

# 1 Peter 3:17-22: Three Traditional Interpretations

Assistant Pastor Chase Fluhart, January 23, 2022

## The Passage

17 For it is better to suffer for doing good, if that should be God's will, than for doing evil. 18 For 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, 19 in 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. 21 Baptism, 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.

## Main Questions

- v. 18: What does it mean that Jesus was put to death in the \_\_\_\_\_, but made alive in the \_\_\_\_\_?
- v. 19a: Who or what are these \_\_\_\_\_ in prison?
- v. 19b: Where or what is this \_\_\_\_\_?
- v. 19c: What did Jesus \_\_\_\_\_ to these spirits?

## Three Traditional Interpretations

**Tradition # 1:** “The Harrowing of \_\_\_\_\_”

**Tradition # 2:** “The Spiritual \_\_\_\_\_ of Christ”

**Tradition # 3:** “Christ's \_\_\_\_\_ Over the Spiritual Forces of Evil”

*First, from v. 18: What does it mean that Jesus was put to death in the flesh, but made alive in the spirit?*

**Tradition #1: Body—Soul**

*Explanation:* Jesus was put to death in the \_\_\_\_\_, and He was made alive in His \_\_\_\_\_. This occurs after His death and before His \_\_\_\_\_.

*Timeline:* Death > ‘made alive in the spirit’ > Resurrection

**Tradition #2: Fleishy/mortal state—the Spirit of God**

*Explanation:* Jesus was put to death in His \_\_\_\_\_ existence or state, and He was raised by the divine power of the \_\_\_\_\_ of God.

*Timeline:* Death > Resurrected by the Spirit of God (i.e., ‘made alive in the spirit’)

**Tradition #3: Fleishy/mortal state—Spiritual/resurrected state**

*Explanation:* Jesus was put to death in His \_\_\_\_\_ existence or state, and He was resurrected into a \_\_\_\_\_ existence or state.

*Timeline:* Death > Resurrection (i.e., ‘made alive in the spirit’)

**Second, from vv. 19-20: Who are the spirits that Jesus preached to? Where or what is the prison? What did Jesus preach?**

**Tradition #1**

- Who are the spirits? \_\_\_\_\_
- What is the prison? \_\_\_\_\_
- What did Jesus preach? \_\_\_\_\_

**Tradition #2**

- Who are the spirits? \_\_\_\_\_
- What is the prison? \_\_\_\_\_
- What did Jesus preach? \_\_\_\_\_

**Tradition #3**

- Who are the spirits? \_\_\_\_\_
- What is the prison? \_\_\_\_\_
- What did Jesus preach? \_\_\_\_\_

— Genesis 6:1-4 (NKJV): “Now it came to pass, when men began to multiply on the face of the earth, and daughters were born to them, that the sons of God saw the daughters of men, that they were beautiful; and they took wives for themselves of all whom they chose. And the LORD said, “My Spirit shall not strive with man forever, for he is indeed flesh; yet his days shall be one hundred and twenty years.” There were giants on the earth in those days, and also afterward, when the sons of God came in to the daughters of men and they bore children to them. Those were the mighty men who were of old, men of renown.”

— 2 Peter 2:4: “For if God did not spare angels when they sinned, but cast them into Tartarus, or Hell, and committed them to chains of gloomy darkness to be kept until the judgment;”

**Summaries of three traditional interpretations:**

***Tradition #1 The Harrowing of Hades***

“Christ Jesus suffered for our sins, the just for the unjust that He might bring us to God. Being put to death in *body*, His *soul* was made alive; His soul went *down to Hades* and preached *His triumphant victory to the souls of the godly of the Old Testament*, as well as to the imprisoned *souls* who rebelled in the time of Noah, when the ark was being prepared, wherein few—only eight souls—were saved by and through water.”

***Tradition #2 The Spiritual Preaching of Christ***

“Christ Jesus suffered for our sins, the just for the unjust that He might bring us to God. Being put to death in *His mortal body*, He was resurrected by the *Spirit of God*—by the same *Spirit* which He went and preached, *formerly, through Noah and even now, through the apostles and preachers of Christ* to souls imprisoned in *their sin and unbelief* while God’s patience waits, as in the days of Noah when the ark was being prepared, wherein few—only eight souls—were saved by and through water.”

***Tradition #3 Christ’s Triumph Over the Forces of Evil***

“Christ Jesus suffered for our sins, the just for the unjust that He might bring us to God. Being put to death in *His mortal, fleshly body*, He was resurrected to have an *immortal, spiritual body*, and in *this resurrected state*, Jesus went and proclaimed *victory* against those imprisoned *angels* who *committed corrupting deeds* in the time of Noah, when the ark was being prepared, wherein few—only eight souls—were saved by and through water.”