

Christ Preaching To The Spirits In Prison 1 Pet. 3:18-20

Rev. Henry Cowles

In the English version of this passage we read: "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 long suffering 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; who is gone into heaven, and is on the right hand of God; angels and authorities and powers being made subject unto him" (1 Pet. 3:18–22). In the original the essential words are: "θανάτωθει ς μεν σαρκί, ζωοποιηθει ς δε πνεύματι, εν ω και οι ς εν φυλακη πνεύμασι πορευθει ς ε κήρυξεν, αἰρείησαςiv pote, οτε α πεξεδέχeto η του θεου μακροθυμία εν ημέραις Νω ε, κατασκευαζομένης κιβωτου ."

The object of this Article is to ascertain *when, where, by whom* (instrumentally or otherwise), and *to whom*, this preaching was done.

BSac 32:127 (July 1875) p. 402

The issue lies between two widely diverse constructions of the passage: first, that which assumes that this preaching was done — as to *time when*—in the interval between Christ's death and resurrection; as to *place where* — in Hades — the realm of the dead; on the point *by whom* — by Christ himself in his disembodied state; on the point *to whom* — to the lost spirits who while living on earth were of Noah's generation, the very men who were persistently unbelieving during the period while the ark was in preparation. Second, that which assumes that this preaching was done — as to *time when* — while the ark was in preparation; as to *place where* — on this earth, and not in Hades; on the point *by whom* — by Christ really, but through Noah instrumentally, whom Peter himself speaks of elsewhere as "a preacher of righteousness" (2 Pet. 2:5); on the point, *to whom* specifically — to those hardened, defiant sinners, with whom God in long-suffering waited so...

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