

## 1 Peter 3:19-22

Martin Luther is quoted as saying in reference to this section of scripture: "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 certainty what Peter means."

### Verse 19-20

There are multiple different views on verses 19 and 20. "In which He also went" to start verse 19 is referring to the Holy Spirit as mentioned in verse 18. We know that Christ went in the Spirit to make a proclamation to a group. From this, there are several questions that must be answered in an attempt to make clear this difficult section of scripture.

The first question that arises is who are the spirits now in prison to whom He made proclamation to?

- Angelic spirits?
  - One view is that after His death and before His resurrection He descended into hades and made proclamation to disobedient angels that were present in the time of the Noah (Nephilim?- [Gen 6:4-5](#))
  - Another view is that Christ proclaimed His victory to the fallen angels who are in prison after His resurrection at His ascension.
  - Verses that discuss some angels being bound in hell for judgment ([2 Peter 2:4-5](#))([Jude 6](#)) ([Luke 8:31](#))
  
- Human spirits?
  - One view is that Jesus was being led by the Spirit in His earthly ministry with His mission to proclaim release of the captives. ([Luke 4:14-21](#)).
  - A completely heretical view is that Christ went to preach the Gospel to those who were already in Hades to give them a second chance. This is completely against all teaching of the scripture.
  - Another view is looking back into the past to the time of Noah. This view is that Christ through the Holy Spirit preached through Noah ([2 Peter 2:5](#)) to those who were disobedient in the time of Noah as the ark was being constructed. The Spirit of God was revealing the words of God to the prophets as noted in [1 Peter 1:10-11](#) which could apply to Noah as He was speaking on behalf of God and preaching to those people who were disobedient.

We must consider the context of 1 Peter and especially the preceding verses. Peter has labored to the point that his audience are exiles who are the minority and will be persecuted, insulted, slandered, and reviled for their faith. However, he continues to remind them that even though they are the minority on this earth and even though they will be insulted, slandered, and persecuted, that God is faithful and faith in Him will rescue them to their imperishable inheritance which is reserved to those whom He has chose and are born again. In view of the aforementioned thought, Peter I believe refers back to the time of Noah as an example of how Noah and his family went through the same persecution, slander, and ridicule. Just as God protected and saved this small number of people (Noah's family), He will do the same to the audience of Peter's letter and to all who are His children. He also references Noah and the flood to spring into the next thought which is being saved from the judgment of God through the water in which He will discuss baptism. In my own personal opinion, I would hold the view that God was speaking through Noah to preach to the people in Noah's day, but because of their disobedience back then, their spirits are now in prison in Hades. Again, I believe there are parallels to the suffering of the exiles in 1 Peter and Noah and His family as well as judgment, baptism, and salvation which he is explaining the exiles in 1 Peter in regards to their salvation.

### Safely through the water

The water represents God's judgment and wrath He is pouring out on the disobedient sinful people in the world at that time. Noah and his family were saved by faith and were brought safely through the water judgment. It was by faith in God that they were saved. We see several types and shadows in the flood and the ark.

In [Luke 12:50](#), Jesus says that he has a baptism to undergo; he is distressed until it is accomplished. Jesus had already been physically baptized([Matthew 3:13-17](#)), so what is referring to in this text which clearly comes after His water baptism? The baptism He is referring to in this context is His death on the cross. As the water in the time of Noah was judgment, Christ would take the condemnation, sin, and judgment of His people. Jesus would take upon Himself the wrath of God on our behalf. It is because Christ has underwent this baptism that we can be saved.

- o **Romans 6:3-5** Or do you not know that all of us who have been baptized into Christ Jesus have been baptized into His death? <sup>4</sup>Therefore we have been buried with Him through baptism into death, so that as Christ was raised from the dead through the glory of the Father, so we too might walk in newness of life. <sup>5</sup>For if we have become <sup>[a]</sup>united with *Him* in the likeness of His death, certainly we shall also be <sup>[b]</sup>*in the likeness* of His resurrection,

Noah and His family were saved from the wrath of God which was represented by water. They were saved from the judgment and wrath of God by faith and entrance into a wooden object with one door to which God closed that door. This is a picture of redemption and salvation through the work of Christ. In His baptism on a wooden object (the cross) He was “going under the waters of death, judgment and wrath” that was due us. The wooden object of the cross to which we place our faith, saves us from the wrath and judgment of God just as Noah and his family were saved via a wooden vessel. Just as the ark also had one door, Jesus is the only door to Heaven (**John 14:6**) (**John 10:7**). Noah and his family were saved by the ark through the judgment of God and so are His people saved by faith in the cross and work of Christ as He is the only door to salvation and entrance into newness of life. After they had been saved from the judgment of God, they entered into a renovated and new look earth, one that had been destroyed by water. So will it be with all believers who are saved from the wrath and judgment of God on the last day (**1 Thess 5:9**), they will enter a new heaven and a new earth which will not be destroyed and renewed by water, but with fire (**2 Peter 3:10-14**) (**Revelation 21 and 22**).

### **Verse 21- Does baptism save?**

Peter makes a peculiar statement on the surface when he states that baptism saves you. Many denominations and religions have taken this text of scripture to conclude that water baptism is what saves. The scripture is consistently clear that we are saved through faith alone (sola fide) (**Ephesians 2:8-9**) (**Romans 3:22-28**) (**Galatians 2:16**) (**Galatians 3:11**) and Peter does not offer a contradiction in this verse. He goes on to explain for those who may think he is talking about an actual physical water baptism saving them and says “not the removal of dirt from the flesh, but an appeal to God for a good conscience. Peter dismisses the idea that the baptism to which he is speaking is not one that removes dirt from the flesh (water), but a different kind of baptism.

The baptism that is in view here is the baptism or immersion into Christ. This is a spiritual immersion or baptism. We have died with Him on the cross and we are resurrected with Him in His resurrection.

- o **Romans 6:3-5** Or do you not know that all of us who have been baptized into Christ Jesus have been baptized into His death? <sup>4</sup>Therefore we have been buried with Him through baptism into death, so that as Christ was raised from the dead through the glory of the Father, so we too might walk in newness of life. <sup>5</sup>For if we have become <sup>[a]</sup>united with *Him* in the likeness of His death, certainly we shall also be <sup>[b]</sup>*in the likeness* of His resurrection,

Water baptism is an outward sign of spiritual immersion/baptism and every believer should be baptized.

### **Verse 22**

Peter wants to reassure his readers that no matter who or what comes against you or no matter what comes in our lives, we can have peace knowing our God is on His throne ruling and reigning as we speak. After his mission and work was completed, Christ ascended into Heaven. He is the supreme ruler and sovereign God over all the universe. Everything and everyone is in subjection to Him.

- **Psalm 110:1** The Lord says to my Lord: “Sit at My right hand Until I make Your enemies a footstool for Your feet.”
- **Colossians 1:15-18** <sup>[w]</sup>He is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn of all creation. <sup>16</sup>For <sup>[x]</sup>by Him all things were created, *both* in the heavens and on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or dominions or rulers or authorities—all things have been created through Him and for Him. <sup>17</sup>He <sup>[y]</sup>is before all things, and in Him all things <sup>[z]</sup>hold together. <sup>18</sup>He is also head of the body, the church; and He is the beginning, the firstborn from the dead, so that He Himself will come to have first place in everything.
- **Colossians 2:10-15** and in Him you have been made <sup>[u]</sup>complete, and He is the head <sup>[v]</sup>over all rule and authority; <sup>11</sup>and in Him you were also circumcised with a circumcision made without hands, in the removal of the body of the flesh by the circumcision of Christ; <sup>12</sup>having been buried with Him in baptism, in which you were also raised up with Him through faith in the working of God, who raised Him from the dead. <sup>13</sup>When you were dead <sup>[w]</sup>in your transgressions and the uncircumcision of your flesh, He made you alive together with Him, having forgiven us all our transgressions, <sup>14</sup>having canceled out the certificate of debt consisting of decrees against us, which was hostile to us; and He has taken it out of the way, having nailed it to the cross. <sup>15</sup>When He had <sup>[x]</sup>disarmed the rulers and authorities, He made a public display of them, having triumphed over them through <sup>[y]</sup>Him.
- **Psalm 115:3** But our God is in the heavens; He does whatever He pleases.

- **Psalm 103:19** The Lord has established His throne in the heavens, And His <sup>h</sup>sovereignty rules over all.