

## Spirits in Prison

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*“For Christ also hath once suffered for sins, the just for the unjust, that he might bring us to God, being put to death in the flesh, but quickened by the Spirit: By which also he went and preached unto **the spirits in prison**; Which sometime were disobedient, when once the longsuffering of God waited in the days of Noah, while the ark was a preparing, wherein few, that is, eight souls were saved by water. The like figure whereunto even baptism doth also now save us (not the putting away of the filth of the flesh, but the answer of a good conscience toward God,) by the resurrection of Jesus Christ” (1 Peter 3:18-21).*

What does the Bible mean when it says Jesus preached by the Holy Spirit to spirits in prison? The context is referring to the time of Noah, when God’s Spirit was striving with men through the inspired preaching of Noah (Gen. 6:3; 2 Pet. 1:20-21; 2:5). Peter’s words in Second Peter 2:4-5 shed light on his words in First Peter 3:18-19:

*“For if God spared not the angels that sinned, but cast them down to hell [Greek word Tartaros, JPH], and delivered them into **chains** of darkness, to be **reserved unto judgment**; And spared not the old world, but saved **Noah** the eighth person, **a preacher of righteousness**, bringing in the flood upon the world of the ungodly” (2 Peter 2:4-5).*

Tartaros is apparently a temporary place of torment in Hades where all wicked spirits (both angels and men) exist until Judgment (Lk. 16:23 ASV 1901; Rev. 20:14 ASV 1901). First Peter 3:18-19 does not teach that Jesus went to Hades and preached to people who were already being tormented. The meaning is that the sinful people on earth who heard “*the Spirit of Christ*” speaking through Noah (1 Pet. 1:10-12; 2 Pet. 1:20-21) are **now** in spiritual prison in Hades. Like those sinful angels, they are prisoners “*in chains*” until the day of Judgment, when their official sentence will be declared. They will then be cast into Gehenna (Hell), “*into everlasting fire, prepared for the devil and his angels*” (Matt. 25:41), and “*the smoke of their torment ascendeth up forever and ever*” (Rev. 14:11; 20:12-15).

Let’s make sure we are not like those “*disobedient*” ones of Noah’s day! (1 Pet. 3:20). The prison they are in is much worse than any prison on earth. Peter went on to say that we are saved from that punishment through water baptism, which he said is similar to the way Noah and his family were saved after obedience to God’s commands (1 Pet. 3:20-21).