

# Jesus Preaching in Hell

By: Francis Gregory Febus

1 Peter 3:18-20

18 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:**

**19 By which also he went and preached unto the spirits in prison;**

20 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.

KJV

One of the strangest doctrines in our midst us has to be the traditional teaching of Jesus preaching to the residents of Hell subsequent to His death on the cross. I remember long ago as a babe in the Lord how powerful men of God preached of the event of Christ's death. They declared that Christ paid a personal visit to Satan's headquarters in hell and dramatically demanded to have the keys of Hell and Death. They continued the tale by saying that the Devil reluctantly passed the keys to the Christ, knelt and declared, "Jesus is Lord!" The story narration of this story usually concluded with the Lord opening the gates of Hell and preached the everlasting gospel to the tortured souls of the under world.

Back then I would scratch my head and wonder where in the world those preachers obtained that type information because it was not apparently found in the word of God. Those teachers of the oral tradition would mesmerize us with information we were not privy to. At times they would even support their theories with publications as the Talmud. I did not know exactly what the Talmud was but I was sure impressed with its mystical application as it was delivered by the skillful presentation of an apostolic pulpiter! He was sure to have it right, with smooth articulation and timing that would put Fred Astaire to shame!

In time my biblical understanding increased and with it the responsibility of dispensing its wisdom. One thing I learned quickly, it is not wise to share that which is holy with those who resist and reject it.

The scripture we used as the text of this article (1Peter 3:18-20) was the subject of a conversation I had with a pastor friend of mine many years ago. When I challenged his position on Jesus preaching to the residents of Hell, his face immediately became contorted. His whole demeanor toward me was altered from one of sweet fellowship to one of an adversary seeking to protect a sacred possession threatened to be taken away. I immediately dropped the subject and crawled back into my hole. Now that I am no longer a corporate preacher I am independent and free to investigate the subject with an open mind and an open heart.

Unbeknown to my pastor friend was the fact that this scripture is a powerful oneness scripture. The same Spirit that raised the Lord Jesus is identified as the Spirit which empowered Noah to preach to the prisoners illustrated in 1 Peter 3:18-21.

### 1 Peter 3:18-21

18 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:

**The Spirit was the vehicle by which Jesus preached.**

19 By which also he went and preached unto the spirits in prison;

**The spirits in prison are identified by verse 20, the disobedient in the time of Noah!**

20 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.

According to this scripture in verse 18, Christ suffers for our sins and is quickened or made alive (resurrected) by the Spirit.

Verses 18 and 19 tell us that Spirit of Christ was used to preach to the spirits in prison.

There are a few questions we should consider before we hang our collective hats on any kind of conclusion.

1. We must identify the "spirits" that are in prison
2. When did this take place?

### 3. Why is Noah introduced into the narrative in verse 20?

According to the oral traditions handed down to us, Jesus preached to the residents of Hell after His death. To come to that conclusion, one must interpret the phrase “spirits in prison” to mean Hell. That is the quantum leap one must assume in order to join the ranks of those who hold this belief.

In order to ascertain what the word “prisoners” means in this context we must find supportive scripture to establish its hermeneutical value.

#### Isaiah 42:6-7

6 I the LORD have called thee in righteousness, and will hold thine hand, and will keep thee, and give thee for a covenant of the people, for a light of the Gentiles;

7 To open the blind eyes, **to bring out the prisoners from the prison , and them that sit in darkness out of the prison house.**

The people of God are depicted as being hid in prison houses.

#### Isaiah 42:21-22

21 The LORD is well pleased for his righteousness' sake; he will magnify the law, and make it honourable.

22 But this is a people robbed and spoiled; they are all of them snared in holes, and **they are hid in prison houses:** they are for a prey, and none delivereth; for a spoil, and none saith, Restore.

#### Isaiah 61:1

61:1 The Spirit of the Lord God is upon me; because the Lord hath anointed me to preach good tidings unto the meek; he hath sent me to bind up the brokenhearted, to proclaim liberty to the captives, **and the opening of the prison to them that are bound;** KJV.

After considering the scriptures cited above, I believe that we can safely conclude that the bible defines the use of the word “prison” as spiritual bondage. There are absolutely no scriptures that use the term “prisoners” to infer its meaning to be Hell or eternal torture. The presumption of this by Bible teachers today is purely a fabrication of their own imaginations.

In the next component of this study we should consider is **the timing of this event**. The oral tradition assures us that it occurred at the time of the Lord's death, but there is no indication in this passage that supports that view. Verse 20 clearly tells us that this event transpired in the days of Noah. The spirits that were in bondage were the disobedient in the days of Noah. The only conclusion one can come to is that Noah was a preacher, and as true preachers do, they preach through inspiration of the Spirit of God (the Spirit of Christ). Noah preached and warned his generation of the impending judgment of the coming flood. Only eight were saved from the destruction he predicted. The introduction of this ancient figure and his preaching into this particular passage is significant because of the association that is made between the historic event of the flood and salvation by water in Baptism. Both required preaching through the Spirit of Christ to save those in the prison house of sin. If we understand the deity of Christ it should be evident that His Spirit is the spirit of anointing and empowerment that saves the prisoners of this current generation.

#### 1 Peter 1:9-11

9 Receiving the end of your faith, even the salvation of your souls.

10 Of which salvation the prophets have inquired and searched diligently, who prophesied of the grace that should come unto you:

11 Searching what or what manner of time **the Spirit of Christ which was in them** did signify, when it testified beforehand the sufferings of Christ, and the glory that should follow.

12 Unto whom it was revealed, that not unto themselves, but unto us they did minister the things, which are now reported unto you by them that have preached the gospel unto you with the Holy Ghost sent down from heaven; which things the angels desire to look into.

#### 2 Peter 1:21-2:1

21 For the prophecy came not in old time by the will of man: but **holy men of God spake as they were moved by the Holy Ghost**.