

“Faithful Harmony”

1 Peter 3:18-22

October 22, 2023

INTRO: **VIDEO – “Defender”**

That song epitomizes the Bible, 1st Peter, The Gospel, & today’s sermon!

CONTEXT:

- ~ 1st Peter “No Matter What”
- ~ 1st Peter’s structural emphasis
- ~ Today we’ll climb to the heights of Christianity
- ~ Today we’ll tackle some huge heresies...

BIG IDEA: Don’t let what you don’t know interfere with what you do know.

Jesus Christ is LORD & He is faithful!

PREVIEW:

1. **CHRIST’S** Faithful Harmony v.18
2. **PREACHING’S** Faithful Harmony v.19-20
3. **WITNESSE’S** Faithful Harmon v.21-22

PRE-TEXT:

1st Peter's early Commands & Implications

Ch.1

- v.1-2: Peter is writing to *"elect exiles"*
- v.1-2: Peter is writing for their *"obedience to Jesus Christ..."*
- v.1-2: Peter is writing for their *"sprinkling with His blood"*
- v.2: Peter is writing that *"grace & peace be multiplied to you"*
- v.22: *"Love one another earnestly from a pure heart."*

Ch.2

- v.1: *"Put away ALL malice, deceit, hypocrisy, envy, slander..."*
- v.2: *"Long for pure spiritual milk"*
- v.5: *"You're like living stones, being built into a spiritual oikos"*
- v.5: *"You're being built up into a holy priesthood."*
- v.9: *"You are a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation..."*
- v.9: *"You are a people for His own possession..."*
- v.9: Your purpose is to *"proclaim His excellencies..."*
- v.10 *"You are God's people... who have received mercy."*
- v.11 *"Abstain from the passions of the flesh... warring in you"*
- v.12 *"Keep your conduct... honorable..."*
- v.13 *"Be subject for the Lord's sake, to every human institution"*
- v.15 *"Do good and put to silence the ignorance of fools"*
- v.16 *"Live as free... servants of God..."*
- v.17 *"Honor everyone, love the brothers, fear God, & honor the
emperor"*
- v.18 *"Servants/slaves be subject to your masters..."*
- v.21 *"To this (suffering unjustly) you have been called..."*
- v.21 You've been... *"called to follow in Christ's footsteps..."*

21For to this you have been called, because Christ also suffered for you, leaving you an example, so that you might follow in his steps. **22**He committed no sin, neither was deceit found in his mouth. **23**When he was reviled, he did not revile in return; when he suffered, he did not threaten, but continued entrusting himself to him who judges justly. **24**He himself bore our sins in his body on the tree, that we might die to sin and live to righteousness. By his wounds you have been healed. **25**For you were straying like sheep, but have now returned to the Shepherd and Overseer of your souls.

Ch.3

- v.1: *“Likewise wives be subject to your own husbands...”*
- v.7: *“Likewise husbands, live with your wife in understanding...”*
- v.8: *“Finally, ALL of you... have UNITY/HARMONY...”*
- v.8: *“ALL of you... DO have unity of mind, sympathy, brotherly love, tender heartedness, humility of mind.”*
- v.9: *“ALL of you... DON’T repay evil for evil or reviling for rev.”*
- v.10: *“Instead, bless (the unjust)... and you will be blessed.”*

12For the eyes of the Lord are on the righteous, and his ears are open to their prayer. But the face of the Lord is against those who do evil.”

13Now who is there to harm you if you are zealous for what is good? **14**But even if you should suffer for righteousness’ sake, you will be blessed. Have no fear of them, nor be troubled, **15**but in your hearts honor Christ the Lord as holy, always being prepared to make a defense to anyone who asks you for a reason for the hope that is in you; yet do it with gentleness and respect, **16**having a good conscience, so that, when you are slandered, those who revile your good behavior in Christ may be put to shame. **17**For it is better to suffer for doing good, if that should be God’s will, than for doing evil.

TEXT:

1 Peter 3:18-22

I. CHRIST'S

Faithful Harmony

CHRIST faithfully harmonized:

- ~ SUFFERING
- ~ SATISFYING
- ~ SACRIFICING
- ~ SAVING
- ~ SCRIPTURE

18For Christ also suffered once for sins, the righteous for the unrighteous, that he might bring us to God, being put to death in the flesh but made alive in the spirit,

A. Christ's faithfully-harmonized **SUFFERING**:

- Go all the way back to **Genesis 3:15**
- **Isaiah 53:10** (NIV)
Yet it was the LORD's will to crush him and cause him to suffer... the LORD makes his life an offering for sin...
- **Luke 22:42**
"Father, if you are willing, remove this cup from me. Nevertheless, not my will, but yours, be done."
- **Hebrews 12:3**
"Consider Him..."

B. Christ's faithfully-harmonized SATISFYING:

“...Christ also suffered ONCE for sins...”

Romans 5:12-17

12...sin came into the world through one man, and death through sin, and so death spread to all men because all sinned... **17**...if, because of one man's trespass, death reigned through that one man, much more will those who receive the abundance of grace and the free gift of righteousness reign in life through the one man Jesus Christ.

C. Christ's faithfully-harmonized SACRIFICING:

“...Christ also suffered once for sins, the righteous for the unrighteous...”

2 Corinthians 5:21

...He made Him who knew no sin to be sin on our behalf, that we might become the very righteousness of God in Christ

D. Christ's faithfully-harmonized SAVING:

*“...Christ also suffered once for sins, the righteous for the unrighteous, that He might bring **US** to God...”*

2 Corinthians 5:17-21

Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation. The old has passed away; behold, the new has come...

John 3:3, 3:16, 3:36

John 6:44 & John 14:6

Hebrews 10-12 & Revelation 21:8

But the cowards, unbelievers, vile, murderers, sexually immoral, sorcerers, idolaters, and all liars—their share will be in the lake that burns with fire and sulfur, which is the second death.” (HCSB)

Matthew 7:15 & Acts 20:29

Matthew 10:16 & All of 1st John

Matthew 7:21-23 & 2 Corinthians 13:5

E. Christ’s faithfully-harmonized SCRIPTURE:

*“...Christ also suffered once for sins, the righteous for the unrighteous, that He might bring **us** to God... being put to death in the flesh but being made alive in the spirit.”*

1st Corinthians 15:35-50

35 *But someone will ask, "How are the dead raised? With what kind of body do they come?"* 36 *You foolish person! What you sow does not come to life unless it dies...* 40 *There are heavenly bodies and earthly bodies, but the glory of the heavenly is of one kind, and the glory of the earthly is of another...* 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...* 50 *I tell you this, brothers: flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God, nor does the perishable inherit the imperishable.*

QUOTE:

Scripture is clear that Jesus is God ([John 20:28](#); [Titus 2:13](#); [Hebrews 1:8](#)), and it is equally clear that He is truly human ([Romans 1:2-4](#); [1 John 4:2-3](#)). Jesus claimed the divine name ([John 8:58](#)) and did things that only God can do ([Mark 2:1-12](#); [Luke 7:48-50](#)). But Jesus also displayed the weaknesses and vulnerabilities common to humanity ([Luke 19:41](#); [John 19:28](#)). ...The belief that Jesus is both God and man is of fundamental importance. The apostle Paul wrote that an affirmation of the divinity of Jesus is required to be saved ([Romans 10:9](#)), and the apostle John provided a sober warning that those who deny Christ's true humanity are promoting the doctrine of antichrist ([2 John 1:7](#)). - [GotQuestions.org](#)

II. PREACHING'S Faithful Harmony

PREACHING's faithfully harmonized:

- ~ Christ-like PROCLAMATION
- ~ Consequential PRISON
- ~ Compassionate PATIENCE

19in which he went and proclaimed to the spirits in prison, **20**because they formerly did not obey, when God's patience waited in the days of Noah, while the ark was being prepared, in which a few, that is, eight persons, were brought safely through water.

A. Faithfully Harmonized Christ-like Proclamation:

Luther wrote, *"A wonderful text is this, and a more obscure passage perhaps than any other in the New Testament, so that I do not know for a certainty just what Peter means."*

(Jesus thru Noah? Jesus in hell/purgatory? Jesus to demons?)

1. GO! (*Jesus went & said...so we GO make disciples!*)
 - a. Where?
 - b. When?
 - c. Why?
 - d. Who?

2. Preach The Gospel! (see 1 Peter 4:6)
 - a. *"Proclaimed"* is a generic term...
 - b. *"proclaimed" "to spirits" "in prison"* = context

3. To those heading to hell!
 - a. Who or What are the "spirits?"
 - b. Where or What is the "prison?"

B. Faithfully Harmonizing Consequential Prison:

1. GO!
2. Preach WARNING!
3. DISOBEDIENCE is the broad way to destruction!

C. Faithfully Harmonizing Compassionate Patience:

1. GO!
 - a. God went to those in Noah's time...
 - b. We are in Noah-like time...

Luke 17:24-35.

(cf. Matthew 24:36-44)

24For as the lightning flashes and lights up the sky from one side to the other, so will the Son of Man be in his day. **25**But first he must suffer many things and be rejected by this generation. **26**Just as it was in the days of Noah, so will it be in the days of the Son of Man. **27**They were eating and drinking and marrying and being given in marriage, until the day when Noah entered the ark, and the flood came and destroyed them all. **28**Likewise, just as it was in the days of Lot—they were eating and drinking, buying and selling, planting and building, **29**but on the day when Lot went out from Sodom, fire and sulfur rained from heaven and destroyed them all— **30**so will it be on the day when the Son of Man is revealed. **31**On that day, let the one who is on the housetop, with his goods in the house, not come down to take them away, and likewise let the one who is in the field not turn back. **32**Remember Lot's wife. **33**Whoever seeks to preserve his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life will keep it. **34**I tell you, in that night there will be two in one bed. One will be taken and the other left. **35**There will be two women grinding together. One will be taken and the other left."

c. AND... God's family, like Noah, need not fear!

i. *Who can harm us?*

ii. *If the Lord is for us, who can be against us*

A	Noah and his sons (6:10)
B	All life on earth (6:13a)
C	Curse on earth (6:13b)
D	Ark (6:14-16)
E	All living creatures (6:17-20)
F	Food (6:21)
G	Animals in man's hands (7:2-3)
H	Entry into Ark (7:13-16)
I	Waters increase (7:17-19)
J	Mountains covered (7:20)
X	God remembers Noah (8:1)
J'	Mountains visible (8:5)
I'	Waters decrease (8:13-14)
H'	Exit from Ark (8:15-19)
G'	Animals in man's hands (9:2)
F'	Food (9:3-4)
E'	All living creatures (9:10a)
D'	Ark (9:10b)
C'	Blessing on earth (9:13-16)
B'	All life on earth (9:17)
A'	Noah and his sons (9:19)

2. Preach God's PATIENCE

*Let people know that these are the Ark building days... **and the storm clouds are forming!***

*As amazing as God's grace & gospel are...
neither of them are to be taken for granted!*

3. Patient for HIS FEW PEOPLE

a. **Christ is the ARK & only HIS family is in!**

b. **Christ/ARK is ONLY way of "salvation!"**

c. **ALL who reject HIM/ARK are DESTROYED**

- d. **NOTE: no steering & no sail... just Him!**
- e. **In HIM/ARK is EVERYTHING needed...**
- f. **Once in HIM/ARK outside world is cut off**

QUOTE: (Grudem)

The parallel between the situation of Noah and the situation of Peter's readers is clear at several points:

(1) Noah and his family were a minority surrounded by hostile unbelievers; so are Peter's readers

(2) Noah was righteous in the midst of a wicked world. Peter exhorts his readers to be righteous...

(3) Noah witnessed boldly to those around him. Peter encourages his readers to be good witnesses... being willing to suffer, if need be, to bring others to God (just as Christ was willing to suffer and die 'that he might bring us to God').

(4) Noah realized that judgment was soon to come upon the world. Peter reminds his readers of the same

(5) Christ preached through Noah to unbelievers around him. Peter reminds his readers of the reality of Christ's work in the unseen spiritual realm and the fact that Christ is also in them, empowering their witness and, they should not fear... and should 'always be prepared' to tell of the hope that is in them .

(6) At the time of Noah, God was patiently awaiting repentance from unbelievers, before he brought judgment. So it is in the situation of Peter's readers.

(7) Noah was finally saved, with 'a few' others. Peter thus encourages his readers that, though perhaps few, they too will finally be saved, for Christ has triumphed and has all things subject to him.

This passage, once cleared of misunderstanding, should also function today as an encouragement to us to be bold in our witness (as Noah was), to be confident that, though we may be few, God will certainly save us (as he did Noah), and to remind us that just as certainly as the flood eventually came, so final judgment will certainly come to our world as well, and Christ will ultimately triumph over all the evil in the universe.

III. WITNESSE'S Faithful Harmony

WITNESSE'S faithfully harmonized:

- ~ Real **BAPTISM**
- ~ Real **GOSPEL**
- ~ Real **GOOD**
- ~ Real **CHRIST**
- ~ Real **ALMIGHTY**

21Baptism, which corresponds to this, now saves you, not as a removal of dirt from the body but as an appeal to God for a good conscience, through the resurrection of Jesus Christ, **22**who has gone into heaven and is at the right hand of God, with angels, authorities, and powers having been subjected to him.

~ Real **BAPTISM**

- External symbol of internal transformation
- Immerse, submerge, put under

- See the **parallel to the Flood/Ark/Gospel!**
- Jesus both commanded & demonstrated...
- In context... a bold and dangerous witness

~ Real **GOSPEL**

- **THE Gospel (NOT based on works)**
 - See 1 Peter 3:18 & Ephesians 2:1-10
 - See the Stickman Gospel (John 3:36)
 - “mMm” (miracle, Messiah, mission)
- **BEWARE** all false gospels... they abound!

~ Real **GOOD**

- Good conscience is God affirmed...
- Clear conscience is man-made...
- **2 Timothy 3:16-17** defines the difference!

~ Real **CHRIST**

- Referred to hear has capital G “God”
- Greek Christ is literally Messiah in Hebrew
- See JESUS is LORD, God, Messiah!

~ Real **ALMIGHTY**

- All things, all people, all circumstances...
- ***Jesus is LORD... He is CREATOR Christ...***
- **The Trinity is ALMIGHTY!**

T/S: What HERESIES did we debunk today?

~ **No PURGATORY** (Hebrews 9:27)

*...people are destined to die once,
and after that to face judgment,*

~ **No TRANSUBSTANTIATION** (1 Peter 3:18)

~ **No UNIVERSAL Atonement** (“Limited” is biblical)

- *“bring US to God”* (1 Peter 3:18)
- *“new creation”* (2 Corinthians 5:17)

~ **No BAPTISMAL REGENERATION** (Ephesians 2:8-10)

~ **No DENYING Christ’s BODILY RESURRECTION**

- Jesus told them to touch & feel His wounds
- Jesus ate fish for breakfast with them...

REVIEW:

1. **CHRIST’s** Faithful Harmony
2. **PREACHING’s** Faithful Harmony
3. **WITNESSE’s** Faithful Harmon

CLOSE:

Don't let what you don't know
interfere with what you do know.
Jesus Christ is LORD & He is faithful!

Once again, God's Word is revealed to be His gift to His
people. Per 2 Timothy 3:16-17 and our text today,
we have learned of Christ's purpose and plan...

Consider the fact that He chose to suffer for the joy
that was set before Him (Hebrews 12:1-3); namely,
to bring us to God... No matter what!

For our part... Let us all:

CRY OUT and BELIEVE!

REMEMBER... and RESPOND.

EXAMINE His suffering and EMBRACE our suffering!

PRAYER

WORSHIP:

"Believe" - "Jesus Paid It All" - "You Paid It All"

STUDY NOTES:

Christ's Suffering as the Pathway to Exaltation (3:18–22)

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, ¹⁹ through whom also he went and preached to the spirits in prison ²⁰ who disobeyed long ago when God waited patiently in the days of Noah while the ark was being built. In it only a few people, eight in all, were saved through water, ²¹ and this water symbolizes baptism that now saves you also—not the removal of dirt from the body but the pledge of a good conscience toward God. It saves you by the resurrection of Jesus Christ, ²² who has gone into heaven and is at God's right hand—with angels, authorities and powers in submission to him.

In vv. 13–17 believers are to be full of confidence and refrain from fear because of the promise of their eschatological inheritance.

Now in vv. 18–22 Peter argued that Christ also traveled the pathway from suffering to glory.

Suffering, then, is not a sign of divine displeasure. Precisely the opposite. Those who suffer for the Christ will be glorified as he was.

The paragraph is a difficult one, but it has three main points.

1. First, Christ suffered for the unrighteous to bring believers to God (v. 18).
2. Second, by the power of the Spirit he was raised from the dead and proclaimed victory over demonic spirits (vv. 18–19).
3. Finally, he is now exalted on high as the resurrected and ascended Lord and has subjected all demonic powers to himself (v. 22).

The main point, then, is that believers have no need to fear that suffering is the last word, for they share the same destiny as their Lord, whose suffering has secured victory over all hostile powers.

Believers, then, are akin to Noah. They are a small embattled minority in a hostile world, but they can be sure that, like Noah, their future is secure when the judgment comes.

The basis of their assurance is their baptism, for in baptism they have appealed to God to give them a good conscience on the basis of the crucified (v. 18) and risen (v. 21) work of the Lord Jesus Christ.

3:18

The main idea of the previous paragraph is that believers should not fear, even though unbelievers may inflict pain on them (3:14). Instead, they should set apart Christ as Lord in their hearts and be prepared to respond to questions posed by unbelievers (3:15).

The reason believers should not fear is that they will be rewarded and blessed by God for suffering (3:13–14). Hence,

suffering is the pathway to glory.

The word “for” (*hoti*) introducing v. 18 relates back to the constellation of ideas we have just traced from the previous paragraph.

Believers should not become intimidated in suffering but continue to sanctify Christ as Lord because the suffering of Christ was also the means by which he was exalted. **Just as suffering was the pathway to exaltation for Christ, so also suffering is the prelude to glory for believers.** This paragraph, then, with all its interpretive difficulties does not veer away from the situation of the readers. Rather, the emphasis on Christ’s victory reminds believers that the troubles of the present time are temporary, that victory is sure because Christ has triumphed over evil powers.

The theme of the text therefore is not the imitation of Christ, contrary to some scholars,²⁶⁵ but his victory over evil.

Peter did not summon his readers to follow Christ in these particular verses. He encouraged them by reminding them of Christ's victory over evil powers.

Some scholars have postulated that Peter used traditional material in these verses. There is little doubt that traditional themes are cited, but the text has too many unique features to be counted as traditional. And the syntax is too complicated to read a hymn or confessional formula behind the wording.

The subject in v. 18 turns toward the suffering of Christ.

Many manuscripts read that Christ “died” (*apethanen*) rather than “suffered” (*epathen*). The word “suffered” is likely original because the statement that Christ “died” for sinners was part of the common Christian confession (cf. Rom 5:8; 1 Cor 15:3; 2 Cor 5:14; 1 Thess 5:10), and the term “suffer” is unusual by comparison. Further, Peter never used the verb “died” but used the verb “suffer” eleven times. Indeed, the connection with the previous verse is strengthened where the term “suffer” is also found. **Peter was thinking of the death of Christ here, but the term “suffer” establishes a connection with the experience of his readers.**

The NIV omits the word “also” (*kai*), just as it did in 2:21. The idea, once again (see the commentary on 2:21), is that just as believers in Asia Minor were suffering, so also Christ suffered. Nevertheless, **the uniqueness of Christ's suffering is also communicated, just as it was in 2:21. Christ's death was “for sins” (*peri hamartiōn*).** This phrase probably is rooted in the Septuagint, where the singular noun “sin” with the preposition “concerning” (*peri*) refers often to the sin offering. Wright has demonstrated that it has this meaning in forty-four of its fifty-four occurrences in the Septuagint (cf. also Heb 10:6, 8; 13:11).

This interpretation is strengthened by the phrase “once for all” (*hapax*). The suffering of Christ was unique and definitive in that he offered himself as a sin offering once for all.

The distinctiveness of Christ’s sacrifice is featured here, for even though believers suffer, they do not suffer for the sins of others, nor does their suffering constitute a sacrifice for the sins of others.

Nor was Peter suggesting here that the suffering of believers is the means by which unbelievers are brought near to God.

The uniqueness of Christ’s death continues to be emphasized, for he suffered on the cross as “the righteous for the unrighteous.”

The righteousness of Christ is an allusion to his sinlessness (cf. 2:22). His suffering therefore was undeserved. **We saw earlier in 2:21–23 that the response of Jesus to unjust suffering functioned as an example for believers.** Christ’s role as an example is also implied in this text since in the previous paragraph believers are also exhorted to do what is right even if they suffer. Nevertheless, the uniqueness of Christ’s suffering comes to the forefront here. That Christ was “righteous” (*dikaios*) is stressed elsewhere in the New Testament (Matt 27:19; Luke 23:47; Acts 3:14; 7:52; 1 John 2:1, 29; 3:7; cf. Isa 53:11).

*Since Christ suffered as the sinless one (1 John 2:1; 2 Cor 5:21), his suffering is unique. Indeed, only Christ suffered “for the unrighteous” (*hyper adikōn*). His death was vicarious and substitutionary and the basis upon which people become right with God.*

The reason Christ’s death is sufficient is precisely because he was sinless. He could not have died on behalf of his people if he himself were stained by sin. His perfect obedience, therefore,

is the basis for the sufficiency of his death. Peter shared common Christian tradition when he spoke of Christ dying for the unrighteous. **Paul described it as Christ dying for sinners (Rom 5:8)**, adding elsewhere that **he died for our sins (1 Cor 15:3)**. **John said God's Son was the satisfaction for sins (1 John 4:10)**. And we have seen already **in 2:24 that Peter drew upon Isaiah 53 in teaching that Christ "bore our sins."**

*The uniqueness of his death is also communicated in the purpose of his sacrifice. He died "to bring you to God."*²⁷²

The word "bring" (*prosagagē*) communicates the notion that one has access to God (cf. the noun in Rom 5:2; Eph 2:18; 3:12 and the background in the LXX; e.g., Exod 19:4; 29:4; 40:12; Lev 8:24; 16:1; Num 8:9). Only Christ through his suffering died *for* the unrighteous, and the suffering of believers could not bring others to God. Indeed, Christ's suffering is the means by which the Petrine Christians were themselves brought to God, showing that they were formerly unrighteous and sinners.

Intense controversy over the text begins with the next phrase and continues through v. 21.

We will **take the text a phrase at a time** and try to sort out what Peter was saying.

We have a contrast between two phrases, "He was put to death in the body, but made alive by the Spirit." The contrast between the flesh and S/spirit in the New Testament is a common one. The RSV renders the contrast differently, understanding the two dative nouns to be datives of sphere, "being put to death in the flesh but made alive in the spirit" (cf. also NRSV, NASB).

This translation could support the interpretation that Jesus was put to death in his body but lived in terms of his human spirit. Other scholars argue that the point is that Jesus was put to

death in the realm of flesh but was brought to life in the spiritual realm (cf. HCSB).²⁷⁵ Still another possibility is that the two dative nouns “flesh” and “spirit” (*sarki* and *pneumati*) are both datives of agency. According to this view Jesus was put to death *by* human beings (the flesh) and was brought to life *by* the Spirit. Before attempting to resolve this issue, we can make some progress by establishing what is clear in the text. A contrast exists here between death and resurrection of Christ. The participle “being put to death” (RSV, *thanatōtheis*) obviously refers to the death of Christ, showing specifically *how* he suffered (cf. *epathen* earlier in the verse). The participle “being made alive” (literal translation, *zōopoiētheis*), on the other hand, refers to the resurrection of Christ. The verb refers to the resurrection in a number of texts in the New Testament (John 5:21; Rom 4:17; 8:11; 1 Cor 15:22, 36, 45; cf. also Eph 2:5; Col 2:13).

Elsewhere in the New Testament the death and resurrection of Christ are also communicated in the same text (cf. Rom 4:25; 8:34; 14:9; 1 Thess 4:14). We can be confident, therefore, that Peter did not envision Jesus merely living in the interval between his death and resurrection in terms of his human spirit. He thought here of Christ’s resurrection from the dead.

Most scholars try to explain the verse by understanding the dative nouns “flesh” and “spirit” in the same way. Either both nouns are understood to refer to the person of Christ, both his body and spirit, or both nouns are understood to refer to a realm, so that the realm of the flesh and the realm of the spirit are in view. Or both nouns are construed as datives of agency, so that Christ was killed in the body by the “flesh” (i.e., human beings), and he was raised by the Holy Spirit. We can eliminate the first option because the text speaks of the resurrection of Christ, not

of his human spirit. The second interpretation is ruled out by v. 19, for it hardly makes sense to say that Jesus “went” (*poreutheis*) and preached to the imprisoned spirits in the spiritual realm. But neither is the last option credible. It is doubtful that the singular “flesh” (NIV “body,” *sarki*) refers to human beings. The NIV’s interpretation that it refers to Christ’s body is much more probable. **The deadlock can be broken if we recognize that the two dative nouns are not used in precisely the same way; the first is a dative of reference, and the second is a dative of agency.**

Christ was put to death with reference to or in the sphere of his body, but on the other hand he was made alive by the Spirit.

Interestingly, the parallel in 1 Tim 3:16 should be interpreted similarly. Jesus “appeared in a body” (*en sarki*, lit., “in the flesh”) and “was vindicated by the Spirit” (*en pneumati*). I think the NIV’s interpretation is correct here, and it is likely that the two nouns though preceded by the same preposition are to be rendered differently (cf. also Rom 1:3–4).

The message for the readers is clear. Even though Jesus suffered death in terms of his body, the Spirit raised (cf. Rom 8:11) him from the dead. Similarly, those who belong to Christ, even though they will face suffering, will ultimately share in Christ’s resurrection.

3:19

Before examining the details of this verse, the main interpretations that have been proposed will be summarized.

Luther wrote, *“A wonderful text is this, and a more obscure passage perhaps than any other in the New Testament, so that I do not know for a certainty just what Peter means.”*

It should be noted that the main features of the various views are sketched in for the sake of clarity, and the differences of opinion among those who share the same view are not explained.

First, Augustine, *and since him many others, understood the text to refer to Christ’s preaching through Noah to those who lived while Noah was building the ark.*²⁸⁰

According to this view, Christ was not personally present but spoke by means of the Holy Spirit through Noah. The spirits are not literally in prison but refer to those who were snared in sin during Noah’s day. If this view is correct, any notion of Christ descending into hell is excluded.

Second, some have understood Peter as referring to Old Testament saints who died and were liberated by Christ between his death and resurrection.

Third, others understand the imprisoned spirits to refer, as in 4:6, to the sinful human beings who perished during Noah’s flood. Christ in the interval between his death and resurrection descended to hell and preached to them, offering them the opportunity to repent and be saved.

Most of those who adopt such an interpretation infer from this that God will offer a second chance to all those in hell, especially to those who never heard the gospel. If salvation was offered to the wicked generation of Noah, surely it will also be extended to all sinners separated from God.

Fourth, the majority view among scholars today is that the text describes Christ's proclamation of victory and judgment over the evil angels. These evil angels, according to Gen 6:1–4, had sexual relations with women and were imprisoned because of their sin. The point of the passage, then, is not that Christ descended into hell but, as in 3:22, his victory over evil angelic powers.

I believe the last option is correct and will attempt to explain why in what follows. In the discussion that follows, the second and third view will be combined since both teach that Christ liberated people from confinement between his death and resurrection. First, the idea that Christ spoke by means of the Spirit through Noah suffers from a number of problems. First, it does not explain adequately the participle (*poreutheis*) translated “went” in v. 19 and “has gone” in v. 22. In v. 22 it is clear that it refers to Jesus’ ascension to God’s right hand, showing that it is a postresurrection event. The word “went” seems out of place and strange for those who defend the Augustinian view, for Christ does not really go anywhere if he preaches “through” Noah. There are instances in the New Testament where the word “went” (*poreuomai*) refers to the ascension of Christ (Acts 1:10–11; John 14:2, 3, 28; 16:7, 28), while it nowhere refers to his descent into the underworld. We also noticed in v. 18 a clear reference to the resurrection of Christ. The “going” in v. 19, therefore, also most naturally refers to what is true of Christ’s resurrection body. It is obviously the case that Christ did not need his resurrection body to preach through Noah by means of the Spirit. Indeed, the reference to Christ “going” in v. 19 demonstrates the implausibility of the first view since it is difficult to understand how Christ needs to “go anywhere” if he speaks only through the Holy Spirit. This piece of evidence alone shows the first view is implausible. Second, the word “spirits” (*pneumasin*) fits much more plausibly with a reference to angels than to human beings, for “spirits” (*pneumata*) in the plural almost without exception in the New Testament refers to angels. The only place in which the

term clearly refers to human beings is Heb 12:23, and in that instance the addition of the word “righteous” (*dikaiōn*) removes any doubt that human beings are in view. The normal use of the plural “spirits” points toward angels, not human beings. Further, though, the word “prison” (*phylakē*) is often used to denote the place where human beings are held on earth (e.g., Acts 5:19; 8:3; 2 Cor 6:5; 11:23), but the word is never used to denote the place of punishment for human beings after death. The term is used in Rev 20:7, however, for Satan’s confinement for one thousand years (cf. Rev 18:2). That the evil angels are imprisoned is clearly taught in Jewish tradition (1 *Enoch* 10:4; 15:8, 10; 18:12–14; 21:1–10; 67:7; 2 *Enoch* 7:1–3; 18:3; *Jub.* 5:6). Finally, it is difficult to see what relation preaching through Noah has to the present context. Nothing else in these verses emphasizes that the Petrine readers were also to preach to their contemporaries.

The view that Christ offered salvation to those who died in the flood suffers from some of the same weaknesses as the first. Such a view also reads the term “spirits” to refer to human beings, but we have seen that this is unlikely. If Christ descended into hell before his resurrection, the word “went” seems superfluous when used of Christ’s “spirit.” If the journey below is placed after the resurrection, at least Christ has a body with which to make the trip. This interpretation has another fatal problem. It makes no sense contextually for Peter to be teaching that the wicked have a second chance in a letter in which he exhorted the righteous to persevere and to endure suffering. Indeed, **we have seen in many places throughout the commentary that eternal life is conditioned upon such perseverance. All motivation to endure would vanish if Peter now offered a second opportunity after death. The benefit of braving suffering is difficult to grasp if another opportunity to respond will be offered at death.**

The best solution, therefore, is that the verse proclaims Christ’s victory over demonic spirits after his death and resurrection.

The evidence supporting this view is impressive.

First, as we have seen, the word “spirits” almost certainly refers to angels (evil angels in this context).

Second, the notion that the spirits are imprisoned fits with Satan’s imprisonment in Rev 20:7.

Third, Gen 6:1–4 may possibly provide the reason for the spirits’ punishment: their sexual relations with women.

Such an interpretation of Gen 6:1–4 is debated of course. But...

Fourth, this interpretation was standard in Jewish literature in Peter’s day (see 1 Enoch 6–19, 21, 86–88; 106:13–17; Jub. 4:15, 22; 5:1; CD 2:17–19; 1QapGen 2:1; T. Reu. 5:6–7; T. Naph. 3:5; 2 Bar. 56:10–14; cf. Josephus, Ant. 1.73). The impact of this tradition is explained further in my commentary on Jude 6 and 2 Pet 2:4.

Some scholars doubt that Peter was influenced by such a tradition. Because of space constraints I can make only a few comments. Whatever one’s understanding of the literary relationship between Jude and 2 Peter 2, it is clear that the texts are very similar. We know that Jude was influenced by 1 Enoch (cf. Jude 14–15). Hence, it is to be expected that in v. 6 Jude relays an interpretation that is quite similar to the basic understanding of 1 Enoch, though he does not ratify every detail of Enoch’s view. It is quite implausible that 2 Pet 2:4 should be interpreted differently from Jude 6 since the texts share the same tradition. Further, those who believe in the Petrine authorship of both 1 and 2 Peter, as I do, have all the more reason to think that 1 Pet 3:19 draws on the same tradition. Indeed, as I note in the commentary on Jude, the understanding of the text in the New Testament and Jewish tradition probably is in accord with the meaning of the text in Gen 6:1–4.

Finally, such a view of the text, as I already have argued, makes best sense of 1 Pet 3:19 in its own context. The two uses of the participle (*poreutheis*) “went” in v. 19 and “has gone” in v. 22 most naturally refer to Jesus’ exaltation. That it involves his exaltation is specifically taught in v. 22, where he is at God’s right hand. Moreover, this interpretation understands the “spirits” of v. 19 to be another term for the “angels, powers, and authorities” in v. 22. In both cases evil angels are in view. Indeed, in both instances Christ’s victory over them is featured. In v. 19 he proclaims his victory over them as the crucified and risen Lord, and in v. 22 he subjects them to himself as God’s vice-regent. If this view is correct, we can eliminate the interpretation that Christ preached in the interval between his death and resurrection. Again we note that the words “spirits” and “prison” fit most naturally with this interpretation. **The greatest difficulty for such a view is the word “preached” (*ēkryxen*).** Usually this term refers to the preaching of the gospel, and such a definition fits better with the first two interpretations than with this one. **The word can be used, however, in a neutral sense (cf. Rom 2:21; Gal 5:11; Rev 5:2).**

Context is decisive
in defining the meaning of terms.

Usually in the New Testament what one “heralds” is the gospel, but in this instance victory over demonic powers is heralded. Such an understanding does not impose an alien meaning on the word, and it harmonizes with the emphasis on victory in this text (cf. Col 2:15).

Further, this fits with Enoch’s role in 1 Enoch 12:4, where he goes and tells (poreuou kai eipe) the Watchers that they will be judged.

Another objection that can be raised is, Why would Christ proclaim his victory over only some angels, so that his victory is heralded only over the angels who sinned by having sexual relations with women? The question is an excellent one, though we must recognize that...

we cannot answer every question raised in difficult texts.

It is possible, however, that the angels who sinned as recorded in Gen 6:1–4 represent all the evil angels. Still, the text does not answer this issue definitively, and so unanswered questions remain.

Virtually every element of the verse has been discussed except for **the phrase “through whom” (en hō).**

The phrase could be construed as temporal³⁰⁴ (cf. 2:12; 3:16; see also 1:6 and 4:4, where the phrase probably is causal). Or it could be construed as a general antecedent and be translated “wherein,” “thereby,” or “thus.”³⁰⁶

Others take the antecedent to be the neuter noun “spirit” (*pneumati*). This last view is the most likely. If one understands the latter to refer to sphere, then Christ goes in the spiritual sphere, and this could even occur before his resurrection;³⁰⁸ but as Achtemeier observes it is difficult to see how this understanding coheres with Christ going in his resurrection body. It is preferable to see the antecedent as “spirit” and to understand the dative clause as instrumental. According to this view, Christ by means of the Holy Spirit went and proclaimed victory over the imprisoned spirits. This interpretation explains the “also,” for the Spirit not only raised Christ but also empowered him to herald victory.³¹¹

3:20

The interpretation of v. 20 depends, of course, on how v. 19 is understood. I have already argued that the imprisoned spirits in v. 19 refer to the angels who sinned by cohabiting with women in accordance with Gen 6:1–4. Such angels “disobeyed long ago.”

The participle “disobeyed” (*apeithēsas*) should be understood as causal, explaining why the spirits were imprisoned.

The disobedience, as Jude 6 and 2 Pet 2:4 also explain, is their transgression of boundaries God established, with the result that they engaged in sexual relations with women.

Another confirmation of the proposed interpretation is the reference to Noah, since the incident between the “sons of God” and the “daughters of men” (Gen 6:1–4) immediately precedes the flood narrative. Indeed, **it is quite plausible to understand the sin in Gen 6:1–4 as the climax of sin, the enormity of sin now being great enough to justify the extermination of all humanity.**

The reference to God's patience fits with the reference to Noah and his preparation of the ark. The Lord could have wiped out the human race instantly and recommenced his plan with Noah. Instead, ***God demonstrated his patience while Noah built the ark, presumably giving human beings an opportunity to repent during this interval (cf. Rom 2:4; 3:25; Acts 14:16; 17:30).***

Some might object that God's patience toward humans eliminates any reference to angels, but we need to recall that the angels sinned with human beings, so that the fate of human beings and angels becomes entangled in the one event. It is also likely that Peter reflected on God's patience toward the angels as well (Gen 6:3), for there is no evidence that God immediately judged the angels for their sin. He allowed them to commit sin with women, and it seems that some time elapsed before he responded in judgment.

The judgment of the flood that destroyed all is prominent in the text, but so also is the salvation of the few.

Peter emphasized that only a "few" (*oligoi*) were saved (cf. Matt 7:14) from the flood. Indeed, the number of those who were rescued was only "eight." **The text literally reads "eight souls,"** but we should understand the word "souls" (*psychai*), as elsewhere in Peter (1:9, 22; 2:11, 25; 4:19), to refer to human beings as whole persons, not to the immaterial substance. Indeed, the latter view would be incredibly strange here since the point of the story is that they did not perish in the flood, which would hardly call to mind the idea that only their "souls" were preserved. Some in the history of interpretation have been tempted to understand the word "eight" symbolically.³¹⁵ Any symbolic reading is mistaken in this instance, for Peter thought of the eight persons who literally survived the flood: Noah, his wife, their three sons, and their wives (see Gen 7:13; cf. also 6:18; 7:7).

An application is intended, of course, for Petrine readers. ***They were also sojourners and exiles on earth, a small community beset by opponents who mistreated them.***

They should not be discouraged by the smallness of their numbers but must remember that God now extends his patience to all, but the day of judgment is coming in which their opponents will be ashamed and they will be vindicated.

Hence, the appeal to Noah and God's patience reminds them to persevere. If God preserved Noah when he stood in opposition to the whole world, he will also save his people, even though they are now being persecuted.

A pattern or type between Noah's day and the experience of the Petrine readers is also established with reference to salvation.

The eight saved in the ark were saved physically, of course.

Their physical preservation points toward the eschatological salvation that has now dawned in Jesus Christ (cf. 1 Pet 1:10–12).

Indeed, even in Genesis the physical is bound up to some extent with the spiritual, for those who perished in the flood were destroyed because of their sin, and Noah was preserved because he found favor with God (cf. Gen 6:8, 12–13, 18). The preposition used in Greek with the verb “were saved” (*diesōthēsan*) usually means “into” (*eis*). It is difficult to see, however, how it can retain that meaning here, for it does not make much sense to say that they were saved “into the ark.” We should understand the preposition as the NIV does to refer to salvation “in” the ark.³¹⁷

Another preposition poses a problem interpretively. What did Peter mean when he said Noah and the eight “were saved through water” (*di’ hydatos*)? If one takes the preposition as instrumental, then the water is the means by which Noah and his family were saved. The objection to this interpretation is that the water was the instrument used to destroy the world, not the means by which Noah and his family were saved.

Others understand the preposition in a general locative sense.³¹⁹ According to this view, Noah and his family were brought safely through the waters that threatened to submerge and destroy them.

In the Old Testament water is often represented as a scourge that destroys (Pss 18:4; 42:7; 69:1–2, 14–15; 88:7; 144:7). The flood waters represented God’s judgment and fury at sin, and hence Noah and his contemporaries were also rescued from the judgment of sin.

We can say, then, that Noah was actually saved through water if we understand Peter to be saying the following: “Noah’s ‘salvation’ was brought about by the same act of judgment that destroyed the wicked.... The way God rescues the righteous is by destroying their enemies.” The water, then, also separated Noah and his family from their wicked contemporaries, who perished in the flood, and

hence they were spared from the corruption of the society in which they lived.³²² When the waters subsided, they entered a new world, so to speak, one that was cleansed from sin and prepared afresh for life.

The parallel to baptism is drawn in the next verse and will be discussed below.

3:21

The typological thrust of the text is now specifically stated, expressed in the NIV by the verb “symbolizes,” though in the Greek the word is a noun that could be translated as “type” or “pattern” (*antitypon*; cf. Heb 9:24).

The water that deluged the world in Noah’s day and through which Noah was saved functions as a model or pattern for Christian believers.³²⁴ But to what is the water related in the new covenant? The answer is baptism. In fact, we have the surprising statement that

“baptism ... now saves you.”

Before examining that statement, we must consider in what way the flood waters prefigure or correspond to baptism.

The waters of the flood deluged the ancient world and were the agent of

death. Similarly, baptism, which was by immersion during the time of the New Testament, occurs when one is plunged under the water. Anyone who is submerged under water dies. Submersion under the water represents death, as Paul suggested in **Rom 6:3–5**.

Jesus described his upcoming death in terms of baptism (Mark 10:38–39; Luke 12:50), indicating that submersion under the water aptly portrays death.

Just as the chaotic waters of the flood were the agent of destruction, so too the waters of baptism are waters of destruction.

In New Testament theology, however (cf. Matt 3:16; Mark 10:38–39; Rom 6:3–5), believers survive the death-dealing baptismal waters because they are baptized with Christ. They are rescued from death through his resurrection (Rom 6:3–5; Col 2:12).

Hence, we are not surprised to read in this verse that baptism saves “by the resurrection of Jesus Christ.”

The waters of baptism, like the waters of the flood, demonstrate that destruction is at hand, but believers are rescued from these waters in that they are baptized with Christ, who has also emerged from the waters of death through his resurrection. Just as Noah was delivered through the stormy waters of the flood, believers have been saved through the stormy waters of baptism by virtue of Christ's triumph over death.

The word “now” refers to the present eschatological age of fulfillment. With the coming of Jesus Christ the age of salvation has arrived.

It is clear from what has already been said, therefore, that Peter did not succumb to a mechanical view of baptism, as if the rite itself contains an inherent saving power. Such a sacramental view was far from his mind. **The saving power of baptism is rooted in the resurrection of Jesus Christ.**

Peter also added another comment, however, to ward off any misunderstanding.³³⁰

He described what occurs in baptism.

Baptism is not “the removal of dirt from the body.” The NASB follows the Greek more closely here, “not the removal of dirt from the flesh,” so that we see that the term actually used is “flesh” (sarx) rather than “body” (sōma).

The distinction is important, for some commentators conclude from the use of the word “flesh” that Peter spoke in a moral rather than a physical sense. According to this view, baptism does not involve the removal of moral filth or impurity (cf. Jas 1:21). This interpretation should be rejected.

Elsewhere baptism is connected with the cleansing and removal of sin (cf. Mark 1:4; Luke 3:3; Acts 2:38; Eph 5:26; Titus 3:5). It would be strange indeed if baptism did not represent cleansing from moral impurity.

Others understand the verse even more symbolically, thinking that the removal of the filth of the flesh refers to circumcision since uncircumcision can signify uncleanness (cf. Lev 19:23; Jer 4:4; 1 Sam 17:26, 36; Jer 9:26). Baptism, on these terms, is not equivalent to physical circumcision and should not be understood merely as a physical and external act. This view at least has the merit

of being a more sensible understanding of Peter’s theology, for any sense that the physical act of baptism saves is removed.

But the attempt to connect the expression with circumcision should be assessed as a failure. The language used is too remote to detect an allusion to circumcision. It is difficult to believe that Gentiles in Asia Minor would have seen any reference to circumcision, nor did Peter evince any interest elsewhere in Jewish rituals.³³⁴ The simplest interpretation is to be preferred.

Any notion that baptism is inherently saving is ruled out, for the point is not that the water itself magically cleanses. Water removes dirt from the skin, but baptism does not save simply because someone has been submerged under the water.

The statement about the removal of dirt is made so that believers will not understand baptism mechanically or superficially. They must attend to what is really happening in baptism.

The meaning of baptism, then, is explained in the contrasting clause. It is not removing dirt from the flesh but “the pledge of a good conscience.”

The NIV translation represents one interpretation of a very contested phrase. **The word translated “pledge” (*eperōtēma*) occurs only here in the New Testament** and only once in the Septuagint (Dan 4:17). In the latter case it means something like “decree,” which does not make sense in our passage. **The meaning of the noun, however, can be derived from the verb (*eperōtaō*), which often has the meaning of “ask” or “request” in the New Testament, occurring fifty-six times in the New Testament (e.g., Matt 12:10; 16:1; 17:10; 22:23, 35, 41, 46; 27:11; Mark 7:5; 9:21; Luke 2:46; 3:10; John 18:7; 1 Cor 14:35).** If the meaning is derived from the verb, the translation “ask,” “request,” or “appeal” would fit.

We see this interpretation in the NRSV, “an appeal to God for a good conscience” (cf. also RSV). The interpretation reflected in the NIV can be supported by the usage of the word in the papyri. In these instances, the term can be used of stipulations found in contracts. One pledges or promises to abide by the terms of the contract and the stipulations found therein. Similarly, one can understand the text to refer to the promise or pledge made at baptism. If one adopts this view, the genitive word “conscience” could be understood as subjective or objective. If subjective, the phrase says that the promise or pledge to abide by baptismal vows flows from a good conscience. Most scholars who adopt this view, however, understand the word “conscience” to be an objective genitive. If this is the case, the person being baptized promises to maintain a good conscience at baptism.³³⁹ The one baptized pledges to live for the glory of God. This interpretation is certainly possible and does not necessarily contradict Petrine theology. I think it is more likely, however, that the meaning of the noun is derived from the verb.

I reach this decision on contextual grounds. In other words, both interpretations of the word *eperōtēma* are possible lexically. In context, however, it seems more likely that baptism is associated with an appeal or request to God for (vs. “of” or “promise of”) a good conscience.

Once again, the word “conscience” could be understood as a subjective genitive—an appeal to God arising from a good conscience. We can rule out the subjective genitive immediately, though, for then we cannot specify what the believer is praying for since he already has a good conscience.³⁴¹ But if the genitive is objective, as I think it is, believers at baptism ask God—on the basis of the death and resurrection of Christ—to cleanse their consciences and forgive their sins.

The idea, then, is quite similar to Heb 10:22, where believers can draw near to God confidently because their “hearts” have been **“sprinkled to cleanse us from a guilty conscience”** (cf. [Heb 10:22](#)).

In Hebrews there is no doubt that a cleansed conscience is due to the cross of Christ.

The interpretation adopted here fits with the context of 1 Pet 3:18–22, where Peter emphasized Christ's death as the means by which believers are brought into God's presence.

Christ died for believers, the righteous for the unrighteous, and hence believers enter into God's presence on the basis of God's grace alone.

So too Peter did not focus on promises believers make when baptized but the saving work of Christ and his resurrection.

Believers at baptism can be confident on the basis of the work of the crucified and risen Lord that their appeal to have a good conscience will be answered.

3:22

The resurrection of Jesus Christ brings us back to the center of this passage, the victory of Christ over his enemies.

Peter picked up again the word “has gone” (*poreutheis*), emphasizing Jesus’ ascension after his resurrection. The same term in v. 19, I argued, also refers to Jesus’ triumph over demonic powers after his death and resurrection.

The emphasis here is on Jesus’ entrance into heaven and rule at God’s right hand.

The reference to the right hand recalls Ps 110:1, where David’s Lord sits at Yahweh’s right hand and rules. Jesus applied the psalm to himself in his teaching (cf. Matt 22:44; 26:64; Mark 12:36; 14:62; Luke 20:42–43; 22:69), and the influence of the psalm is pervasive in the rest of the New Testament (Acts 2:34–35; Rom 8:34; 1 Cor 15:25; Eph 1:20; Col 3:1; Heb 1:3, 13; 8:1; 10:12).

The text circles back to v. 19 emphasizing that angels, authorities, and powers are subjected to Jesus. All three words refer to angels (for “authorities” [*exousia*] see 1 Cor 15:24; Eph 1:21; 3:10; 6:12; Col 1:16; 2:15; and for “powers” [*dynamis*] see Rom 8:38; 1 Cor 15:24; Eph 1:21). Trying to discern the hierarchy of angels from the different words lands us in unprovable speculation.

The point is that Jesus reigns over all the hostile angelic powers.

Contextually it would make little sense to emphasize that Jesus ruled over good angels.

The message for Peter's readers is clear. In their suffering Jesus still reigns and rules. He has not surrendered believers into the power of the evil forces even if they suffer until death. Jesus by his death and resurrection has triumphed over all demonic forces, and hence by implication believers will reign together with him.¹

¹ Thomas R. Schreiner, [1, 2 Peter, Jude](#), vol. 37, The New American Commentary (Nashville: Broadman & Holman Publishers, 2003), 179–198.

Dr. Wayne Grudem:

For Christ suffered in order to bring you to God (3:18)

18.

For the purpose of this verse, see the discussion of verse 17 above. Instead of *died* (*apothnēskō*) many manuscripts have **‘suffered’ (*paschō*)**, which makes **the connection with ‘suffer’ in verse 17 more explicit.** But since Christ’s suffering for sins resulted in his death, this would make little difference to the sense (the textual evidence clearly favours ‘died’, but some think it abrupt for the context). The difference between *bring us to God* (RSV, NASB) and ‘bring you to God’ (NIV) is also based on a difference among ancient Greek manuscripts, and again carries no great significance for the overall force of the passage.

Peter says that Christ died *once* (Gk. *hapax*, meaning ‘one time, once’) and this, together with the verb tense of *died*, indicates that Christ’s suffering and dying for sins has been completed.

The words *for all* are not intended by the RSV translators to mean ‘for all people’, but simply ‘for all time’ (the words do not represent an additional phrase in the Greek text but are simply part of the translation of *hapax*, ‘once’).

Christ’s death was *for sins*, a compressed way of saying that he paid the penalty for our sins. This is made more explicit when Peter adds *the righteous for the unrighteous*—more literally, ‘the righteous one (singular) for unrighteous people (plural)’.

Precisely because Christ had no guilt of his own to pay for (he was 'righteous'), he could be the substitute who died in our place, bearing the punishment we deserved.

Being put to death in the flesh indicates the fact that Jesus' 'flesh' or physical body was put to death (so NIV: 'He was put to death in the body'). Although 'flesh' (*sarx*) has a range of meanings in the New Testament, **whenever, as here, 'flesh' is contrasted with 'spirit' (*pneuma*), the contrast is between physical, visible things which belong to this present world and invisible things which can exist in the unseen 'spiritual' world of heaven and the age to come. (See 4:6; cf. Matt. 26:41; Mark 14:38; John 3:6; Rom. 8:4–6; 1 Tim. 3:16; etc.)**

But made alive in the spirit, in view of the contrast noted above, must mean 'made alive in the spiritual realm, in the realm of the Spirit's activity'. Here it refers specifically to Christ's resurrection, because 'made alive' must be the opposite of 'put to death' in the previous phrase. 'In the spiritual realm, the realm of the Holy Spirit's activity, Christ was raised from the dead.' This is important because in the New Testament generally this 'spiritual' realm is the realm of all that is lasting, permanent, eternal.

The NIV translation 'but made alive by the Spirit' (similarly, AV), is also possible since there is no distinction in Greek between 'spirit' and 'Spirit'. But it would be somewhat unusual to expect readers to see exactly the same grammatical structure (in Greek) in parallel parts of the same sentence, and yet to know that Peter wanted the two parts understood differently (put to death *in the body* but made alive *by the Spirit*).

The contrast put to death in the flesh but made alive in the spirit fits in with the whole letter's emphasis on the relative unimportance of temporary suffering in

this world compared to the enjoying of an eternal inheritance in the next
(cf. 1:6–7, 8, 11, 13, 23; 2:11; 3:3–4, 14; 4:1–2, 6, 13, 14, 16, 19; 5:1, 4, 10).

Our Lord willingly suffered physical harm, even death, for the sake of eternal, spiritual gain—*that he might bring us to God.*

Peter's readers should not therefore be surprised to find themselves 'following in his steps'.

(ii) Another example: Noah witnessed when persecuted (3:19–20)

19.

In which refers back to 'in the spirit' in verse 18. It means 'in which realm, namely, the spiritual realm'. It does not necessarily mean 'in the resurrection body'²⁵ (which Peter could easily have said, had he wanted to), but rather 'in the realm of the Spirit's activity' (the realm in which Christ was raised from the dead, v. 18).

Peter frequently makes a transition from one section to another by the use of a relative pronoun like this ('which' or 'whom'), and it should indicate to us that the following statements, while related to the overall argument of the section, may introduce a different subject. The pattern of introducing related but clearly distinct subjects in this way (sometimes with, sometimes without, a preposition) is seen in 1:6, 8, 10; 2:4, 22; and 3:21; and, with transitions to less different but none the less distinct material, in 1:12; 3:3, 6b; 4:4; and 5:9.

The Greek text has the word *kai*, 'and, also', following *in which*, giving the sense, 'in which *also* he went ...'. This simply adds emphasis to the impression that a distinct subject is being introduced: Christ was made alive in the spiritual realm (v. 18), and he also did something else in the spiritual realm (vv. 19–20).

Next, *He went and preached to the spirits in prison.*

The meaning of this phrase is much disputed.

The issues are:

1. Who are the spirits in prison?

- unbelievers who have died?
- Old Testament believers who have died?
- fallen angels?

2. What did Christ preach?

- second chance for repentance?
- completion of redemptive work?
- final condemnation?

3. When did he preach?

- in the days of Noah?
- between his death and resurrection?
- after his resurrection?

Various answers have been given to these questions; the five most common views are set out in the Appendix on p. 212. **The following discussion will argue for View 1, i.e. that Christ was preaching through Noah when the ark was being built.** (For a fuller discussion of these two verses, see the Appendix, pp. 211ff.)

Taken by itself, the phrase spirits in prison could refer either to human spirits in hell or to fallen angelic spirits in hell. 2 Peter 2:4 and Jude 6 speak of sinful angels being imprisoned and punished, while Luke 16:23–24 and 2 Peter 2:9 refer to unbelievers who have died and are in a place of punishment.

The word *spirits* could refer either to angelic spirits, good and evil (Matt. 8:16; Heb. 1:14) or to human spirits of people who have died (Matt. 27:50; Luke 23:46; John 19:30; Acts 7:59; 1 Cor. 5:5; Heb. 12:23; Eccl. 12:7). This is also the case in extra-biblical literature. (For example, in 1 Enoch, which Selwyn and Dalton claim as their primary evidence for View 5 [see appendix, p. 216], *pneuma* refers twenty times to angelic spirits and seventeen times to human spirits, and in both cases the spirits are imprisoned and awaiting final judgment.)

Some contend that when ‘spirit’ is found without a defining phrase attached to it (like ‘of men’, etc.), it means angelic or demonic spirits, never human spirits. But this argument is invalid, for *pneuma* by itself is simply ambiguous, and in every case where it means ‘angelic spirit’ as well as every case where it means ‘human spirit’ the context makes it clear what kind of spirit is meant.

20.

The spirits in prison are those *who formerly did not obey* (better: ‘disobeyed’, since the word has a sense of active rebellion),

when God’s patience waited in the days of Noah, during the building of the ark.

These phrases indicate that only human spirits can be intended, for nowhere in the Bible or in Jewish literature outside of the Bible are angels ever said to have disobeyed ‘during the

building of the ark'. Genesis 6:5–13 clearly emphasizes the *human sin* which provoked God to flood the earth in judgment.

Furthermore, extra-biblical literature, some of which was probably familiar to many of Peter's readers, frequently describes the mockery which Noah had to endure from his contemporaries, e.g. 'They derided him and said, "Old man, what is this ark for?"' (b.Sanh. 108b). ***When God's patience waited in the days of Noah also suggests human, rather than angelic, disobedience.***

God's patience waited for human beings to repent before bringing the judgment of the flood (this is also a frequent theme in extra-biblical literature), but ***never is there any hint that fallen angels have a chance to repent—it is only given to sinful human beings (cf. 2 Pet. 2:4; Jude 6).***

But why does Peter refer to 'spirits' if he has in view disobedience by human beings who were not just 'spirits' but bodies as well?

This is best explained by understanding the text to mean 'spirits who are now in prison' (i.e. at the time Peter was writing), but who were people on earth at the time of Noah, when Christ was preaching to them. *(The NASB translates, 'the spirits now in prison'.) A similar expression is found a few verses later at 4:6, 'For this is why the gospel was preached even to the dead', which is best understood to mean 'the gospel was preached to those who are now dead' (but who were alive when the gospel was preached to them; see discussion below).*

One can speak the same way in English: ‘Queen Elizabeth was born in 1926’ is an appropriate statement, even though she was not Queen when she was born—we mean ‘She who is now Queen Elizabeth was born in 1926.’

The phrase ***who formerly did not obey is better translated ‘when they formerly disobeyed’***, thus specifying that this was the time when Christ ‘in spirit’ preached to these people: i.e. ‘*when they formerly disobeyed* when God’s patience was waiting in the days of Noah, during the building of the ark.’

Peter elsewhere mentions ideas similar to the thought that Christ ‘in spirit’ preached through Noah, for in 1:11 the Spirit of Christ is said to have been active in the prophets of the Old Testament era (cf. 1 Cor. 10:4).

Although Peter does not specifically call Noah a prophet in **2 Peter 2:5**, he terms him a ‘herald of righteousness’, and uses the noun (*kēryx*) which is related to the verb ‘preached’ (*kēryssō*) in **3:20**.

By saying that Christ *went and preached* rather than just saying that he ‘preached’, Peter suggests that Christ did not stay in heaven but ‘went’ to where people were disobeying, and there preached to them through the lips of Noah.

The content of this preaching was not a message of final condemnation (see Views 3 and 5 on pp. 212–213) or the completion of redemption (see View 4 on p. 213), but concerned the need to repent and come to God for salvation. This is what Noah would have preached to those around him (even without extra-biblical literature we would draw this conclusion from 2 Pet. 2:4).

It is the right message to preach when people are disobeying ‘while God’s patience is waiting’ (cf. 2 Pet. 3:9).

This interpretation is very appropriate to the larger context of 3:13–22.

The parallel between the situation of Noah and the situation of Peter’s readers is clear at several points:

(1) Noah and his family were a minority surrounded by hostile unbelievers; so are Peter’s readers (vv. 13–14; 4:4, 12–13).

(2) Noah was righteous in the midst of a wicked world. Peter exhorts his readers to be righteous in the midst of wicked unbelievers (vv. 13–14, 16–17; 4:3–4).

(3) Noah witnessed boldly to those around him. Peter encourages his readers to be good witnesses to unbelievers around them (vv. 14, 16–17), being willing to suffer, if need be, to bring others to God (just as Christ was willing to suffer and die ‘that he might bring us to God’, v. 18).

(4) Noah realized that judgment was soon to come upon the world. Peter reminds his readers that God’s judgment is certainly coming, perhaps soon (4:5, 7; 2 Pet. 3:10).

(5) In the unseen ‘spiritual’ realm Christ preached through Noah to unbelievers around him. By saying this Peter can remind his readers of the reality of Christ’s work in the unseen spiritual realm and the fact that Christ is also in them, empowering their witness and making it spiritually effective (cf. 1:8, 11, 12, 25; 2:4). Therefore, they should not fear (v. 14) but in their hearts should ‘reverence Christ as Lord’ and should ‘always be prepared’ to tell of the hope that is in them (v. 15).

(6) At the time of Noah, God was patiently awaiting repentance from unbelievers, before he brought judgment. So it is in the situation of Peter’s readers: God is patiently awaiting repentance from unbelievers (cf. 2 Pet, 3:9) before bringing judgment on the world (cf. 2 Pet. 3:10).

(7) Noah was finally saved, with 'a few' others. Peter thus encourages his readers that, though perhaps few, they too will finally be saved, for Christ has triumphed and has all things subject to him (3:22; 4:13, 19; 5:10; 2 Pet. 2:9).

This passage, once cleared of misunderstanding, should also function today as an encouragement to us to be bold in our witness (as Noah was), to be confident that, though we may be few, God will certainly save us (as he did Noah), and to remind us that just as certainly as the flood eventually came, so final judgment will certainly come to our world as well, and Christ will ultimately triumph over all the evil in the universe.

At the end of verse 20, Peter mentions that in the ark *a few, that is, eight persons, were saved through water*. Although this is the usual translation, it is more likely that the sense is ‘into which (i.e. the ark) a few, that is, eight persons, *escaped through water*’. This is a common sense of the verb *diasōzō* in this form (aorist passive/deponent: so Gen. 19:19; Josh. 10:20; Judg. 3:26; 2 Kgs (LXX 4 Kgs) 19:37, A text; Isa. 37:38 [all with *diasōzō* plus *eis* in the sense ‘escaped to ...’]; Acts 27:44; 28:1, 4), and the idea that Noah and his family ‘escaped through water’ is consistent with Genesis 7:13, which specifies that Noah and his family entered the ark ‘on this same day’ as the flood came (v. 11). The advantage of this translation is that it gives the preposition *dia* its very common sense ‘through’, as well as allowing *eis* to mean ‘into’ (its most common sense) rather than just ‘in’ (for which we might have expected *en*), and it follows the sense of the construction as it is used elsewhere.

The mention of ‘eight persons’ is one of many New Testament examples where seemingly minor details in the Old Testament are quoted as historically reliable. Peter picks up the detail about Noah entering the ark with his wife, his three sons, and their wives (Gen. 6:10; 7:7) and affirms its truth. God shows his mercy to the family of a righteous man (including even children by marriage), enabling each of them to give heed to Noah’s preaching and be saved, despite the extreme wickedness (Gen. 6:5) around them.

(iii) God will save you (as he did Noah & Christ) (3:21–22)

21.

‘Through water’ (v. 20) leads Peter to make a transition to baptism: Baptism, which corresponds to this, now saves you....

The grammar of the Greek text is puzzling, but the RSV translation given here represents a good understanding of the force of the words. If our understanding of ‘escaped through water’ in verse 20 is correct, then the word *which* (*ho*) at the beginning of the verse refers back to ‘escaping through water’. **Baptism corresponds to escaping through water in that the water of baptism is in some ways a counterpart to the waters of the flood.** For if, as is nearly certain, baptism when Peter wrote was by immersion (going completely under the water—note how incongruous the mention of ‘removal of dirt from the body’ would be if Peter thought that only

a few drops of water were sprinkled on the head), then going down into the waters of baptism was a vivid symbol of going down into the grave in death. (Cf. ‘we were buried therefore with him by baptism into death’, Rom. 6:4.)

The water of baptism is like waters of judgment—similar to the waters of the flood, and showing clearly what we deserve for our sins. Coming up out of the waters of baptism corresponds to being kept safe through the waters of the flood, the waters of God’s judgment on sin, and emerging to live in ‘newness of life’ (cf. **Rom. 6:4**).

Baptism thus shows us clearly that in one sense we have ‘died’ and ‘been raised’ again, but in another sense we emerge from the waters knowing that we are still alive and have passed through the waters of God’s judgment unharmed.

As Noah fled into the ark, so we flee to Christ, and in him we escape judgment.

But what does Peter mean by saying that
baptism ... now saves you?

It saves you *not as a removal of dirt from the body* (i.e. not as an outward, physical act which washes dirt from the body—that is not the part which saves you), *but as an appeal to God for a clear conscience* (i.e. as an inward, spiritual transaction between God and the individual, a transaction symbolized by the outward ceremony of baptism).

We could paraphrase, **‘Baptism now saves you—
not the outward physical ceremony
of baptism but the inward spiritual
reality which baptism represents.’**

Thus Peter guards against any ‘magical’ view of baptism which would attribute saving power to the physical ceremony itself.

An appeal to God for a clear conscience

is another way of saying **'a request for forgiveness of sins and a new heart'**.

When God gives a sinner a *clear conscience*, that person has the assurance that every sin has been forgiven and that he or she stands in a right relationship with God (Heb. 9:14 and 10:22 speak this way about the cleansing of one's conscience through Christ).

To be baptized rightly is to make such an appeal to God: 'Please, God, as I enter this baptism which will cleanse my body outwardly I am asking you to cleanse my heart inwardly, forgive my sins, make me right before you.'

In this way baptism is an appropriate symbol for the beginning of the Christian life.

Once we understand baptism in this way, we can appreciate why 'Repent, and be baptized ... for the forgiveness of your sins' (Acts 2:38) was an evangelistic command in the early church.

Some have argued that ‘pledge’ is a better word than *appeal* (NIV: ‘the pledge of a good conscience towards God’). This is because *eperōtēma*, which usually means ‘question’, has not elsewhere been found with the meaning ‘appeal’. It has the sense ‘pledge’ in later Greek papyri (but none at the time of the NT—the earliest is 2nd century AD; cf. LSJ, p. 618), so this meaning has been advocated here (so Selwyn, pp. 205–206). However, ‘pledge’ is still a derived sense which may have come into use after the time of the New Testament.

Moreover, although no examples have been discovered of the noun meaning ‘appeal’, the related verb is used with the sense to ‘make a request, ask for something’ (Matt. 16:1, ‘they asked him to show them a sign from heaven’). So this word may well have been easily understandable to Peter’s readers in the sense ‘request’.

More importantly, ‘pledge’ introduces a theological problem. If baptism is a ‘pledge to God’ to maintain a good conscience (or a pledge—to live an obedient life—which flows from a good conscience), then the emphasis is no longer on dependence on God to give salvation but on dependence on one’s own effort or strength of resolve.

And...

since this phrase is so clearly connected with the beginning of the Christian life as the thing about baptism which ‘saves you’, the translation ‘pledge’ seems to be inconsistent with the New Testament teaching on salvation by faith alone: it would be the only place where a promise to be righteous is said to be the thing which ‘saves you’.

And since the lexical data are inconclusive for both senses (while suggesting that both senses are apparently possible), it is better to adopt the translation ‘appeal’ as a sense much more in accord with the rest of the New Testament.

Those who support the view that only people who are old enough to profess faith in Christ should be baptized might well see in this verse some support for their position: baptism, it might be argued, is appropriately administered to anyone who is old enough personally to make ‘an appeal to God for a clear conscience’.

Yet it is not even a request to God for a clean conscience which actually provides the basis for our salvation. That salvation has ultimately been earned for us by Christ, and all that baptism represents comes to us not on the merits of any response from us, but *through the resurrection of Jesus Christ*.

His resurrection marked his once-and-for-all exit from the realm of death and judgment on sin, and our union with him in his resurrection is the means by which God gives us new life (see note at 1:3, above).

Our rising out of the waters of baptism is a picture of our being raised with Christ; by being brought safely through these ‘waters of judgment’ through Christ’s resurrection we are indeed given a clear conscience by God.

(The sense ‘pledge’ would not fit this idea of a clear conscience as a gift from God nearly as well.)

22.

Peter completes this discussion with a mention of Christ’s ascension into heaven. *Jesus Christ has gone into heaven and now is at the right hand of God.*

Though modern thinkers largely reject such a notion, **the New Testament writers do not hesitate to talk about heaven in spatial terms.**

Jesus’ ascension to heaven also was the occasion when he received new authority and power which he had not had before as God-man. (Though, as God the Son, he had possessed infinite power for all eternity, he had not previously exercised this power in the role of the person who was both God and man.) Peter emphasizes this by saying that **Jesus is at the right hand of God.**

In the ancient world, to sit at the right hand of a king signified that one acted with the king's authority and power (cf. Ps. 110:1 and Eph. 1:20–21, with similar emphasis on authority).

This theme of Christ's 'session' (i.e. his sitting at God's right hand) is often mentioned in the New Testament (Matt. 22:44, 26:64; Acts 2:33–34; 5:31; 7:56; Rom. 8:34; Col. 3:1; Heb. 1:3, 13; 10:12; 12:2; cf. Ps. 110:1). It is used by the New Testament authors as an indication of Christ's present universal authority, the finality of his completed work of redemption, and his immeasurable worthiness to receive our praise (note Phil. 2:9; 1 Tim. 3:16; Rev. 5:12).

Moreover, Christ's ascension foreshadows our future ascension and rule with him

(1 Thess. 4:17; Rev. 2:26–27; 3:21).

Peter focuses here on Christ's authority in the unseen spiritual world: he has *angels, authorities, and powers subject to him*. The three terms can be applied to both good and evil spiritual beings elsewhere in Scripture, and without specific restrictions in the context it is best to understand them as a reference to all spiritual beings in the universe, both good and evil.

When Paul says not only that we have been raised with Christ but also that God has 'made us sit with him in the heavenly places' (Eph. 2:6), it indicates that even now Christians have a share in the spiritual authority which belongs to Christ, an authority which finds expression in our lives especially in terms of power in spiritual warfare (2 Cor. 10:3–4; Eph. 6:10–18), freedom from fearing demonic powers (Eph. 6:13; Jas 4:7; 1 Pet. 5:9; 1 John 4:4), and authority to rebuke, if need be, the demonic forces which oppose us (Luke 10:17–20; Acts 16:18).²

² Wayne A. Grudem, *1 Peter: An Introduction and Commentary*, vol. 17, Tyndale New Testament Commentaries (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1988), 163–174.

Matthew Henry

Verses 18–20

Here, I. The example of Christ is proposed as an argument for patience under sufferings, the strength of which will be discerned if we consider the several points contained in the words; observe therefore, 1. Jesus Christ himself was not exempted from sufferings in this life, though he had no guilt of his own and could have declined all suffering if he had pleased. 2. The reason or meritorious cause of Christ's suffering was the sins of men: *Christ suffered for sins*. The sufferings of Christ were a true and proper punishment; this punishment was suffered to expiate and to make an atonement for sin; and it extends to all sin. 3. In the case of our Lord's suffering, it was the just that suffered for the unjust; he substituted himself in our room and stead, and bore our iniquities. He that knew no sin suffered instead of those that knew no righteousness. 4. The merit and perfection of Christ's sacrifice were such that for him to suffer once was enough. The legal sacrifices were repeated from day to day, and from year to year; but the sacrifice of Christ, once offered, purgeth away sin, Heb. 7:27; 9:26, 28; 10:10, 12, 14. 5. The blessed end or design of our Lord's sufferings was to bring us to God, to reconcile us to God, to give us access to the Father, to render us and our services acceptable, and to bring us to eternal glory, Eph. 2:13, 18; 3:12; Heb. 10:21, 22. 6. The issue and event of Christ's suffering, as to himself, were these, he was put to death in his human nature, but he was quickened and raised again by the Spirit. Now, if Christ was not exempted from sufferings, why should Christians expect it? If he suffered, to expiate sins, why should not we be content when our sufferings are only for trial and correction, but not for expiation? If he, though perfectly just, why should not we, who are all criminals? If he once suffered, and then entered into glory, shall not we be patient under trouble, since it will be but a little time and we shall follow him to glory? If he *suffered, to bring us to God*, shall not we submit to difficulties, since they are of so much use to quicken us in our return to God, and in the performance of our duty to him?

II. The apostle passes from the example of Christ to that of the old world, and sets before the Jews, to whom he wrote, the different event of those who believed and obeyed Christ preaching by Noah, from those that continued disobedient and unbelieving, intimating to the Jews that they were under a like sentence. God would not wait much longer upon them. They had now an offer of mercy; those that accepted of it should be saved, but those who rejected Christ and the gospel should be as certainly destroyed as ever the disobedient in the times of Noah were.

1. For the explication of this we may notice, (1.) The preacher—Christ Jesus, who has interested himself in the affairs of the church and of the world ever since he was first promised to Adam, Gen. 3:15. *He went*, not by a local motion, but by special operation, as God is frequently said to move, Gen. 11:5; Hos. 5:15; Mic. 1:3. *He went and preached*, by his Spirit striving with them, and inspiring and enabling Enoch and Noah to plead with them, and *preach righteousness to them*, as 2 Pt. 2:5. (2.) The hearers. Because they were dead and disembodied when the apostle speaks of them, therefore he properly calls them spirits now *in prison*; not that they were *in prison when Christ preached to them*, as the vulgar Latin translation and the popish expositors pretend. (3.) The sin of these people: They were *disobedient*, that is, *rebellious, unpersuadable, and unbelieving*, as the word signifies; this their sin is aggravated from the patience and *long-*

suffering of God (which once waited upon them for 120 years together), while Noah was preparing the ark, and by that, as well as by his preaching, giving them fair warning of what was coming upon them. (4.) The event of all: Their bodies were drowned, and their spirits cast into hell, which is called a prison (Mt. 5:25; 2 Pt. 2:4, 5); but Noah and his family, who believed and were obedient, were saved in the ark.

2. From the whole we learn that, (1.) God takes exact notice of all the means and advantages that people in all ages have had for the salvation of their souls; it is put to the account of the old world that Christ offered them his help, sent his Spirit, gave them fair warning by Noah, and waited a long time for their amendment. (2.) Though the patience of God wait long upon sinners, yet it will expire at last; it is beneath the majesty of the great God always to wait upon man in vain. (3.) The spirits of disobedient sinners, as soon as they are out of their bodies, are committed to the prison of hell, whence there is no redemption. (4.) The way of the most is neither the best, the wisest, nor the safest way to follow: better to follow the eight in the ark than the eight millions drowned by the flood and damned to hell.

Verses 21–22

Noah's salvation in the ark upon the water prefigured the salvation of all good Christians in the church by baptism; that temporal salvation by the ark was a type, the antitype whereunto is the eternal salvation of believers by baptism, to prevent mistakes about which the apostle,

I. Declares what he means by saving baptism; not the outward ceremony of washing with water, which, in itself, does no more than put away the filth of the flesh, but it is that baptism wherein there is a faithful answer or restipulation of a resolved good conscience, engaging to believe in, and be entirely devoted to, God, the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, renouncing at the same time the flesh, the world, and the devil. The baptismal covenant, made and kept, will certainly save us. Washing is the visible sign; this is the thing signified.

II. The apostle shows that the efficacy of baptism to salvation depends not upon the work done, but upon the resurrection of Christ, which supposes his death, and is the foundation of our faith and hope, to which we are rendered conformable by dying to sin, and rising again to holiness and newness of life. Learn, 1. the sacrament of baptism, rightly received, is a means and a pledge of salvation. *Baptism now saveth us.* God is pleased to convey his blessings to us in and by his ordinances, Acts 2:38; 22:16. 2. The external participation of baptism will save no man without an answerable good conscience and conversation. There must be the answer of a good conscience towards God.—*Obj.* Infants cannot make such an answer, and therefore ought not to be baptized.—*Answer,* the true circumcision was that of the heart and of the spirit (Rom. 2:29), which children were no more capable of then than our infants are capable of making this answer now; yet they were allowed circumcision at eight days old. The infants of the Christian church therefore may be admitted to the ordinance with as much reason as the infants of the Jewish, unless they are barred from it by some express prohibition of Christ.

IV. The apostle, having mentioned the death and resurrection of Christ, proceeds to speak of his ascension, and sitting at the right hand of the Father, as a subject fit to be considered by these believers for their comfort in their suffering condition, v. 22. If

the advancement of Christ was so glorious after his deep humiliation, let not his followers despair, but expect that after these short distresses they shall be advanced to transcendent joy and glory. Learn, 1. Jesus Christ, after he had finished his labours and his sufferings upon earth, ascended triumphantly into heaven, of which see Acts 1:9–11; Mk. 16:19. He went to heaven to receive his own acquired crown and glory (Jn. 17:5), to finish that part of his mediatorial work which could not be done on earth, and make intercession for his people, to demonstrate the fulness of his satisfaction, to take possession of heaven for his people, to prepare mansions for them, and to send down the Comforter, which was to be the first-fruits of his intercession, Jn. 16:7. 2. Upon his ascension into heaven, Christ is enthroned at the right hand of the Father. His being said to *sit* there imports absolute rest and cessation from all further troubles and sufferings, and an advancement to the highest personal dignity and sovereign power. 3. Angels, authorities, and powers, are all made subject to Christ Jesus: *all power in heaven and earth*, to command, to give law, issue orders, and pronounce a final sentence, is committed to Jesus, God—man, which his enemies will find to their everlasting sorrow and confusion, but his servants to their eternal joy and satisfaction.

GotQuestions.org

How can Jesus be both God and man at the same time?

The Bible teaches that Jesus Christ is both God and man. Many Christians are understandably confused when it comes to understanding how Jesus can be God and man at the same time. How could our divine Creator become a human? Could a first-century Jewish man really be God? While a certain amount of mystery will always accompany this issue, both Scripture and, to a lesser extent, church tradition provide for us important distinctions to help us make sense of this matter.

While previous church councils had deliberated over issues pertaining to the nature of Christ and His relationship to the Father, it was the [Council of Chalcedon](#) (AD 451) that affirmed that Christ is “the same perfect in divinity and perfect in humanity, the same truly God and truly man.” This statement is not true simply because the council taught it.

Rather, the council's declaration was authoritative only insofar as it aligned with what the Bible teaches on the subject. Scripture is clear that Jesus is God ([John 20:28](#); [Titus 2:13](#); [Hebrews 1:8](#)), and it is equally clear that He is truly human ([Romans 1:2-4](#); [1 John 4:2-3](#)). Jesus claimed the divine name ([John 8:58](#)) and did things that only God can do ([Mark 2:1-12](#); [Luke 7:48-50](#)). But Jesus also displayed the weaknesses and vulnerabilities common to humanity ([Luke 19:41](#); [John 19:28](#)).

The belief that Jesus is both God and man is of fundamental importance. The apostle Paul wrote that an affirmation of the divinity of Jesus is required to be saved ([Romans 10:9](#)), and the apostle John provided a sober warning that those who deny Christ's true humanity are promoting the doctrine of antichrist ([2 John 1:7](#)).

The Triune God of the Bible has existed and reigned from all eternity, and the second Person of the [Trinity](#), the Son, took on human flesh at a particular point in time ([Luke 1:35](#); [Hebrews 1:5](#)). God the Son added a sinless human nature to His eternally existent divine nature. The result was the Incarnation. God the Son became a man ([John 1:1, 14](#)). [Hebrews 2:17](#) gives the reason that Jesus had to be both God and man: "He had to be made like them, fully human in every way, in order that he might become a merciful and faithful high priest in service to God, and that he might make atonement for the sins of the people." The Son of God took on human flesh to provide redemption to those under the law ([Galatians 4:4-5](#)).

At no time did Jesus ever cease to be God. Although He was made fully human, there was never a point when He abrogated His divine nature (see [Luke 6:5, 8](#)). It is equally true that, after becoming incarnate, the Son has never ceased to be human. As the apostle Paul wrote, "For there is one God, and there is one mediator between God and men, *the man* Christ Jesus" ([1 Timothy 2:5](#), emphasis added). Jesus is not half-human and half-divine. Rather, He is *Theanthropos*, the God-man. The Lord Jesus Christ is one eternally divine Person who will forever possess two [distinct yet inseparable natures](#): one divine and one human.