

1 Peter 3:18-22 ¹⁸ 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; ¹⁹ in which also He went and made proclamation to the spirits *now* in prison, ²⁰ 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. ²¹ Corresponding to that, baptism now saves you-- not the removal of dirt from the flesh, but an appeal to God for a good conscience-- through the resurrection of Jesus Christ, ²² who is at the right hand of God, having gone into heaven, after angels and authorities and powers had been subjected to Him.

This is undoubtedly one of those portions of Scripture that potentially opens the door for some strange doctrines if we're not careful to compare the whole counsel of God's word so as to move from implicit passages, like the one's before us that appear more opaque than clear, to the more explicit passages that would help to define what this text is actually communicating.

There is nowhere else in the word of God that specifically addresses Jesus preaching to spirits in prison after his death on the cross. But, as we ask ourselves some questions, we can begin to see a little more clearly where Peter is going with this section.

For example, what does it mean for Christ to have been put to death in the flesh, but made alive in the spirit? When did he go to make proclamation to the spirits in prison; before or after his resurrection? What message was proclaimed; gospel or simply victory over death? Who are the spirits who received this proclamation; human spirits or demons? And what kind of prison are these spirits in; presumably hell?

Let's back up to the first issue that juxtaposes death and life at the end of verse 18. We're told that Christ died for sins once for all, the just for the unjust.

As we have seen in previous studies this is not teaching any sort of soteriological universalism but rather a one-time death event to cover all the sins of the unjust, which necessarily means all of the unjust given to the Son by the Father, that is, the elect.

John 6:39 ³⁹ "This is the will of Him who sent Me, that of ***all that He has given Me*** I lose nothing, but raise it up on the last day.

Matthew 24:31 ³¹ "And He will send forth His angels with A GREAT TRUMPET and **THEY WILL GATHER TOGETHER His elect from the four winds**, from one end of the sky to the other.

Romans 8:33-34 ³³ **Who will bring a charge against God's elect?** God is the one who justifies; ³⁴ who is the one who condemns? Christ Jesus is He who died, yes, rather who was raised, who is at the right hand of God, **who also intercedes for us [the elect].**

It is in the context of Jesus dying for His people, the just for the unjust, whereby He brings us to God, that Peter uses the phrase, "having been put to death in the flesh, but made alive in the spirit."

We know what it means for Christ to have been put to death in the flesh as this clearly demonstrates the means by which our sins are paid for on the cross.

^{ESV} **Hebrews 9:28** so Christ, having been offered once to bear the sins of many, will appear a second time, not to deal with sin but to save those who are eagerly waiting for him.

If the sins of the many [the elect] were bore on the cross than we can be assured that it was the death of Christ on the cross that Peter is undoubtedly describing, thus He was "**put to death in the flesh.**"

But if he was put to death in the flesh, in what condition was he made alive in the spirit?

Other translations treat this verse by using the word **by** instead of **in** placing the force directly on the Holy Spirit who is doing the raising.

^{NIV} **1 Peter 3:18** For Christ died for sins once for all, the righteous for the unrighteous, to bring you to God. He was put to death in the body **but made alive by the Spirit,**

Peter tells us that Jesus was made alive after being put to death in the flesh. And this was certainly a work of the Spirit of God who raised Jesus bodily from the grave.

Romans 8:11 ¹¹ But if the Spirit of Him who raised Jesus from the dead dwells in you, He who raised Christ Jesus from the dead will also give life to your mortal bodies through His Spirit who dwells in you.

If Jesus was raised either *in* or *by* the Spirit it does not fundamentally change the physical life unto which He was raised, (the same body before death), previously placed in the ground. Therefore, to be made alive in the spirit, in the context of 1Peter 3, means He was bodily raised in the flesh in or by the Spirit of God.

It is in this context of being physically raised to life in the spirit, ***in which also [Jesus] went and made proclamation to the spirits now in prison, (1Peter 3:19).***

When was Jesus raised from the dead? On the first day of the week. Therefore, the time in which Jesus went and made proclamation to these spirits, (whoever they are), could not take place until at least Sunday morning, but would not limit that visitation to only Sunday as Jesus remained on the earth in his resurrected state for another 40 days.

Remember, Peter only states the condition in which Jesus made the proclamation, (being made alive in the spirit), not the specific time frame of the proclamation after which he was made alive in the spirit.

So, the context would seem to suggest that after Jesus rose bodily from the dead, we have this subsequent visitation to spirits in prison. What could this possibility be?

Again, nowhere in the word of God are we given any explicit teaching as to who or what is involved in this particular incident. At this point in our hermeneutical exegetical exercise, it is very important not to create a doctrine that would be out of accord with other clear teachings in the word of God. Therefore, the explicit passages must dictate to the implicit passage in question.

What do we mean by this? There are explicit passages in the word of God that are not ambiguous as it applies to the gospel, for example.

And so, whatever else is being taught here it is also necessary to point out those things that are not being taught. There are those who would suggest that what Jesus did was to dive into the depths of hell and preach the gospel to people who lived and died during the days of Noah.

1 Peter 3:19-20 ¹⁹ in which also He went and made proclamation to the spirits *now* in prison, ²⁰ ***who once were disobedient, when the patience of God kept waiting in the days of Noah.***

It is certainly true that the text includes a particular group who were once disobedient during the days of Noah, but at this point it does not define either the destination of Jesus or the specific audience to which he made the proclamation.

What is interesting is that when the terms "spirits" is used of the spirits of men it is often accompanied by a word or words that make clear it is the spirits of men.

Isaiah 14:9 ⁹ "Sheol from beneath is excited over you to meet you when you come; It arouses for you the ***spirits of the dead***, all the leaders of the earth; It raises all the kings of the nations from their thrones.

Isaiah 26:19 ¹⁹ ***Your dead will live***; Their corpses will rise. You who lie in the dust, awake and shout for joy, For your dew *is as* the dew of the dawn, And ***the earth will give birth to the departed spirits***.

Hebrews 12:22-23 ²² But you have come to Mount Zion and to the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem, and to myriads of angels, ²³ to ***the general assembly and church of the firstborn who are enrolled in heaven***, and to God, the Judge of all, and to the spirits of ***the righteous made perfect***,

And so, if these spirits in 1Peter 3 are the spirits of men, then there should be a clearer designation that they are in fact departed human beings who are now in prison, hell, to which Jesus presumably goes to preach to.

One place where someone may get the idea that Jesus visited hell after his death on the cross is in the first part of the Apostle's Creed:

"I believe in Jesus Christ, his only Son, our Lord,
who was conceived by the Holy Spirit
and born of the virgin Mary.
He suffered under Pontius Pilate,
was crucified, died, and was buried;
he descended to hell.
The third day he rose again from the dead.
He ascended to heaven
and is seated at the right hand of God the Father almighty.
From there he will come to judge the living and the dead."

This form of the Apostle's Creed is actually a later form of an earlier creed called the Old Roman Creed, neither of which were written by the apostles. The earlier Roman Creed excludes the phrase, "he descended into hell."

The idea of descending into hell, according to the Apostle's Creed, at least from a non-Roman Catholic perspective, is more in line with descending into the earth before being resurrected from the grave.

We get a clearer sense of this when looking at Messianic prophecy found in Psalm 16.

Psalm 16:9-10 ⁹ Therefore my heart is glad and my glory rejoices; My flesh also will dwell securely. ¹⁰ For You will not abandon my soul to Sheol; Nor will You allow Your Holy One to undergo decay.

It is clear that the physical body is in view here in Psalm 16 and that this body will not undergo decay, which is to say that this person will rise from the dead, as His body will rise out of Sheol, (the grave), in the context of this Psalm.

Luke confirms this in the book of Acts.

Acts 13:33-37 ³³ that God has fulfilled this *promise* to our children in that He raised up Jesus, as it is also written in the second Psalm, 'YOU ARE MY SON; TODAY I HAVE BEGOTTEN YOU.' ³⁴ "As for the fact that He raised Him up from the dead, no longer to return to decay, He has spoken in this way: 'I WILL GIVE YOU THE HOLY *and* SURE *blessings* OF DAVID.' ³⁵ "Therefore He also says in another *Psalm*, 'YOU WILL NOT ALLOW YOUR HOLY ONE TO UNDERGO DECAY.' ³⁶ "For David, after he had served the purpose of God in his own generation, fell asleep, and was laid among his fathers and underwent decay; ³⁷ but He whom God raised did not undergo decay.

You'll notice that Luke acknowledges that David's body did undergo decay. In the context of Psalm 16 the body not decaying and the soul in Sheol is describing the same event as found in our risen Lord and Savior.

The fact that the soul (*nephesh* in Hebrew, which can include the entire person, body and spirit), is abandoned to Sheol, does not preclude that the physical body is not in view.

Sheol is a Jewish idiom, depending on the context, that addresses the world of the dead, including the ground into which a physical body is placed. David speaks to this aspect of Sheol in a variety of places.

Psalm 88:3-6 ³ For my soul has had enough troubles, And my life has drawn near to Sheol. ⁴ I am reckoned among those who go down to the pit; I have become like a man without strength, ⁵ Forsaken among the dead, Like the slain who lie in the grave, Whom You remember no more, And they are cut off from Your hand. ⁶ You have put me in the lowest pit, In dark places, in the depths.

You'll notice that David's *soul* has had enough troubles in verse 3, as his *life* has drawn near to Sheol, or the world of the dead. But in verse 4 Sheol is replaced with the pit, and his life, full of troubles, is now without strength.

Verses three and four are placed in what is called a Hebrew parallelism, both describing the same phenomenon. In other words, his *soul* and his

life being drawn to Sheol are describing the same part of David, which is to say, his entire person. Therefore, David himself is being put in the pit, or the grave, as he metaphorically visits the world of the dead. Though absent from the body, he would be present with the Lord.

And so, when we employ the word hell, as in “descending into hell,” we must not think that the place called hell or hades, (the place of torment for the spirits of unbelievers after death), was the requisite destination for Jesus on the day He was crucified.

In a similar way, Jesus is not descending into hell in the sense that part of the just punishment for him includes a taste of what men will suffer in hell. The Scriptures are clear that the cross alone was sufficient for the punishment that should have fallen on us, but has fallen on our Lord and Savior.

This line of thought is similar to the teaching that insists, when Jesus cried out to the Father, My God, My God, why have you forsaken Me, (Psalm 22:1), that it was a cry of abandonment as if Jesus were separated from the Father at that moment, thus suffering a fate like that of sinful men separated from God because of their sin.

The truth remains that God is one and that He cannot fundamentally be separated from Himself. This would violate those explicit passages that cannot be broken.

Malachi 3:6 ⁶ "For I, the LORD, do not change; therefore you, O sons of Jacob, are not consumed.

This is the same Father who sent the Son to redeem a people for Himself.

Matthew 3:16-17 ¹⁶ After being baptized, Jesus came up immediately from the water; and behold, the heavens were opened, and he saw the Spirit of God descending as a dove *and* lighting on Him, ¹⁷ and behold, a voice out of the heavens said, "***This is My beloved Son, in whom I am well-pleased.***"

Part of what it means for the Father to be pleased with the Son is to accomplish the mission for which the Son was sent.

Colossians 1:19-20 ¹⁹ For it was the *Father's* good pleasure for all the fullness to dwell in Him, ²⁰ and through Him to reconcile all things to Himself, having made peace through the blood of His cross; through Him, *I say*, whether things on earth or things in heaven.

The peace came through the blood of the cross, not by Jesus being cut off from the Godhead and subsequently descending into hell to pay a debt outside of the cross.

Of course, there are those who still insist that Jesus, in some spiritual state after his crucifixion, but prior to his resurrection, went and made proclamation to the spirits in prison, presumably in hell, to which only the Apostle's Creed seems to allude.

Two things should be pointed out regarding this line of thought. The first is that Jesus made it clear to the thief on the cross that TODAY the thief would be with him in paradise, not hell.

The second thing, as was noted earlier, is that our salvation, according to Scripture, was accomplished at the cross itself, thus Jesus did not need to suffer any subsequent punishment.

Ephesians 2:15-16 ¹⁵ by abolishing in His flesh the enmity, *which is* the Law of commandments *contained* in ordinances, so that in Himself He might make the two into one new man, *thus* establishing peace, ¹⁶ **and might reconcile them both in one body to God through the cross, by it having put to death the enmity.**

Colossians 2:13-15 ¹³ When you were dead in your transgressions and the uncircumcision of your flesh, He made you alive together with Him, having forgiven us all our transgressions, ¹⁴ **having canceled out the certificate of debt consisting of decrees against us, which was hostile to us; and He has taken it out of the way, having nailed it to the cross.** ¹⁵ When He had disarmed the rulers and authorities, He made a public display of them, having triumphed over them through Him.

1 Peter 2:24 ²⁴ **and He Himself bore our sins in His body on the cross,** so that we might die to sin and live to righteousness; for by His wounds you were healed.

And, of course, we should consider the very statement of Jesus himself as he put an exclamation point on his work to reconcile men to himself on behalf of the Father.

John 19:30 ³⁰ Therefore when Jesus had received the sour wine, He said, **"It is finished!"** And He bowed His head and gave up His spirit.

So, there was no need for Jesus to descend into hell for any punitive reasons as his death on the cross was sufficient to bear our guilt in full.

So, when we are told that Jesus was made alive in the spirit, in opposition to him being put to death in the flesh, this necessarily describes him in his resurrected state as he makes proclamation to the spirits in prison.

As he was formerly placed into Sheol, the grave, He is now alive in the spirit as His fleshly body is now a resurrected spiritual body. By this we do not mean that His fleshly body ceased to be flesh, rather, His fleshly

body now takes on all the characteristics of that spiritual reality that overcomes the flesh being relegated to the grave. Paul speaks to this when writing to the church at Corinth.

1 Corinthians 15:39-47 ³⁹ All flesh is not the same flesh, but there is one *flesh* of men, and another flesh of beasts, and another flesh of birds, and another of fish. ⁴⁰ There are also heavenly bodies and earthly bodies, but the glory of the heavenly is one, and the *glory* of the earthly is another. ⁴¹ There is one glory of the sun, and another glory of the moon, and another glory of the stars; for star differs from star in glory. ⁴² So also is the resurrection of the dead. It is sown a perishable *body*, it is raised an imperishable *body*; ⁴³ it is sown in dishonor, it is raised in glory; it is sown in weakness, it is raised in power; ⁴⁴ it is sown a natural body, it is raised a spiritual body. If there is a natural body, there is also a spiritual *body*. ⁴⁵ So also it is written, "The first MAN, Adam, BECAME A LIVING SOUL." The last Adam *became* a life-giving spirit. ⁴⁶ However, the spiritual is not first, but the natural; then the spiritual. ⁴⁷ The first man is from the earth, earthy; the second man is from heaven.

The context here is clear; flesh, (Greek, *sarx*), is that which describes the body of either beast or man. It is this body which is given glory by God depending on that part of creation that is designed to glorify God in a particular way; *"There are also heavenly bodies and earthly bodies, but the glory of the heavenly is one, and the glory of the earthly is another."*

Paul then goes on to describe how the resurrection of man alters the glory of man from that which was sown perishable in dishonor, to that which is raised in glory, or imperishable. The physical body of man is clearly in view.

Thus, the physical body of a believer is raised from that which was a natural body to a spiritual body. Paul is not making an argument that a resurrection body is anything other than a physical body, only that the natural man, in Christ, who is part of a cursed world will be raised unto new life, new creation.

This new life is derived from the last Adam, who is Jesus Christ, fully God and fully man, now raised on the third day, whom Paul identifies as a life-giving spirit. But it is in that immediate context that Paul makes clear what that spiritual aspect of man and Christ is.

As to the first Adam, he became a living soul. God explains what this means in the very beginning of Genesis when our Creator gave life to the first man.

^{ESV} **Genesis 2:7** then the LORD God formed the man of dust from the ground and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life, and the man became a living creature.

Man was first formed a physical entity from the dust of the earth. But he did not become a living being. (Hebrew, *nephesh*, soul), until God (*breathed into his nostrils the breath of life*), at which point man was now complete as both physical and spiritual.

However, the last Adam did not start in this way, because the last Adam had no beginning as the last Adam is none other than the Son of God sent from the Father, who is eternal, which is why Paul juxtaposes the first Adam with the last Adam, identifying the first with the earth, whereas Christ is identified as having existence already being in heaven.

So, when we come back to 1Peter 3:18, where Christ is put to death in the flesh, but made alive in the spirit, Peter is saying that the last Adam has fulfilled his eternal role of taking on flesh for human beings, but has overcome the natural order in His resurrection to now become part of that eternal spiritual order, (the new creation), over which He is King.

Therefore, it is in this risen state that Jesus makes a proclamation to spirits in prison. But, if Jesus made proclamation to human spirits in prison with a gospel message this creates a biblical conundrum. The problem with this proposition is that Scripture explicitly prohibits this if this preaching is meant for any sort of conversion phenomenon.

Hebrews 9:27 ²⁷ And inasmuch as it is appointed for men to die once and after this *comes* judgment,

We have a picture of this final arrangement when Jesus shared the story of the rich man and Lazarus who both died as each went to their respective habitations to which they were sealed.

Luke 16:22-28 ²² "Now the poor man died and was carried away by the angels to Abraham's bosom; and the rich man also died and was buried. ²³ "In Hades he lifted up his eyes, being in torment, and saw Abraham far away and Lazarus in his bosom. ²⁴ "And he cried out and said, 'Father Abraham, have mercy on me, and send Lazarus so that he may dip the tip of his finger in water and cool off my tongue, for I am in agony in this flame.' ²⁵ "But Abraham said, 'Child, remember that during your life you received your good things, and likewise Lazarus bad things; but now he is being comforted here, and you are in agony. ²⁶ 'And besides all this, between us and you there is a great chasm fixed, so that those who wish to come over from here to you will not be able, and *that* none may cross over from there to us.' ²⁷ "And he said, 'Then I beg you, father, that you send him to my father's house-- ²⁸ for I have five

brothers-- in order that he may warn them, so that they will not also come to this place of torment.'

So, we know that Jesus would not have been preaching the gospel to the spirits of human beings in hell, which raises another issue in the 1Peter 3 text.

Who are these spirits? The text does not specifically tell us. If they are spirits of men, particularly of men who lived during the days of Noah, why would they be differentiated from men during any other period? And if they are the spirits of men what would be the advantage of preaching the gospel to them if their fate is sealed after their deaths?

The Greek word that Peter uses for preach in 1Peter 3:19 is *kerusso*, and it simply means to be a herald, or proclaim. It does not indicate what is heralded by Jesus in this context. But what is excluded from the context actually gives us some clues as to what is being communicated by Peter.

If the overall teaching of the word of God does not permit the gospel being shared with the spirits of men after death, then the spirits who were once disobedient, that included the time of the days of Noah, would leave the door open for evil spirits (demons) during this same time period.

In fact, this seems to be the way this term is used when speaking of demons in both old and new testaments where the descriptive word, unclean, is often found in the same context, or is simply identified as demons.

Matthew 8:16 ¹⁶ When evening came, they brought to Him many who were **demon-possessed**; and **He cast out the spirits** with a word, and healed all who were ill.

Matthew 10:1 ^{NAU} Jesus summoned His twelve disciples and gave them authority over **unclean spirits**, to cast them out, and to heal every kind of disease and every kind of sickness.

Therefore, it would make sense to see the spirits in 1Peter 3 as describing demons who are in prison.

This is where some teach that the spirits in question are the sons of God in Genesis 6:2, presumably evil spirits, who "saw that the daughters of men were beautiful; and they took wives for themselves, whomever they chose."

The reasoning behind such a judgment was because of how these evil spirits, "angels did not keep their own domain, but abandoned their proper abode", (**Jude 1:6**), as they came into the daughters of men, thus placing God in a position to judge all of humanity by destroying all flesh, now personally tainted by demons, in a world-wide flood.

Having written an entire book on this subject I will just say that evil spirits taking human women as wives, and having children to them, cannot withstand any semblance of exegesis and defies any perspicuity of the actual text that is dealing with the covenant seed of Seth juxtaposed with the seed of the serpent, (the seed that rejected that covenant made with Adam and Eve, the seed of the woman.)

To get the exhaustive teaching on this I refer you to my book, War of the Seeds, A covenantal, exegetical look at the sons of God in Genesis and Job.

So, I would reject the notion that the spirits in prison in the 1Peter 3 passage is addressing fallen angels who sinned the sin of cohabitating with human women, and for that reason were visited by Christ after his resurrection to condemn them for that sin against the human race, which in turn precipitated the flooding of the entire world in judgment by God.

Having said that, this does not mean that the spirits in prison, in the 1Peter 3 passage, may not in fact be the spirits of demons as the only viable alternative, but for an entirely different reason.

As to the reason that God's patience is introduced into the 1Peter 3 narrative, that includes Noah, may be Peter's way of comparing how God's first global judgment was not hasty as patience was still extended to mankind. Peter seems to extend this argument out to the present day, (a run up to the second global fiery judgment), in his second letter.

2 Peter 3:9 ⁹ The Lord is not slow about His promise, as some count slowness, but is patient toward you, not wishing for any to perish but for all to come to repentance.

The apostle Paul would also make this same argument.

Romans 9:22-24 ²² What if God, although willing to demonstrate His wrath and to make His power known, endured with much patience vessels of wrath prepared for destruction? ²³ And *He did so* to make known the riches of His glory upon vessels of mercy, which He prepared beforehand for glory, ²⁴ *even us*, whom He also called, not from among Jews only, but also from among Gentiles.

And so, the patience extended to the world that resulted in only eight people being saved is a picture of how God will continue to extend patience until the last person chosen to eternal life will come into the ark of God's saving grace found in Christ Jesus.

Remember, this entire section of 1Peter 3 is dealing with the judgment of sin resulting in Christ's crucifixion, death and the subsequent victory

in His resurrection. For all intents and purposes, the disobedient spirits in Peter's text, are likely the evil spirits who had deceived the whole world prior to and including the time leading up to Noah.

These spirits were certainly instrumental in enticing and keeping the world in darkness from the truth of God's saving Messiah found in the seed of the woman promised to Eve, which is precisely what the light of the world, Jesus Christ, came to declare during the days of his incarnation.

Acts 26:18 ¹⁸ to open their eyes so that they may turn from darkness to light and from the dominion of Satan to God, that they may receive forgiveness of sins and an inheritance among those who have been sanctified by faith in Me.'

It is the influential darkness of the spiritual forces of wickedness in heavenly places that continues to deceive the unbelieving world who are ensnared on a daily basis; the same influence that took place during the days of Noah involving the same spirits.

Ephesians 6:12 ¹² For our struggle is not against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the powers, against the world forces of this darkness, against the spiritual *forces* of wickedness in the heavenly *places*.

Christ has fulfilled the promises made to a pre-flood people through Noah's preaching, (*when the patience of God kept waiting in the days of Noah, during the construction of the ark*), who were subsequently judged for their sin in a world-wide flood.

Therefore, it could make sense to proclaim to these same evil spirits who sinned, and were cast out of heaven, that their day of reckoning is around the corner as Jesus enters their world, prison if you will, to proclaim final victory over death as these spirits await their final judgment in the Lake of Fire.

Jude 1:6 ⁶ And angels who did not keep their own domain, but abandoned their proper abode, He has kept in eternal bonds under darkness for the judgment of the great day,

^{SV} **2 Peter 2:4** For if God did not spare angels when they sinned, but cast them into hell and committed them to chains of gloomy darkness to be kept until the judgment;

These same angels certainly understood their fate prior to Christ's resurrection.

Matthew 8:29 ²⁹ And they [demons] cried out, saying, "What business do we have with each other, Son of God? Have You come here to torment us before the time?"

Is the "hell" or "eternal bonds," that Peter and Jude refer to, the same "prison" referred to in 1Peter 3:18? And if this is a prison does this mean that these "spirits" are incapable of having an effect on mankind since they are confined to chains of gloomy darkness to be kept until the judgment?

To the last question we know that Satan has been bound by Christ since His appearance as the risen Messiah.

Mark 3:27 ²⁷ "But no one can enter the strong man's house and plunder his property unless he first binds the strong man, and then he will plunder his house.

John 12:30-32 ³⁰ Jesus answered and said, "This voice has not come for My sake, but for your sakes. ³¹ "Now judgment is upon this world; ***now the ruler of this world will be cast out.*** ³² "And I, if I am lifted up from the earth, will draw all men to Myself."

Revelation 20:2-3 ² And he laid hold of the dragon, the serpent of old, who is the devil and Satan, ***and bound him for a thousand years;*** ³ and he threw him into the abyss, and shut *it* and sealed *it* over him, ***so that he would not deceive the nations any longer,*** until the thousand years were completed; after these things he must be released for a short time.

This binding, or prison if you will, does not preclude that Satan and his demons will not be active in the world, only that they are not able to deceive the nations any longer, as it pertains to the gospel, until which time the Lord allows them to be loosed to deceive the nations where the apostasy of the "church" will ensue, thus his patience coming to an end as in the days of Noah.

And so, there is no reason to believe that being visited in prison by the risen Lord, (declaring His victory over the grave to these evil spirits), keeps them from causing havoc in the church which we are told in many instances is used by God to test our faith, of which Peter makes note of in his first letter.

1 Peter 4:12-14 ¹² Beloved, do not be surprised at the fiery ordeal among you, which comes upon you for your testing, as though some strange thing were happening to you; ¹³ but to the degree that you share the sufferings of Christ, keep on rejoicing, so that also at the revelation of His glory you may rejoice with exultation. ¹⁴ If you are

reviled for the name of Christ, you are blessed, because the Spirit of glory and of God rests on you.

If the risen Christ has visited the spirits in prison, (those evil spirits in the spiritual realm), then a victory lap may be implied over their intent to murder that which was made in the image of God.

Colossians 2:13-15 ¹³ When you were dead in your transgressions and the uncircumcision of your flesh, **He made you alive together with Him, having forgiven us all our transgressions,** ¹⁴ having canceled out the certificate of debt consisting of decrees against us, which was hostile to us; and He has taken it out of the way, having nailed it to the cross. ¹⁵ When He had disarmed the rulers and authorities, **He made a public display of them, having triumphed over them through Him.**

Having weighed the evidence it seems more logical that the proclamation is not one of salvation being preached to the spirits of men, but a declaration of victory over those spiritual forces of wickedness in the heavenly places.

This may be seen in a similar instance just before the second world-wide judgment in fire where Christ declares His imminent coming.

Revelation 22:7 ⁷ "And behold, I am coming quickly. Blessed is he who heeds the words of the prophecy of this book."

Since there is no other place in Scripture that addresses this concept of Christ visiting spirits in prison, we can only surmise this to be a unique glimpse behind the scenes of our Lord's activity, and leave it at that. As long as this teaching does not contradict any other clear teaching on what Christ did or did not do during those early days, after his resurrection, we must be content with what Scripture reveals, even if we do not have all the answers this side of heaven.

But I believe we go too far if we spend most of our time trying to figure out what Peter is saying regarding this resurrection parenthesis, because the real thrust of this passage begins and ends with Christ's victory.

1 Peter 3:18 ¹⁸ For Christ also died for sins once for all, *the* just for *the* unjust, so that He might bring us to God

PARENTHESIS: 1 Peter 3:19-20 ¹⁹ in which also He went and made proclamation to the spirits *now* in prison, ²⁰ 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.

Christ dying for the sins of his elect, and the ark of God's grace saving eight people from his judgment, is the message Peter ends with.

1 Peter 3:21-22 ²¹ Corresponding to that, baptism now saves you-- not the removal of dirt from the flesh, but an appeal to God for a good conscience-- through the resurrection of Jesus Christ, ²² who is at the right hand of God, having gone into heaven, after angels and authorities and powers had been subjected to Him.

Christ has conquered his enemies and has taken up his proper place at the right hand of the Father.

^{ESV} **Revelation 3:21** The one who conquers, I will grant him to sit with me on my throne, as I also conquered and sat down with my Father on his throne.

When Peter says in verse 21, "Corresponding to that, baptism now saves you" he is referencing the flood of Noah's day as Noah and his family are delivered safely from God's judgment.

So, salvation is still clearly in view here as it was in the beginning of this section when "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;" (**1 Peter 3:18**)

As we leave the parenthesis of verses 19 through 21 it is Peter's intention to return to the heart of the message which is "baptism now saves you." But then he defines what this baptism is.

1 Peter 3:21 not the removal of dirt from the flesh, but an appeal to God for a good conscience-- through the resurrection of Jesus Christ,

Peter quickly pivots from what his readers would identify as one of the ordinances of the Christian faith, water baptism, and shows how water baptism speaks to a greater reality.

In this case he explains how the water associated with Noah's flood that destroyed the world but delivered his family, was a water that pointed to a judgment that resulted in Christ being put to death in the flesh, but made alive in the Spirit, with the intent to remove the dirt of our filthy rags that kept us in bondage to our sin and guilt.

This is the same message that the writer of Hebrews reveals to us.

^{ESV} **Hebrews 10:22** let us draw near with a true heart in full assurance of faith, with our hearts sprinkled clean from an evil conscience and our bodies washed with pure water.

And it is this same washing that Paul would identify later in his letter to Titus that explains what this washing actually accomplishes.

^{ESV} **Titus 3:5** he saved us, not because of works done by us in righteousness, but according to his own mercy, by the washing of regeneration and renewal of the Holy Spirit,

This section in Peter's letter was never meant to be some strange diversion into a gnostic teaching on Christ's secret journey to a netherworld where we need the equivalent of a Little Orphan Annie decoder ring to figure out this puzzle, but rather a clear message of hope and joy as our victorious Savior accomplishes a good conscience for God's people through the resurrection of Jesus Christ.

We no longer have to fear that we will come under His wrath because the sin that separated us from God has been eliminated, as our status has been changed by God Himself from guilty to not guilty, from enemy to friend, from an alien to a beloved adopted bride.

This status does not come from anything we could accomplish but rather by what Christ accomplished on our behalf as He imputed His righteousness to our account. This is why we have a good conscience toward God and Paul drives home this point when writing to the Romans.

Romans 8:1-4 ^{NAU 1} Therefore there is now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus. ² For the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus has set you free from the law of sin and of death. ³ For what the Law could not do, weak as it was through the flesh, God *did*: sending His own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh and *as an offering* for sin, He condemned sin in the flesh, ⁴ so that the requirement of the Law might be fulfilled in us, who do not walk according to the flesh but according to the Spirit.

It is through Christ's resurrection that you and I have access to the Father because it was through the resurrection by which our Savior gained access to the Father on our behalf, securing the salvation of all that the Father gave Him, and these He will most certainly raise up on the last day as we too will rise from the dead and receive resurrected glorified bodies like our Lord's.

1 Peter 3:22 ²² who is at the right hand of God, having gone into heaven, after angels and authorities and powers had been subjected to Him.

This risen Jesus is at the right hand of God and makes intercession for us continually. He has risen and we have been seated with Him in the heavenly places in the sense that our position before the Father is also at His side as our Lord Jesus brings us to God through the atoning work on the cross and then secures that through His resurrection.

The victory proclamation that is implied in 1Peter 3:19 seems to also be implied at the very end of this section where, after Christ has gone into heaven, all things are subjected to Him, including angels, authorities and powers. He has truly accomplished the will of the Father in bringing His people home to dwell securely with Him forever.

Ephesians 2:4-8 ⁴ But God, being rich in mercy, because of His great love with which He loved us, ⁵ even when we were dead in our transgressions, made us alive together with Christ (by grace you have been saved), ⁶ and raised us up with Him, and seated us with Him in the heavenly *places* in Christ Jesus, ⁷ so that in the ages to come He might show the surpassing riches of His grace in kindness toward us in Christ Jesus. ⁸ For by grace you have been saved through faith; and that not of yourselves, *it is* the gift of God;

This is the God we serve and love, and the God we long to be with as we anticipate the hope of glory that is found in Christ at the last heralding trumpet on the last day as He comes for us, as He then turns this entire universe upside down, eliminating the curse through His fiery glory, and establishing His kingdom in this world as He dwells with us forever on the new earth and heavens.

This is a glorious thing we look forward to and in Peter's second letter he holds out this hope and how we should respond to it in this life as we wait for the next. We'll end with this today.

2 Peter 3:13-14 ¹³ But according to His promise we are looking for new heavens and a new earth, in which righteousness dwells. ¹⁴ Therefore, beloved, since you look for these things, be diligent to be found by Him in peace, spotless and blameless,