**Christ, and the Spirits in Prison**

*1 Peter 3:18-22*

**Introduction**

1. **1 Peter 3:18-22** has been misunderstood, and used by some to suggest doctrines which are not in harmony with scripture.
2. At first glance, the text can seem to be somewhat confusing, but it teaches a principle which is fundamental in scripture, and of utmost importance regarding the salvation of man.
3. A Misinterpretation of the Text
4. Misinterpretation
	1. Christ, in between His death and resurrection, preached the gospel to spirits in prison who were disobedient during the days of Noah.
	2. Implications if true:
		1. The gospel could save the spirits in prison.
		2. Christ did not preach the saving gospel to all disembodied spirits in prison, but excluded those who were not present in the days of Noah.
	3. **Mormons** – use this section of scripture to support their doctrine that the dead will have a chance to hear the gospel, believe it, and obey it to their salvation.
	4. **These are misinterpretations of the text. We can know this first by seeing they contradict other passages of scripture. 🡪**
5. Our Standing with God After Death
	1. **Hebrews 9:27** – appointed for man to die once, then the judgment.
	2. **2 Corinthians 5:10** – judged for deeds done in the body.
	3. **Matthew 24:36, 42-44** – this judgment is always spoken of in the future tense of an unknown day. It has not yet arrived.
	4. **2 Peter 2:9** – until then, God knows how to “reserve” the unjust in punishment.
	5. **Luke 16:23, 25-26** – story of the rich man and Lazarus illustrates this point:
		1. **Rich man** – disobedient in flesh, awakes in torments in hades, fate sealed. (awaiting judgment – final sentencing to hell)
		2. **Lazarus** – obedient in flesh, awakes in Abraham’s bosom, fate sealed. (awaiting judgment – reward)
	6. **Once we die, our fate is sealed. The gospel is preached to those who are still in the flesh. This is the time they have to live for God, and secure a heavenly home.**
6. The Text – **1 Peter 3:18-22**
7. Christ’s Desire to Save, and Method of Saving **(v. 18-20)**
	1. Christ wants to save us **(v. 18):**
		1. **Context:** suffering for doing good, and encouragement to do so **(v. 17).**
		2. **(v. 18a)** – Christ as an example of such – suffered unjustly, in submission to God’s will to bring us to God.
		3. **(v. 18b)** – This was good because He was made alive ***“in the spirit” (NASB)***.
			1. **Flesh and spirit in contrast** – killed physically, but awoke in spirit in comfort.
			2. ***“Assuredly, I say to you, today you will be with Me in Paradise” (Luke 23:43*** – just as Lazarus awoke in Paradise, so did Christ).
			3. **Cf. 1 Peter 4:6** – gospel preached so they could be judged while in the flesh, but be found with God alive in the spirit.
	2. Christ has always wanted to save men **(v. 19):**
		1. ***“in which also He went” (NASB)*** – in spiritual form:
			1. ***“Most assuredly, I say to you, before Abraham was, I AM” (John 8:58)***.
			2. ***“In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God” (John 1:1).***
			3. ***“God is Spirit” (John 4:24)***.
		2. He preached to the spirits in prison (**v. 19b**):
			1. ***“the spirits now in prison”*** (NASB – ***“now”*** is supplied, but because it is implied).
			2. **They are in prison now, but when did Christ preach to them?**
				1. **(v. 20)** – during the days of Noah.
				2. **Disobedient** – implies a message to be disobedient to.

**Cf. Genesis 6:3** – the longsuffering of God – 120 yrs.

**Strive** – judge, contend, plead.

**Cf. 2 Peter 2:5** – Noah preached righteousness, but they disobeyed. 🡪

**Cf. Genesis 6:5-8** – God decided to destroy the world, but Noah found grace (favor) in His eyes.

Why did Noah find favor?

**Cf. Hebrews 11:7** – was a man of faith.

He believed God (**cf. Romans 10:17**), and was obedient to Him.

* + - * 1. **Cf. Romans 10:13-16** – Christ wanted to save the men in the days of Noah.

Sent a preacher – Noah.

Gave opportunity to call on His name.

They did not believe, nor obey.

* + 1. They are now ***“reserve[d]…under punishment for the day of judgment” (2 Peter 2:9)*** – because they did not move by faith as did Noah.
1. An Antitype **(vv. 21-22)**
	1. A parallel is drawn for those under the dispensation of the gospel of Christ.
	2. **Baptism (v. 21):**
		1. ***“The like figure whereunto even baptism doth also now save us” (KJV)***.
		2. How is baptism a like figure of the salvation of Noah and his family?
			1. **Message heard** – flood is coming; judgment is coming.
			2. **Message believed** – Noah convinced of flood; convinced of judgment.
			3. **Instruction to escape** – Noah, build an ark; be baptized.
		3. **Answer** – ***“an appeal to God” (NASB***) – an inquiry, intense desire (Strong).
			1. **Cf. Romans 10:13** – those who call on the name of the Lord will be saved – ***“calls on”*** - *epikaleō*; appeal to.
			2. **Cf. Colossians 2:12-13** – faith in the working of God. (*Appeal to God for salvation through baptism in faith to be raised up from sin.)*
	3. **Christ at God’s right hand (v. 22):**
		1. Position of authority.
		2. **Authority to judge** – **cf. John 5:26-29** – Christ will judge us in the end.
		3. **NOTE – the victory of Christ:**
			1. **1 Peter 3:17-18, 21b-22** – Christ was righteous, and submitted to God’s will. He suffered for this, but was ultimately exalted.
			2. **1 Peter 4:1-6** – This assurance is given to Christians who remain faithful despite immense opposition. We will live according to God in the spirit.
				1. This is the reason the gospel was preached.
				2. **Implication – without the gospel, i.e. hearing, believing, and obeying it, you will not live according to God in the spirit 🡪**

**Conclusion**

1. Christ wants all men to be saved. So much so that He died on the cross for our sins.
2. However, in conjunction with His sacrifice, His method of saving men is the preaching of the gospel.
3. Like those in the days of Noah, if you refuse to obey this message you will lose your souls.
4. Christ is reaching out to you in the gospel – won’t you obey by being baptized for the remission of sins?