced **the release of the righteous** from the underworld so that they might be transferred to heaven
- 1) **B. C. Caffin**: “Origen, in his second homily on 1 Kings, taught that the Lord, descending into Hades, brought the souls of the holy dead, the patriarchs and prophets, out of Hades into paradise; no souls could pass the flaming sword till he had led the way; but now, through his grace and power, the blessed dead who die in the Lord enter at once into the rest of Paradise – not yet heaven, but an intermediate place of rest, far better than that from which the saints of the old covenant were delivered.” (22:136)
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- 2) There are NT passages that suggest at least the possibility that **the righteous have been released from Hades**
    - a) Stephen asked the Lord in heaven to **receive his spirit** (Acts 7:55-56, 59)
    - b) Paul said that to die was to **“be with Christ”** (Phil. 1:23)
    - c) Paul said that to be **“absent from the body”** was to be **“present with the Lord”** (2 Cor. 5:6-8)
      - 1] Note: This is during the intermediate state while the spirit is disembodied
    - d) The Hebrew writer seems to suggest that **the disembodied spirits of the righteous are in heaven** (Heb. 12:22-24)
    - e) The book of Revelation speaks of **the righteous dead being in heaven** while much is still going on here on earth
      - 1] The martyred souls are **underneath the altar** (Rev. 6:9-11), and **the altar is in heaven** (Rev. 14:17-18)
        - a] This is a scene of the **intermediate state** because:
          - 1] They are **calling for vengeance** on those who still dwell on the earth (Rev. 6:10)
          - 2] They are told that they must **wait until others are killed** (Rev. 6:11)
        - 2] The great multitude which have come out of the great tribulation **stand before the throne** (Rev. 7:9-10, 13-17) and **the throne is in heaven** (Rev. 4:2)
        - 3] Those who are victorious over the beast **stand by the sea of glass** and sing the song of Moses and the Lamb (Rev. 15:1-4) and **the sea of glass is in heaven** (Rev. 4:2, 6)
      - f) The Scriptures speak of Jesus **bringing the righteous with Him** at His Final Coming (1 Th 3:11-13; 4:13-14)
        - 1] I understand this to refer to **the “spirits”** of those who were righteous, and who are coming to be **reunited with their resurrected bodies** (cf. 1 Th. 4:16)
          - a] Of course, I suppose Jesus could “pick up” these saints in Hades on His way
    - c. He proclaimed **condemnation** to the spirits of **the disobedient in Noah’s day**
    - d. He proclaimed His **victory and judgment**

C. Evaluation:

1. The **flesh-spirit contrast** has nothing to do with the **Greek body-soul distinction**; it is instead a contrast between the **physical realm** and the **spiritual realm** (Dalton, 42)
    - a. Peter is saying that Christ was **put to death in the physical realm** and **resurrected in the spiritual realm**
  2. How could the expression **“made alive in the spirit”** refer to Christ’s soul, since **a spirit does not die?** (cf. Eccl. 12:7; Mt. 10:28)
    - a. Reply: The word **“made alive”** (*zoopoieo*) can mean different things in different contexts
      - 1] **Resurrection** from the dead (Jn. 5:21a; Rom. 8:11; 1 Cor. 15:22, 45)
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- 2) Giving **spiritual life** to those dead in sin (Jn. 5:21b; 6:63; 2 Cor. 3:6; Gal. 3:21)
  - 3) **Quickening Abraham's body** to beget Isaac [?] (Rom. 4:17, 19)
  - 4) The **sprouting** of a seed (1 Cor. 15:36)
  - 5) The **giving of life** (1 Tim. 6:13)
  - 6) Perhaps Jesus' spirit was "**made alive**" in some sense that would not imply its **previous death**
    - a) **A.T. Robertson**: "The spirit of Christ did not die when his flesh did, but 'was endued with new and greater powers of life' (Thayer)." (6:116)
3. If "**made alive in the spirit**" refers to Christ's **resurrection**, it cannot refer to a **descent to Hades** and a proclamation to its inhabitants
  4. This interpretation assumes that the word "**spirits**" refers to **the souls of disembodied human beings**
    - a. These "**spirits**" are certainly not clearly and unambiguously identified as **human spirits**
      - 1) **J. Ramsey Michaels**: "A human being may have a spirit (i.e., a soul, or the life within a person; cf. e.g., Matt 27:50; Luke 23:46; John 19:30; Acts 7:59), but it is not normally said that one is a spirit, much less that a group of human beings collectively are 'spirits' – even though this is done with *psuche*, or 'soul,' notably in 1 Peter itself (see v 20b; also perhaps 1:9)." (49:207)
    - b. When the word "**spirits**" is referring to **men**, it is qualified in some way (Heb. 12:23). Whenever there is no qualifier, the word "**spirits**" connotes either **persons now living on earth** or **supernatural beings**, or possibly both (cf. Heb. 12:9)
      - 1) **E. G. Selwyn**: "Linguistically, there is far more authority for *ta pneumata* without a qualifying genitive connoting supernatural beings than departed human beings...." (199)
      - 2) **Gary L. Knapp**: "Elsewhere in the NT, however, when Gk. *pneumata* occurs alone and unqualified, it never refers to human beings.... Thus He. 12:23 affords little support for this view, since in this verse *pneumata* is qualified and has an unequivocal human reference. Also, 1 Pet. 3:20 uses Gk. *psyche*, not *pneuma*, for human beings." (ISBE, Rev. Ed., 3:976)
        - a) **Wayne Grudem**: "But this argument is invalid, for *pneuma* by itself is simply ambiguous, and in every case where it means 'angelic spirit' as well as every case where it means 'human spirit' the context makes it clear what kind of spirit is meant." (158)
      - b) The word "**spirit**" is used without qualification to refer to **human spirits** (Eccl. 12:7; Mt. 27:50; Jn. 19:30)
      - c) The **context** of 1 Pet. 3:19 indicates **what kind of "spirits"** are under consideration:
        - 1) They were "**in prison**"
        - 2) They were "**disobedient in the days of Noah**"
          - a) It was **human disobedience** that caused God to destroy the world with the flood (Gen. 6:5-7, 11-13)
        - 3) They were disobedient "**when once the longsuffering of God waited...while the ark was being prepared**"
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- c. If the word “**spirits**” refers to human beings, one would expect to read in v. 20 “**spirits of those who disobeyed**” rather than “**sprits who disobeyed,**” since they would have been **living men, not spirits**, at the time of disobedience (France, 269; Dalton, 153)
5. It is not at all certain that the “**spirits**” (3:19) and the “**dead**” (4:6) are one and the same
- a. The **key words** in both texts are different:
- 1) “**Spirits**” [*pneuma*] (3:19) vs. “**dead**” [*nekros*] (4:6)
- 2) “**Preached**” [*kerusso*] (3:19) vs. “**preached**” [*euangelizo*] (4:6)
- b. 1 Pet. 4:6 is probably to be interpreted with reference to Christians who have died: “This is why the gospel was preached to those (who are now) dead...” (France, 280, n. 40)
6. While there is ample evidence of **belief in the descent of Christ into Hades**, the earliest “Church Fathers” **do not appeal to this passage** in support of that view
- a. **E. G. Selwyn**: “The outstanding fact in the Patristic evidence before A.D. 190 is that, despite the popularity of the doctrine of Christ’s ‘harrowing of hell’, 1 Pet. iii. 18ff. is never quoted as authority for it. ‘The conception of the *Descensus* current in the early Church proceeds on entirely different lines, and arose independently of I Pet. iii. 19f. Prior to the time of Clement of Alexandria...and Origen..., this passage, so far as we know, was never referred to in connexion with the *Descensus*’....” (340, quoted in Feinberg, 310)
7. There are serious problems with the view that Christ proclaimed the **gospel**, offering a “**second chance**” to unbelievers
- a. This interpretation assumes that **Christ preached the gospel**
- 1) In 1 Peter the characteristic word for the **message of redemption** is *euangelizein* (1:12, 25; 4:6)
- 2) In this passage Peter uses the word *kerusso* (“I proclaim”), not *euangelizo* (“I proclaim the good news”)
- a) The **nature of the message** is not inherent in the word itself
- 1] **John S. Feinberg**: “*Kerysso* is a cognate of *keryx* and has the fundamental meaning of ‘to act as a herald.’ **There is nothing implicit in the meaning of the word which suggests the content of the heralding**, but only that proclaiming or heralding is done.” (Bold emphasis added, 325)
- 2] **Albert Barnes**: “The word used here...is of a **general character**, meaning to **make a proclamation of any kind**, as a crier does, or to **deliver a message**, and does not necessarily imply that it was the gospel which was preached, nor does it determine anything in regard to the nature of the message. It is not affirmed that he preached *the gospel*, for if that specific idea had been expressed it would have been rather by another word....” (Bold emphasis added, 177-178)
- 3] Other commentators make this same point (cf. Hamilton, 182-183; Blum, 12:242; Stibbs, 17:142; Wiersbe, 2:416)
- b) While it is true that the word is commonly used for the **proclamation of the gospel**, it is the context in which the word is found that demonstrates this, not the word itself
- c) Furthermore, the word is also used for **the proclamation of other things** [See above, p. 56-57]
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- 1)* Reply: When *kerusso* is used without an object, it refers to preaching the gospel (Mt. 11:1; Mk. 1:38-39; 3:14; 16:20; Lk. 4:44; 1 Cor. 9:27; 15:11)
- d)* So it is just assumption that **Christ preached the gospel**
- b.* The text says that Christ preached to **the spirits who were disobedient in the days of Noah**, not to all the spirits
- 1)* The very most that one could make out of this passage is that **an offer of salvation was made to those who had been disobedient in the days of Noah**
- a)* **C. New:** “Then, if this passage does mean that Christ preached to the dead, it only speaks of the dead in the days of Noah; it seems incredible that these comparative few should be singled out from the great mass of mankind for so great a blessing. I might remind you, too, that if these words mean that the impenitent dead have a second chance, they stand alone in Scripture, at least as far as I am aware.” (PC, 22:158)
- 2)* Why would people **before the flood** be given a **second chance** when those after the flood are not?
- a)* Reply: Possibly because they **experienced the devastating destruction of the Flood** and no other generation has ever experienced that kind of judgment
- 3)* Note: **The Mormons** appeal to this passage when they argue that those in this life who did not have an opportunity to hear and accept the gospel will have an opportunity beyond the grave
- a)* But they ignore the fact that this passage mentions only **the wicked in the days of Noah**, no one else
- b)* And they ignore the fact that **the antediluvians heard God’s word** through the preaching of Noah (2 Pet. 2:5), and they were disobedient to it
- c)* Mormon doctrine puts a **premium upon ignorance!** (If you don’t hear it now you can hear and obey it later. But, if you hear and reject the gospel in this life there is no second chance!)
- c.* Several NT passages indicate that there will be **no “second chance” after death**
- 1)* Heb. 9:27: <sup>27</sup>And as it is appointed for men to **die once**, but **after this the judgment**,
- 2)* The dead cannot **hope for God’s truth** (Isa. 38:18-19)
- 3)* There was **no “second chance” for the rich man**; his destiny was sealed (Lk. 16:23-26)
- 4)* We must give an account for the things **done in the body** (2 Cor. 5:10)
- 5)* The wicked are **“reserved... under punishment for the day of judgment”** 2 Pet. 2:4-5, 9
- 6)* **A.T. Robertson:** “One can only say that it is a slim hope for those who neglect or reject Christ in this life to gamble with a possible second chance after death which rests on very precarious exegesis of a most difficult passage in Peter’s Epistle.” (6:117)
- d.* How would Christ **preaching the gospel** in *Hades* and **offering a second chance fit the context** which is encouraging Christians to be willing to suffer for righteousness’ sake?
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- 1) **William J. Dalton:** “Christ’s message of conversion or salvation to the souls of the dead could hardly be a theme to inspire or strengthen Christians facing persecution.” (43)
  - 2) If there will be a **second chance** for salvation after death, why would Christians need to **endure suffering now** in this life? (Feinberg, 332)
  - 3) A **proclamation of victory**, rather than an **offer of salvation**, would better cohere with the statement in v. 22 that **all spiritual powers are subject to Christ** (cf. Eph. 1:20-22; Col. 2:15)
  - 4) Reply: Christ preaching the gospel in Hades would encourage persecuted Christians to continue to preach the gospel even in the midst of their suffering (1 Pet. 3:15)
    - a) **William J. Dalton:** “The function of 3:19-20 is *not* to provide, in the preaching of Christ, an example to stir the readers to missionary activity.” (186-187)
    - b) **John S. Feinberg:** “On this view vv 18-20 do not serve as encouragement to believers in their affliction but rather exhort them to further work in spite of affliction. Moreover, the view ignores the fact that v 22 ends with the theme of glory that follows the suffering. Finally, the basic thrust of vv 13-18 is suffering for righteousness’ sake, and thus, to pull out the one statement in v 15 about answering those who question seems to miss the main point of vv 13-18.” (332)
8. There are problems with the view that Christ announced **the release of the righteous** from the underworld
- a. **B. C. Caffin:** “The earliest writers do not seem to have thought that any change in the condition of the dead was produced by Christ’s descent into Hades. The Lord announced the gospel to the dead; the departed saints rejoiced to hear the glad tidings, as now the angels rejoice over each repentant sinner.” (22:136)
9. There are problems with the view that **Christ preached condemnation** to those who were disobedient in the days of Noah
- a. **Why** would Christ have preached condemnation to those who already would have known that they were condemned?
    - 1) **B. C. Caffin:** “It cannot be that the most merciful Saviour would have visited souls irretrievably lost merely to upbraid them and to enhance their misery.” (22:135)
    - 2) **William J. Dalton:** “This opinion was known in the time of St. Thomas Aquinas, since he rejects it in his treatment of 1 Pet. 3:19. It assumed importance only in post-Reformation times among certain Lutheran scholars, who rejected as unreal the Augustinian theory favoured by early Protestants.” (41)
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## V. **Interpretation #5: Christ Preached Through Noah**

### A. Explanation:

1. Before the Incarnation, in His preexistent state, **Christ in His Spirit preached through Noah** to the wicked antediluvians before the flood destroyed them
2. **Grudem's paraphrase:** "In the spiritual realm of existence Christ went and preached through Noah to those who are now spirits in the prison of hell. This happened when they formerly disobeyed, when the patience of God was waiting in the days of Noah while the ark was being built." (239)

### B. Argumentation:

1. **Augustine** (AD 354-430), in a letter to Evodius, appears to be the first to hesitantly propose this interpretation (*Letter CLXIV*, NPNF, First Series, 1:515-521)
  - a. **B. C. Caffin:** "But in his epistle to Euodius (Ep. 99 and 164) Augustine, much exercised... by the difficulties of the question, propounded the interpretation which became general in the Western Church, being adopted by Bede, Thomas Aquinas, De Lyra, and later by Beza, Hammond, Leighton, Pearson, etc." (22:136)
2. Christ was **active in the affairs of people** on earth before the Incarnation (cf. 1 Cor. 10:4, 9)
3. The **Spirit of Christ** was at work in **OT prophets** (1 Pet. 1:10-12)
  - a. Holy men of God spoke as they were moved by the **Holy Spirit** (2 Pet. 1:20-21)
4. Noah was "**a preacher of righteousness**" (2 Pet. 2:5)
  - a. Note: The word "**preacher**" (*kerux*) is the noun form of the verb "**preached**" (*kerusso*) used in 1 Pet. 3:19
  - b. Noah **condemned the world** of his day (Heb. 11:7)
5. One may be said to **do something** when it is actually **done by his agent** (Jn. 4:1-2; Eph. 2:17; cf. Jn. 14:18, 28; Acts 26:23; 2 Cor. 13:3; 1 Pet. 1:10-11; 2 Sam. 12:9; 1 Ki. 21:19)
6. Christ's preaching through Noah to the antediluvians would have been a **call to repentance** and a **warning of coming judgment** in the flood
  - a. Note: This view avoids the problems with respect to **the content of the preaching** that arise if this preaching occurred between Jesus' death and resurrection or during His ascension
7. This interpretation explains **why the preaching was directed only to the disobedient in the days of Noah**
  - a. **John S. Feinberg:** "In sum, there are problems with the reference to the days of Noah if Christ is preaching either in hades or after his resurrection. On the other hand, if he preaches in his preexistent state, it is obvious why only one generation of disobedient people are mentioned as hearing him." (331)
8. This interpretation explains **the "prison"** in one of two ways:
  - a. Augustine believed that **the "prison"** that Peter mentions in this passage does not refer to a literal place of bondage but rather to the spiritual bondage in ignorance and sin of the men who were disobedient in the days of Noah

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- I) Note:* The word “**prison**” is used figuratively in the Bible (cf. Psa. 142:6-7; Isa. 42:6-7; 49:9; 61:1)
- a)* Sinners are **captives of Satan** (2 Tim. 2:26; Lk. 4:17-21; cf. 2 Pet. 2:19)
- b.* Others explain that these spirits who had been disobedient in Noah’s day were **in prison when Peter wrote this epistle**
- I) Wayne Grudem:* “One can speak the same way in English: ‘Queen Elizabeth was born in 1926’ is an appropriate statement, even though she was not Queen when she was born – we mean ‘She who is now Queen Elizabeth was born in 1926.’” (159)
- a) Reply:* It is obvious that Elizabeth was not queen when she was born in 1926; thus the statement is free of ambiguity. However, this kind of obvious clarity is lacking in Peter’s perplexing passage
- 9.** This interpretation **fits the context** of suffering and glory as an encouragement to suffering saints
- a.* Noah and his family were **a minority** surrounded by hostile unbelievers; so are Peter’s readers (1 Pet. 3:13-14; 4:4, 12-13)
- b.* Noah was **righteous** in the midst of a wicked world (Gen. 6:22; 7:5; 2 Pet. 2:5), and Peter exhorts his readers to **be righteous** in the midst of a wicked world (1 Pet. 3:10-14, 16-17; 4:3-4)
- c.* Noah **preached boldly** to those around him (2 Pet. 2:5), and Peter exhorts his readers to always be ready to “**give a defense**” (1 Pet. 3:15)
- d.* Noah realized that **judgment was soon to come** upon the world, and Peter reminds his readers that **God’s judgment is certainly coming**, perhaps soon (1 Pet. 4:5, 7, 17-18; 2 Pet. 3:10)
- e.* In Noah’s day, God was **patiently awaiting repentance** before He brought judgment; and so it was when Peter wrote his epistles (2 Pet. 3:9-10)
- f.* Noah and a few others were **saved**, and Peter thus encourages his readers that **they too will be saved**, because Christ has triumphed and all things have been made subject to Him (1 Pet. 3:22; 4:13, 19; 5:10; 2 Pet. 2:9) (Grudem, 160-161, 230-232)
- I) Wayne Grudem:* “It fits well with Peter’s purpose of encouraging suffering believers that they need not fear to be righteous and to bear faithful witness to the hostile unbelievers surrounding them, for Christ is at work in them as he was in Noah, and they, like Noah, will certainly be saved from the judgment to come.” (232)
- g. John S. Feinberg:* “Christ suffered as a just individual for the benefit of others. Just as he was put to death at the hands of others (*thanatotheis* is passive), he was also raised from the dead by another, the Holy Spirit (*zoopoietheis* is passive). Likewise, if the Christian will allow himself to be abused by others and even for others, someone else (God, in particular) will see to it that just as Christ was vindicated through his resurrection and later exalted through his ascension, so the suffering saint will be vindicated and exalted. But, beyond that, not only are Christ’s death, resurrection, and ascension an example of this truth, but there are other examples as well. Christ through the Holy Spirit (the same Holy Spirit who raised him from the dead) went and preached through Noah to the people who were nonbelievers in Noah’s day. As a result of that preaching, Noah was laughed at and persecuted, just as the Christians of Peter’s time were being laughed at for their stand for the Lord. But, what was
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the final outcome? Those who laughed and disobeyed were destroyed in the flood, but Noah, the preacher of righteousness, who suffered for his stand for God was saved. He was vindicated and exalted, and so was the Christ who preached through him.” (335)

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C. Evaluation:

1. Since the datives “**flesh**” (*sarki*) and “**spirit**” (*pneumati*) should be **translated the same**, the rendering “put to death *in* the flesh but made alive *by* the Spirit” (KJV, NKJV) is not correct
    - a. Peter is not contrasting the **death of Christ** with the **activity of the Holy Spirit**
    - b. He is contrasting **the death of Christ’s body** with **the vivification of His spirit**, or he is contrasting **the death of Christ in the physical realm** with **the resurrection of Christ in the spiritual realm**
  2. It is certainly not obvious from a simple reading of the text that **Christ preached through Noah**
    - a. The context indicates when something attributed to a particular person is actually **done through his agent** (cf. Jn. 4:1-2)
    - b. But the context of this passage **does not clearly indicate** that Jesus preached to the antediluvians through Noah
      - I) While this meaning is certainly **possible**, is it **probable**, is it **certain**?
    - c. If Peter really meant that Jesus, in His preexistent state, preached to the antediluvians through Noah, **why didn’t he say that more clearly?**
  3. Christ preaching in His preexistent state does not meet the demands of the phrase “**He went**” (3:19a) which suggests **a change of location**, and that after Christ’s death
    - a. **Gareth Reese**: “The word *poreuomai* is regularly used of one traveling, going on a journey, making a change of place.” (91)
      - I) Note: The word would not suggest any direction whether an ascent or a descent (Roberts, 4)
    - b. **B. C. Caffin**: “The Greek word (*poreutheis*) occurs again in ver. 22, ‘who is *gone* into heaven.’ It must have the same meaning in both places; in ver. 22 it asserts a change of locality; it must do the like here. There it is used of the ascent into heaven; it can scarcely mean here that, without any such change of place, Christ preached, not in his own Person, but through Noah or the apostles.” (22:133)
    - c. Reply: “Went” would not necessarily require a change of location (cf. Eph. 2:17)
      - I) **Guy N. Woods**: “If Christ could preach to the Gentiles through Paul, why not to the people before the flood through Noah?” (106)
        - a) Response: Just because something may be **possible**, that doesn’t mean that it is **probable** or **certain**
    - d. Reply: It is not unusual for Peter to use a word or an idea at the end of one section as a **springboard** to an entirely new section with a distinctly different subject (cf. 1 Pet. 1:6, 8, 10; 2:4, 22; 3:21)
      - I) **Wayne Grudem**: “This frequent stylistic device throughout 1 Peter means that one simply cannot argue that the phrase ‘in which’ at the beginning of verse 19 means that this verse must be continuing the same subject or the same line of thought (or the same chronological sequence) as verse 18 – Peter uses this literary device too frequently when changing to a distinct subject.” (229)
  4. The term “**preached**” (*ekeruxen*) [aorist tense] “naturally implies a specific event rather than a series of admonitions [through Noah] extending over long years” (Hiebert, 152)
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5. This preaching was to **spirits**, not to **men in the flesh** (which would have been the case if the Spirit of Christ had preached through Noah)
  6. This interpretation requires some “**mental gymnastics**” with the word “**prison**”
    - a. Either we must interpret the word “prison” figuratively as **the prison of ignorance and sin** or **the prison of the body**
    - b. Or we must view the word “prison” as **the current state of the disobedient spirits** when Peter was writing, not when the preaching was being done
      - 1) This view forces one to interpret the verse as if Peter said “**preached to the spirits now in prison**” [NASB], but he does not say that
      - 2) Reply: Most commentators interpret the statement “**the gospel was preached also to those who are dead**” (1 Pet. 4:6) to mean that **the gospel was preached to “those who are now dead**” (at the time Peter is writing) even though they were alive on the earth at the time the gospel was preached to them
  7. This preaching occurs **while the spirits are “in prison,”** not before they were imprisoned
    - a. **B. C. Caffin**: “[T]he word *phulake* [prison] cannot be taken metaphorically of the flesh in which the soul is confined. If, with Beza, we understand it as meaning ‘who are now in prison,’ we escape one difficulty, but another is introduced; for it is surely forced and unnatural to make the time of the verb and that of the dative clause different. The words *sen phulake* must describe the condition of the spirits at the time of the Saviour’s preaching.” (22:136)
    - b. **John S. Feinberg**: “Of course, the immediate objection is to note that Peter indicates that the spirits are in prison and thus disembodied. While this is true, it does not necessitate that Christ preached to them in their disembodied state. . . . The point is that from Peter’s perspective as he writes 1 Pet 3:19 the spirits are disembodied and in prison, though they were not in that state when they heard the message. In other words, one needs to supply the word ‘now’ and read v 19 as ‘preached to spirits *now* in prison.’” (330)
      - 1) Reply: One needs to supply the word “now,” not because **the text requires it**, but because **this interpretation requires it**
  8. This preaching is to spirits who “**formerly were disobedient,**” but if the preaching was done through Noah, it would have occurred **during their disobedience**
    - a. Note: Grudem argues, on the basis of Greek grammatical rules, that v. 20 should be translated “**when they formerly disobeyed**” instead of “**who formerly disobeyed**” (233-236)
      - 1) **Wayne Grudem**: “If our understanding is correct, Peter wrote exactly what he meant to say, namely, that Christ preached to the spirits who are now in prison but he did so ‘**when they formerly disobeyed**’.” (Bold emphasis added, 236)
  9. This interpretation does not seem to fit the **apparent chronological sequence** in the passage
    - b. **Death** (“put to death in the flesh”) (3:18b)
    - c. **Vivification** or **Resurrection** (“made alive in the spirit”) (3:18b)
    - d. **Descent** or **Ascension** (“He went”) (3:19a)
    - e. **Preaching** (“preached to the spirits in prison”) (3:19b)
    - f. **Ascension** (“who has gone into heaven”) (3:22a)
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**g. Coronation** (“at the right hand of God”) (3:22b)

- 1) The passage most naturally refers to an incident that took place **after Christ died and was made alive**. Why would Peter allude to something that Christ supposedly did through Noah thousands of years before His incarnation?
- 2) Reply: If this chronological sequence was intended by Peter, as claimed, 3:19 could still be viewed as a parenthetical statement outside the chronological sequence (just as 3:20-21 is)
- 3) **Wayne Grudem**: “Furthermore, the mention of Christ’s ascension in 3:22 is probably better accounted for by the fact that it is the naturally sequential event to include after the mention of Christ’s resurrection at the end of 3:21 (not the end of 3:18).” (238)
  - a) Response: 3:20-21 are obviously parenthetical. 3:22 continues from 3:19

**10.** This interpretation does not easily fit the context of **suffering**

- a. Reply: There are **several interesting parallels** between the situation of Noah before the flood and the situation of Peter’s readers [See above]

**VI. Interpretation #6: Christ Preached To Fallen Angels**

**A. Explanation:**

1. This interpretation is divided into two principal views:
    - a. Between His death and resurrection, in **His disembodied state**, Christ preached to **fallen angels** who sinned in the days of Noah by marrying the “daughters of men”
    - b. **After His resurrection**, either before or during His ascension, Christ preached to **fallen angels** who sinned in the days of Noah by marrying the “daughters of men”
      - 1) **Dalton’s paraphrase**: “In the sphere of the flesh he was put to death. In the sphere of the spirit, he was brought to life. And in the sphere of this spirit he went and made proclamation” (145)
      - 2) Hiebert suggests that perhaps this preaching may have occurred “**immediately after His resurrection, before His appearances** to His followers in Jerusalem” (Bold emphasis added, 153)
  2. These fallen angels were imprisoned in:
    - a. **Tartarus**
    - b. The **lower heavens**
  3. The nature of Christ’s preaching is variously explained:
    - a. A proclamation offering **salvation**
    - b. A proclamation of **judgment**
      - 1) **Enoch’s proclamation of condemnation** to the angels who sinned at the flood is seen as the background for this passage (1 Enoch 12:1-6; 13:1-10; 14:1-8; 16:1-4)
    - c. A proclamation of **victory** over all evil angelic powers
      - 1) **William J. Dalton**: “The ‘proclamation to the spirits’ of 1 Pet 3:19 is the equivalent of the subjection of the principalities (1 Pet 3:22; Eph 1:21-22), of their being led in the triumphal procession of the risen Lord (Col 2:15; Eph 4:8).” (186)
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**B. Argumentation:**

- I. The contrast between “**flesh**” and “**spirit**” is not a contrast between **the material and immaterial parts** of Christ’s person (*i.e.* his “body” and “soul”), but rather between **his earthly existence** and **his risen state** (cf. Rom. 1:3-4; 1 Tim. 3:16)
  - a. **J. Ramsey Michaels:** “Dalton comments that flesh and spirit normally refer in the NT ‘to **two orders of being, the flesh representing human nature in its weakness**, its proclivity to evil, its actual evil once it opposes the influence of God, **the spirit representing the consequence of God’s incursion into human affairs**, the presence and activity among men of the Spirit of God’ (*Proclamation*, 127).” (Bold emphasis added, 49:204)
  - b. **J. Ramsey Michaels:** “If ‘**flesh**’ is **the sphere of human limitations**, of suffering, and of death (cf. 4:1), ‘**Spirit**’ is **the sphere of power**, vindication, and a new life.... Both spheres affect Christ’s (or anyone else’s) whole person; one cannot be assigned to the body and the other to the soul....” (Bold emphasis added, 49:205)
  - c. **J. Ramsey Michaels:** “The statement that Christ was ‘**made alive in the Spirit**,’ therefore, means simply that **he was raised from the dead, not as a spirit, but bodily** (as resurrection always is in the NT), and **in a sphere in which the Spirit and power of God are displayed without hindrance or human limitation** (cf. 1:21). Death ‘in the flesh’ is conquered and reversed; Jesus Christ is set free to complete a mission of utmost importance for the readers of the epistle.” (Bold emphasis added, 49:205)
2. The word “**spirits**” (*pneumata*), without qualification, is always used in the NT for **supernatural beings**
  - a. Good spirits
    - 1) **Angels** (Heb. 1:7, 13-14)
    - 2) The **seven Spirits** before the throne (Rev. 1:4; 3:1; 4:5; 5:6)
    - 3) Spirits associated with **miraculous gifts** (1 Cor. 12:10; 14:32)
  - b. Evil spirits:
    - 1) **Demons** (Mt. 8:16; Lk. 10:17, 20; Rev. 16:14)
    - 2) **Unclean spirits** (Mt. 12:43, 45; Lk. 11:24, 26)
    - 3) Spirits associated with **false prophesy** (1 Tim. 4:1; 1 Jn. 4:1)
    - 4) Spirits in **prison** (1 Pet. 3:18)
3. Whether the preaching in this passage occurred during Jesus’ **descent to Hades** or His **ascension to heaven** depends on the interpretation of “**made alive in the spirit**”
  - a. Those who argue for the **descent** argue that “made alive in the spirit” refers to **Jesus’ vivification**
    - 1) The word “**made alive**” (*zoopoieo*) can refer to something other than resurrection
      - a) Giving **spiritual life** to those dead in sin (Jn. 5:21b; 6:63; 2 Cor. 3:6; Gal. 3:21)
      - b) **Quickening Abraham’s body** to beget Isaac [?] (Rom. 4:17, 19)
      - c) The **sprouting** of a seed (1 Cor. 15:36)
      - d) The **giving of life** (1 Tim. 6:13)

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- 2) **A.T. Robertson:** “The spirit of Christ did not die when his flesh did, but ‘was endued with new and greater powers of life’ (Thayer).” (6:116)
    - a) Reply: The word *zoopoieo* is never used in the NT of a disembodied spirit that survives the death of the body (Roberts, 3)
  - b. Those who argue for the **ascension** argue that “made alive in the spirit” refers to **Jesus’ resurrection**
    - 1) The word “**quickened**” (*zoopoieo*) elsewhere refers to being **made alive again in a resurrection** (Jn. 5:21a; Rom. 8:11; 1 Cor. 15:22, 45)
      - a) Reply: Since the resurrection is mentioned in v. 21, followed by the ascension; chronologically, v. 19 would refer to something prior to the resurrection
        - 1) Response: The reference to the resurrection in v. 21 is in a parenthesis; therefore v. 19 would not have to refer to something prior to the resurrection
    - 2) **William J. Dalton:** “[A]part from 1 Pet 3:19, which is under question, there is **no evidence of any activity of Jesus in this journey to the world of the dead**. On the other hand, the New Testament has **plenty of evidence of the salvific activity of Jesus in his ascension** into heaven.” (Bold emphasis added, 162)
      - a) Present His blood (Heb. 9:11-12, 14, 23-26)
      - b) Sit at God’s right hand (Heb. 10:12)
      - c) Lead captivity captive (Eph. 4:8)
    - 3) If “**made alive**” refers to **Christ’s resurrection**, then Peter cannot be describing **Jesus’ activity during a descent to Hades**
  4. The location of the “**prison**” in this passage probably depends upon whether Peter is talking about **Jesus’ descent** or **His ascension**
    - a. Descent: **Tartarus**
    - b. Ascension: The **lower heavens**

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5. The “**sons of God**” marrying the “**daughters of men**” (Gen. 6:1-2) eventually resulted in the judgment of the flood (Gen. 6:5-7)
  6. In the OT, the term “**sons of God**” refers only to **angels** (Job 1:6; 2:1; 38:7; Dan. 3:25)
    - a. Note: The LXX in Job 1 reads “**angels of God**”
  7. In extra-biblical Jewish literature, the “**sons of God**” who married the “**daughters of men**” are understood to be “**fallen angels**” who married **human women**
    - a. **Josephus**: “[F]or **many angels of God accompanied with women, and begat sons** that proved unjust, and despisers of all that was good, on account of the confidence they had in their own strength; for the tradition is, That these men did what resembled the acts of those whom the Grecians call giants.” (Bold emphasis added, *Antiquities of the Jews*, 1:3:73)
    - b. **Philo**: ““And when **the angels of God** saw the daughters of men that they were beautiful, **they took unto themselves wives** of all of them whom they chose.’ Those beings, whom other philosophers call demons, Moses usually calls angels; and they are souls hovering in the air.” (Bold emphasis added, *On the Giants*, II:6)
    - c. [See Appendix B: “The Sons Of God In Jewish Pseudepigraphal Literature”]
    - d. 1 Enoch describes:
      - 1) Fallen angels as “**spirits**” (1 Enoch 15:4, 6, 8)
      - 2) Fallen angels as **imprisoned** (1 Enoch 18:14; 21:10; 10:1ff)
      - 3) Fallen angels as **disobedient** (1 Enoch 21:6; 106:13-14)
      - 4) Fallen angels connected with **Noah and the flood** (1 Enoch 6-10; 65-67; 106:13-17)
        - a) Reply: 17 out of the 37 times “**spirit**” (*pneuma*) is used in 1 Enoch, it refers to **human spirits** (1 Enoch 9:10; 20:3, 6 [2x]; 22:3, 6, 7, 9 [2x], 11 [2x], 12, 13 [2x]; 98:3, 10; 103:4) (Grudem, “209)
        - b) Reply: In some instances these human spirits are described as being **bound or confined** in a place of waiting (1 Enoch 22:3-13; 98:3); thus “**in prison**”
    - e. **Kenneth Wuest**: “This was **the prevailing view of the passage** in the ancient synagogue of the Jews. Josephus, Jewish historian of the first century, speaks of the sons of God of Genesis 6 as angels, and in such a way as to indicate that that was **the commonly accepted interpretation** in his day. It was **the view held by Christian theologians for the first three or four centuries of the Church**. Dr. James M. Gray in his book *Spiritism and the Fallen Angels* says, ‘There is reason to believe it would not have been changed in the latter case, had it not been for certain erroneous opinions and practices of Christendom.’” (Bold emphasis added, 104)
  8. The NT clearly indicates that “**fallen angels**” are **imprisoned** awaiting final judgment (2 Pet. 2:4; Jude 6-7)
    - a. **Kenneth Wuest**: “In the Book of Enoch 22:2, Gehenna is said to be the place of dead apostate Jews, and **Tartarus**, of fallen angels. The Greek poet Homer uses the term ‘Hades’ as the place for dead men, and ‘**Tartarus**,’ a murky abyss beneath Hades, for fallen immortals. Peter uses the word in agreement with the Book of Enoch and with Greek mythology, because he is speaking of fallen angels, not men.” (Bold emphasis added, 101)
  9. Sinful angels are closely associated with the **flood** (2 Pet. 2:4-5)
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10. Jude speaks of the inhabitants of Sodom and Gomorrah who sinned in a **similar manner** as the angels “who left their own abode” (Jude 6-7)

a. **Kenneth Wuest:** “The words ‘in like manner’ of verse 7 cannot be construed with the words ‘and the cities about them,’ thus confining the sin of fornication to Sodom and Gomorrah and the cities about them. The words ‘in like manner’ do not present a likeness between Sodom and the cities about them. *Expositor’s Greek Testament* classifies the words ‘in like manner’ as an adverbial accusative. This means that this phrase is to be construed with the verb translated ‘giving themselves over to fornication,’ not with the words ‘and the cities about them.’ Therefore the punctuation in the A.V. should be, ‘Even as Sodom and Gomorrah and the cities about them, in like manner giving themselves over to fornication.’ These words are so punctuated in the Greek text of Eberhard Nestle. Punctuation in the extant Greek manuscripts is not inspired. The punctuation of the textual critic is based upon the Greek grammar involved. This means that **the comparison is between the angels of verse 6 and the cities of verse 7.** This interpretation must be conclusive, all opinions to the contrary notwithstanding, for it is based upon the rules of Greek grammar. **The sin in both cases is said to be fornication.** We have the definite statement of Scripture therefore that **the sin of the fallen angels was fornication.** Expositor’s in commenting on this passage says, ‘Like them, the fallen angels.’ Alford uses the phrase ‘in like manner to the angels.’ **This fornication was in character the ‘going after strange flesh.’**” (Bold emphasis added, 103)

- 1) The Sodomites went after “**strange flesh**” (men with men)
- 2) The angels went after “**strange flesh**” (angels with humans)

11. Christ announces **His victory over the forces of evil**

a. Christ **publicly triumphed** over the principalities and powers (Col. 2:15)

b. Christ **led captivity captive** (Eph. 4:8-10)

- 1) **E. G. Selwyn:** “Some scholars take...here as meaning ‘**the earth below**’ and interpret the ‘descent’ of **the Incarnation**; but in view of Pss. lxiii. 9 and cxxxix. 15 this is improbable....There can be little doubt that **the underworld is the region referred to.** In that case it is to be noted that St. Paul is treating Christ’s *Descensus ad Inferos* as a belief fully accepted in the Church, and necessary if the universal range of Christ’s redemptive work is to be adequately grasped.” (Bold emphasis added, Essay I, p. 321)



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12. This interpretation **harmonizes beautifully** with Peter's wording and the context
- a. The preaching was done by **Jesus** Himself (not through Noah)
  - b. The preaching was done by Jesus **after** "being put to death in the flesh" (not in His pre-incarnate state)
  - c. The preaching was done by Jesus **after** He was "made alive in the spirit" (*i.e.* after His resurrection, not during the three day period between His death and resurrection)
  - d. The preaching was to **the spirits** (*i.e.* angelic spirits)
    - 1) Note: There is no clear indication in this passage that these "spirits" were **human spirits**, as in other passages (cf. Heb. 12:23; Rev. 6:9; 20:4)
    - 2) **R. T. France**: "Used absolutely *pneumata* would unquestionably be understood in this sense [supernatural beings, ksk] by a contemporary reader, especially one at all familiar with Jewish apocalyptic and other inter-testamental literature." (269)
    - 3) The only obstacle to accepting this meaning of "spirits" is the assumption that v. 19 is referring to Christ preaching to the dead in Hades
  - e. The preaching was done while these spirits were **in prison** (not in the days of Noah before they were imprisoned)
  - f. The preaching was to the spirits who were **formerly disobedient**
    - 1) This view does not necessarily require that these rebellious angels were the "**sons of God**" in Genesis 6, but were simply **somehow disobedient** at that time [?]
13. Christ's preaching to these "fallen angels" **fits this context** in that it assures Peter's readers that **Christ is superior to all powers** and believers have no need to fear them (cf. 1 Pet. 3:22)
- a. Note: Some argue that **these powers were ultimately behind the persecution of believers** by unbelievers which is such a prominent theme in the book of 1 Peter
    - 1) **John Frieberg**: "[T]hese evil angels represent **the evil powers which ultimately lie behind the human beings who are persecuting Peter's readers**. But, Christ proclaims victory over these evil angels, angels who were judged along with evil men at the time of Noah while Noah and his family were saved. That being so, these suffering Christians should take heart. Even though they are suffering, **the forces that are the ultimate cause of their problem have been defeated and Christ has proclaimed victory over them.**" (Bold emphasis added, 333)
    - 2) **R. T. France**: "The emphasis in these verses is on **the triumph of Jesus over all opposing powers**. This triumph began in his redeeming death, was established through his resurrection, and is now effective through his ascension and sitting at God's right hand. Verse 18 is the beginning of this recital, and its relevance to the context is that **the persecuted Christian, facing the powers of evil, may know that these powers are already defeated, that he shares in the triumph of his Master, to whom all powers are subject**. The apparent defeat of death was for Jesus the beginning of victory. So it is for the Christian martyr: **death leads to resurrection and triumph**, because Jesus through his redeeming death has once for all conquered sin and all the powers of evil. This is no digression, but the very foundation of the Christian hope in which the martyr may die." (Bold emphasis added, 266-267)
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- b. R. T. France:** “He was put to death (as you may well be), but that was only in the earthly sphere: he has been raised to new spiritual life (as you will be too, if you die for him). (So death was, for Jesus, the way of achievement and victory; do not fear those who can only kill the body.) In the triumph of his resurrection he went to the fallen angels awaiting judgment in their place of confinement, and proclaimed to them the victory won by his redeeming death. (Even the most wicked of spiritual powers have had to recognize the authority of the risen Jesus; whatever the forces against you, they are not his equal).” (277)

C. Evaluation:

1. The expression “**sons of God**” is used in the NT to refer to **the righteous** (Mt. 5:9; Lk. 20:36; Rom. 8:14, 19; Gal. 3:26); therefore this could be a reference to **the righteous descendents of Seth** intermarrying with **the wicked descendents of Cain**
  - a. Reply: This theory does not account for **Adam and Eve’s other children** (Gen. 5:4)
  - b. Reply: Does the expression “**sons of God**” only refer to **righteous males** and the expression “**daughters of men**” only refer to **wicked females**? This seems highly unlikely
2. The Targums and the Rabbinic literature are unanimous in viewing the “**sons of God**” as **human beings**
  - a. Targum Onkelos on Gen. 6:2, 4 reads “**sons of princes**” (or great men)
  - b. Targum Pseudo-Jonathan reads the same
  - c. Targum Neofiti reads “**sons of the Judges**”
  - d. Tosefta interprets “sons of God” as **men of the generation of the flood** (*Sotah* 3.9a)
  - e. The Babylonian Talmud understand the “sons of God” to be **men at the time of the flood** (*b.Sanh* 108a)
  - f. Symmachus translates Gen. 6:2 as “**the sons of the rulers**” (Grudem, 212)
3. Jewish tradition does not uniformly link **the sin of angels with the flood**
  - a. This sin is more frequently associated with:
    - 1) The days of **Enoch** and **Methuselah**, two and three generations before Noah (*Jubilees* 4:22; cf. 4:20; 20:8)
    - 2) The time of **Jared**, four generations before Noah (1 *Enoch* 6:6 [Greek text]; 106:13) (Grudem, 213)
4. There is no conclusive proof that the **angels who sinned** (2 Pet. 2:4; Jude 6) were **disobedient in the days of Noah**
  - a. **John S. Feinberg:** “Finally, as for appeals to 2 Peter 2 and Jude 6, they are question-begging. **Both passages speak about angels disobeying and being punished. Neither passage explicitly states that these angels were disobedient in the days of Noah.** Just because a reference to Noah is made in 2 Pet 2:5, that does not prove that the angels in 2 Pet 2:4 are to be linked to the comments about Noah in the following verse. Moreover, since the sentence which begins in v 4 runs for several verses, are we also to link the angels to Sodom and Gomorrah (v 6), for example?” (Bold emphasis added, 323)
  - b. **John S. Feinberg:** “As for Jude 6, there is no mention of Noah in Jude 5-8. The only way to derive the notion is by analogy from the sin of Sodom and Gomorrah (v 7) and an argument that since the sin of Genesis 6 was a sexual sin involving angels and the sin of

Jude 7 was sexual sin, then if what happened in the case of the angels mentioned in Jude 6 is like what happened in Sodom and Gomorrah, Jude 6 must refer to angels in the days of Noah. It should be evident that **such a line of argument grossly begs the question by importing Genesis 6 into the passage in Jude. Even if Genesis 6 does refer to angels, that still would be no proof that the angels mentioned in Jude 6 are the same angels--** after all, there are more angels than just those which supposedly were active in the days of Noah. Thus, **appeals to either 2 Pet 2:4 or Jude 6 initially beg the question, since neither passage indicates that the angels referred to are from the days of Noah.** Moreover, having begged the question in regard to 2 Peter 2 and Jude 6 by linking them to Genesis 6, **one begs the question again by importing the notion into 1 Pet 3:19-20. Even if Genesis 6, 2 Peter 2, and Jude 6 all refer to angels in the days of Noah, that does not prove that 1 Pet 3:19-20 does, too.** Asserting that it does without other evidence begs the question.” (Bold emphasis added, 324)

- c. **John S. Feinberg:** “[T]he basic lines of cogent evidence for the identity of the *pneumasin* [spirits] as angels in 1 Pet 3:19 are the general pattern of usage of the word in Greek and the general appeal to intertestamental literature and the intellectual milieu of the day. Of course, that evidence only shows that *pneumasin* [spirits] **can refer to angels in 3:19, not that it does or must.** Since *pneumasin* [spirits] **can also refer to disembodied spirits of humans,** both views are initially possible.” (Bold emphasis added, 324)
5. Jesus said that **angels do not marry** (Mt. 22:29-30 // Mk. 12:25 // Lk. 20:34-35)
    - a. **Reply:** Jesus said that **angels in heaven do not marry.** He does not say what angels who leave their habitation (Jude 6-7) and come down to earth might do. If angels could **take on human form and eat food** (Gen. 18:1-8; 19:1-3), why wouldn’t it be possible for them to **take on human form and cohabit** with the “daughters of men”? (Gen. 6:1-4)
  6. There is no indication in the Bible that sinful angels ever have the **opportunity to repent** (cf. Heb. 2:16; 2 Pet. 2:4; Jude 6)
    - a. The word “**waited**” (*apekdechomai*) has the nuance of **hopeful or expectant waiting** (BAGD, 83)
    - b. Presumably God was expectantly waiting for **repentance** (Gen. 6:3; Psa. 103:7-14; 106:43-46; Hos. 11:8-9), but that would necessarily be the repentance of **sinful humans**, not sinful angels
  7. The whole development of 1 Pet. 3:20 supposes that **the setting is that of human life**
  8. If Christ proclaimed **His victory**, why did He do so only to those angels who were disobedient in the days of Noah? **Why not to all evil angels?**
    - a. **John S. Feinberg:** “If the reference in 1 Pet 3:19-20 is to wicked angels in the days of Noah...**why would Peter single out these and none others as the ones over whom victory is proclaimed by the ascended Christ?** Christ is victorious over all evil angels, not just those who sinned during the days of Noah.” (Bold emphasis added, 329)
    - b. **John S. Feinberg:** “It is more likely that he would preach victory or condemnation to these angels, but one has to wonder why he would do so. Certainly, **not to inform them of something they did not know**, and given the character of Christ, **it is not likely that he would do so to taunt them.** If the point is simply to announce the defeat of these powers and display his glory to them and all creation, it must be admitted that such a suggestion seems initially plausible.” (Bold emphasis added, 329)

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- I) Reply: Perhaps these notoriously wicked angels are **representative of all others**
    - a) But the passage does not mention anyone hearing the preaching other than **those who disobeyed** in the days of Noah
    - b) Furthermore, there is no compelling evidence that this is a case of **synecdoche**
  - 2) **Phil Roberts**: “Peter assures his readers that they can be confident of victory because Christ, in the process of his own suffering and glorification, has already gone and proclaimed victory over (or judgment on) the very evil spirits that contributed to the destruction of the world of Noah – the world that was. Thus they need not fear that another generation of such evil spirits will destroy the salvation that they have in Christ. They will be saved from the judgment that comes on this world even as Noah was saved from the judgment that came on his world – through faithful perseverance, and through water. They will be saved by the one ‘who is on the right hand of God, having gone into heaven; angels and authorities and powers being made subject unto him’ (1 Pet. 3:22).”  
(10)
9. How would **imprisoned angels from Noah’s day** be responsible for the persecution of Christians in Peter’s day?
- a. **John Feinberg**: “If, in fact, Christ is announcing victory over the forces that are harassing Peter’s readers, **why would he single out only evil angels from the days of Noah?** Wouldn’t the forces opposing Peter’s readers include more evil powers than just those disobedient in Noah’s day? If Christ announces victory at all, it must be over all evil angels.” (Bold emphasis added, 333)
  - I) Reply: 1 Pet. 3:22 and other passages demonstrate that **all angelic beings are subject to Christ** (cf. Eph. 1:20-22; Col. 2:9-10, 14-15)

### Interpretations Of 1 Peter 4:6:

#### I. Interpretation #1: Christ Preached The Gospel In Hades

##### A. Explanation:

1. During His descent to Hades Christ preached to all the dead, offering those who lived in pre-Christian times **the opportunity of conversion**
2. The gospel **had to be preached** to all the dead, because only those who have had the **opportunity to hear** the gospel could be **justly judged**
3. “**Judged according to men in the flesh**” refers to the **judgment of death**

##### B. Argumentation:

1. **William J. Dalton**: “[A] number of manuscripts of 1 Peter provide an introduction to the text which implies a **preaching of the gospel in the world of the dead** with a view to **conversion**...” (Bold emphasis added, 52, n. 6)
2. The word that Peter uses (*euangelizo*) means to **preach the gospel**

##### C. Evaluation:

1. This interpretation incorrectly assumes that **Christ is the One who did the preaching**
  - a. The main verb should be translated “**he was preached**” instead of “**the gospel was preached.**” NT usage favors a personal subject (Dalton, 54)

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- 1) **William Dalton:** “If this translation is correct, it is implied that **the preaching was done, not by Christ, but by another person.** This presents an immediate problem [for those who] suppose that Christ is the person who did the preaching.” (54)
    - b. Note: None of the major English versions [YLT, KJV, NKJV, ASV, NASB, NIV, ESV, RSV, NRSV] translate this verse as Dalton suggests
  2. Although Christ’s descent to Hades was a favorite theme of the early church, 1 Pet. 4:6 was **rarely linked with Christ’s descent** and never clearly linked with a preaching of Christ to convert (Dalton, 62)
    - a. **William J. Dalton:** “[T]he Alexandrian school, which pioneered the optimistic interpretation of the descent as found in 1 Pet 3:19, gives no hint that it finds the same meaning in 4:6. In the whole history of interpretation, this view first appeared without ambiguity in the writings of liberal Protestants, in the middle of the 19<sup>th</sup> century.” (52)
  3. This interpretation ignores the **apparent chronological sequence** in the passage
    - a. **William J. Dalton:** “[T]he grammar of the passage [1 Pet. 4:6] requires that the action of the verbs in both the *men* and the *de* clauses should follow that of the main verb. The natural order of the text is, first, the **preaching of Christ**, second, **being judged in the eyes of human beings**, third, **living in the eyes of God.** Nearly all the commentators who see in 4:6 a preaching by Christ to the souls of the dead have to **do violence to this chronological order.** They translate: ‘For this is why the gospel was preached to the dead (souls of the dead), in order that, **although they had been judged in the flesh like human beings...**’ To my mind this is a serious difficulty against any interpretation of the text which sees in it a preaching of Christ to the souls in the world of the dead.” (Bold emphasis added, 240)
  4. This interpretation **does not fit the context** which deals with the **condemnation of the hostile pagans** and the **vindication of the faithful Christians** (Dalton, 55)
    - a. **William Dalton:** “It seems highly unlikely that, in the midst of this train of thought, the writer should suddenly **go off on a tangent**, in an effort to **explain how Christ can judge ‘the living and the dead’**....the general thrust of 1 Peter is not directed to **the conversion of the pagan persecutors**, but rather to **the survival of Christians in a hostile environment.**” (Bold emphasis added, 55)

## II. Interpretation #2: Christ Preached In Hades The Good News Of Salvation

### A. Explanation:

1. During His descent to Hades, Christ preached the **good news of salvation** to the **righteous**
2. Christ preached to:
  - a. The **penitent antediluvians** who were converted before they died in the flood
  - b. All **OT saints**

### B. Argumentation:

### C. Evaluation:

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1. This interpretation incorrectly assumes that **Christ is the One who did the preaching** [See above]
  2. There is no clear indication that **the “dead”** was understood in the limited sense of **the righteous dead** in early Christian tradition
  3. **William J. Dalton:** “[S]trictly speaking, 4:6b is a purpose clause: **the gospel was preached to the dead in order that they might be judged in the flesh. This judgment cannot be the judgment of death.** This is hardly the purpose of the preaching of the gospel. It remains true, however, that the concessive meaning, ‘though judged in the flesh in the eyes of people’, is accepted by most translators and commentators.” (Bold emphasis added, Dalton, 59-60)

### **III. Interpretation #3: The Gospel Was Preached To The Spiritually Dead**

#### **A. Explanation:**

1. **William J. Dalton:** “The gospel was preached to the spiritually dead (those who were once pagans), in order that they might be judged in the flesh in the eyes of human beings (share the suffering of Christ in enduring persecution), and so live in the spirit in the eyes of God (which corresponds to life free from sin of 4:1).” (57)

#### **B. Argumentation:**

##### **C. Evaluation:**

1. **Bo Ricke:** “Spiritually dead people cannot here be meant, seeing that the word *euangelisthe* is in the aorist, expressing a **given fact** (‘complex’ aorist). **The preaching of the Gospel still continues**, and there are still spiritually dead, so that if the author had wished to say something about non-Christians in general considered as spiritually dead he ought absolutely to have spoken in **the present tense.**” (Bold emphasis added, 205)
2. The **“dead”** in v. 6 should be interpreted in the same way as the **“dead”** in v. 5
  - a. Elsewhere in the NT, the phrase **“the living and the dead”** clearly refers to **those physically alive and physically dead** (Acts 10:42; Rom. 14:9; 2 Tim. 4:1)
  - b. Since v. 5 refers to the **Final Judgment**, “the living and the dead” must refer to **those physically alive and physically dead**

### **IV. Interpretation #4: The Gospel Was Preached To Living Who Have Since Died**

#### **A. Explanation:**

1. The gospel was preached to those who **became Christians** and then **later died** before 1 Peter was written

#### **B. Argumentation:**

1. **William J. Dalton:** “The preaching of the gospel to Christians who have since died is not in vain. True, in the eyes of human beings they suffer the common condemnation of death, but in the eyes of God, who sees the truth, they enjoy eternal life.” (59)

#### **C. Evaluation:**

1. The obvious meaning of this preaching to the dead is that the people who heard the preaching were **dead at the time**
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2. Since the “**dead**” refers to **all the dead** in v. 5, it should have that same meaning in v. 6, and **not be limited to Christians** who have died
    - a. Reply: This ignores the main idea of the context: the **vindication of Christians** against their pagan persecutors
  3. The judgment (*krinein*) in v. 5 is the **Final Judgment**; the judgment in v. 6 should be interpreted the same way
    - a. Reply: The judgment in v. 5 is obviously **the judgment of Christ**; the judgment in v. 6 is “**according to men,**” and that is **not Final Judgment**

### Conclusion:

- I. **J. Ramsey Michaels**: “At the heart of the message of 1 Peter are ‘**the sufferings intended for Christ and the glorious events that would follow**’ (1:11). If 2:18-25 develops the notion of Christ’s sufferings, the present passage sets forth the ‘glorious events’ that followed: **his resurrection from the dead, his journey to heaven, and the establishment of his universal dominion** over ‘angels, authorities, and powers,’ extending even to the strongholds of those untamed ‘spirits’ whose evil influence brought destruction on the world back in Noah’s time. The theme of the passage – as of 3:13-4:6 in its entirety – is vindication. **The vindication of Christ lays the basis for the vindication of the Christian believer, and Christ’s vindication is total.**” (Bold emphasis added, 49:220-221)

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\*These sources were the most helpful to me.



Appendix A: Getting It At A Glance

**Interpretations Of 1 Pet. 3:18-20 & 4:6**

	Interpretation #1	Interpretation #2	Interpretation #3	Interpretation #4	Interpretation #5	Interpretation #6
<b>Put to death</b>	Physical death	Physical death	Physical death	Physical death	Physical death	Physical death
<b>The flesh</b>	Jesus' body	Jesus' body	Jesus' body	Jesus' body	Jesus' body Physical realm	Physical realm
<b>Made alive</b>	Vivification Resurrection	Vivification	Resurrection	Vivification	Vivification Resurrection	Vivification Resurrection
<b>The spirit</b>	Jesus' soul	Jesus' soul	Jesus' soul	Jesus' soul	Jesus' soul Spiritual realm	Spiritual realm
<b>He went</b>	<b>Enoch</b>	Jesus' descent	Christ & apostles	Jesus' descent Offer of salvation	<b>Noah</b> Repentance	Jesus' descent Offer of salvation
<b>Preached</b>	Condemnation	Release	Gospel	Release Condemnation Victory	Judgment	Judgment Victory
<b>Spirits</b>	Fallen Angels	OT saints	Unbelievers Physical body	Human souls	Humans Physical body	<b>Fallen angels</b> Tartarus
<b>Prison</b>	Underworld	<b>Limbo</b>	Sin & ignorance	<b>Hades</b>	Sin & ignorance Prison now	Lower heavens
<b>Formerly disobedient</b>	Intermarriage with humans			Antediluvian sin	Antediluvian sin	Intermarriage with humans
<b>Gospel preached to the dead</b>				Offer of salvation	Formerly alive Now dead	Formerly alive Now dead

*I.*

## II. Appendix B: The “Sons Of God” In Jewish Pseudepigraphal Literature

**III.** 1 Enoch 6:1-3: “<sup>1</sup> And it came to pass when the children of men had multiplied that in those days were born unto <sup>2</sup> them beautiful and comely daughters. And **the angels**, the children of the heaven, saw and lusted after them, and said to one another: ‘Come, **let us choose us wives from among the children of men** <sup>3</sup> and beget us children.’...”

**IV.** 1 Enoch 15:1-9: <sup>1</sup> And He answered and said to me, and I heard His voice: ‘Fear not, Enoch, thou righteous <sup>2</sup> man and scribe of righteousness: approach hither and hear my voice. And go, say to **the Watchers of heaven**, who have sent thee to intercede for them: “You should intercede” for men, and not men <sup>3</sup> for you: Wherefore have ye left the high, holy, and eternal heaven, and **lain with women**, and **defiled yourselves with the daughters of men** and **taken to yourselves wives**, and done like the children <sup>4</sup> of earth, and **begotten giants** (as your) sons? And though ye were holy, spiritual, living the eternal life, you have defiled yourselves with the blood of women, and have begotten (children) with the blood of flesh, and, as the children of men, have lusted after flesh and blood as those also do who die <sup>5</sup> and perish. Therefore have I given them wives also that they might impregnate them, and beget <sup>6</sup> children by them, that thus nothing might be wanting to them on earth. But you were formerly <sup>7</sup> spiritual, living the eternal life, and immortal for all generations of the world. And therefore I have not appointed wives for you; for as for the spiritual ones of the heaven, in heaven is their dwelling. <sup>8</sup> And now, **the giants, who are produced from the spirits and flesh, shall be called evil spirits upon** <sup>9</sup> **the earth**, and on the earth shall be their dwelling. **Evil spirits have proceeded from their bodies; because they are born from men and from the holy Watchers** is their beginning and primal origin;

**V.** 1 Enoch 106:13-16: “[A]nd this I [Enoch] have already seen in a vision, and make known to thee that in the generation of my father Jared some of **the angels** of heaven transgressed the word of the Lord. And behold they commit sin and transgress the law, and have **united themselves with women and commit sin with them, and have married some of them, and have begot children by them**. And they shall produce on the earth giants not according to the spirit, but according to the flesh, and there shall be a great punishment on the earth, and the earth shall be cleansed from all impurity. Yea, there shall come a great destruction over the whole earth, and there shall be a deluge and <sup>16</sup> a great destruction for one year.”

**VI.** Jubilees 5:1-2, 5-12: “<sup>1</sup> And it came to pass when the children of men began to multiply on the face of the earth and daughters were born unto them, that **the angels of God** saw them on a certain year of this jubilee, that they were beautiful to look upon; and **they took themselves wives of all whom they** <sup>2</sup> **chose, and they bare unto them sons and they were giants**. .... <sup>5,6</sup> which He had created. But Noah found grace before the eyes of the Lord. And against **the angels** whom He had sent upon the earth, He was exceedingly wroth, and He gave commandment to root them out of all their dominion, and He bade us to **bind them in the depths of the earth**, and <sup>7</sup> behold **they are bound in the midst of them**, and are (kept) separate. And against their sons went forth a command from before His face that they should be smitten with the sword, and be removed <sup>8</sup> from under heaven. And He said ‘My spirit shall not always abide on man; for they also are flesh <sup>9</sup> and their days shall be one hundred and twenty years’. And He sent His sword into their midst that each should slay his neighbour, and they began to slay each other till they all fell by the sword <sup>10</sup> and were destroyed from the earth. And their fathers were witnesses (of their destruction), and after this they were **bound in the depths of the earth for ever**, until the day of the great condemnation, when judgment is executed on all those who have corrupted their ways and their works before <sup>11</sup> the Lord. And He destroyed all from their places, and there was not left one of them whom <sup>12</sup> He judged not according to all their wickedness. And he made for all his works a new and righteous nature, so that they should not sin in their whole nature for ever....

**VII.** 2 Baruch 56:10-15: <sup>10</sup> For he became a danger to his own soul: even to the angels <sup>11</sup> For, moreover, at that time when he was created, they enjoyed liberty. <sup>12</sup> And became he a danger **some of them descended, and mingled with the women**. <sup>13</sup> And then those who did so were **tormented in chains**. <sup>14</sup> But the rest of the multitude of the angels, of which there is (no) number, restrained themselves. <sup>15</sup> And those who dwelt on the earth perished together (with them) through the waters of the deluge.