

## 1 PETER 3:18-22 | PETER'S PERPLEXING PASSAGES

- Verse 18 –
  - In light of the **suffering for well doing** of verse 17, Peter reminds the recipients that **Christ also hath once suffered for sins, the just for the unjust.**
    - The word **suffered** encompasses the entire crucifixion experience.
    - He did this **for sins**. The word **for** in **for sins** is περί [peri], which implies “all the things surrounding sins.” In the final day, the “entire package” of sin’s curse will be removed.
    - The word **for** in **the just for the unjust** is ὑπέρ [huper], which implies being *in the place of*, that is, a substitution.
  - Christ did this so that **he might bring us to God**. While in this context the pronoun **us** is the Jewish faithful, other passages remind us of the full worldwide nature of the outcome of Christ’s work in matters *concerning* sin.
  - The full extent of the death of Christ is not only that He was **put to death in the flesh** but also that He was **quickened by the Spirit** (that is, the resurrection).
- Verses 19-20 –
  - This seemingly passing comment has been the subject of endless discussion.
    - Who were these **spirits in prison** and what is this disobedience of which the text speaks?
    - The context allows nothing other than *some kind of spirits from the days of Noah, while the ark was preparing.*
  - The word **preached** is the word for *proclaim*, not the word for *evangelize*. Jesus was not “preaching the Gospel” but rather “proclaiming His victory.”
    - Who better to proclaim this victory than to the ones who did more than anyone, anywhere, at anytime to bring the future salvation of the created order to fruition?
    - And that group would be none other than the **sons of God** who **saw the daughters of men** and **took them wives** (Gen. 6:2) from among them, thus creating the **giants in the earth** (Gen. 6:4), which would have destroyed the redemptive plan had God not eradicated the problem.
    - Noah alone was found **perfect in his generations** (Gen. 6:9).
  - Because of God’s work to *save* (not *destroy*) mankind, there were **eight souls** that **were saved by water** through the Ark.
- Verse 21 –
  - In one of the most “problematic” passages of all the Bible, Peter clearly says **baptism doth also now save us**.
  - Peter says that **water** (v. 20) is **The like figure** (v. 21), using the word ἀντίτυπος [antitypos] (antitype).
    - The *type* is the shadow, the *antitype* is the substance.

- Thus it is *undeniable* that Peter is saying that “as water saved the eight souls on the ark, so baptism saves us.”
  - For an example of the word *antitype*, see Hebrews 9:24, where it is in the plural and translated **figures**.
- It is impossible to argue that Peter is speaking about some kind of *Spirit baptism*, since it simply doesn’t fit the context.
- Peter clearly states that there is nothing in the cleansing power of water that does the saving, but **baptism** (in water) **doth also now save us**. Baptism is **the answer of a good conscience toward God** (i.e.: it is what the Jews did when they had a good conscience).
- How could Peter possibly be saying what he is saying?
  - We should first be reminded of Acts 2:38, words of Peter which concur with this passage.
  - We should further be reminded that Peter speaks to Jews about the Jewish (i.e. *Kingdom*) Gospel, and that he is *not* talking about our Gospel of grace.
    - Salvation as we know it is fully impossible by Baptism.
    - Paul himself proved it is possible to remove the Gospel from Baptism, saying that **Christ sent me not to baptize, but to preach the gospel** (1 Cor. 1:17).
- There are three responses to Peter’s words:
  - Create a salvific baptism. This has been the response of the greater part of Christendom.
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  - Deny the clarity of the words and spiritualize them rather than take them literally. This has been the response of the greater part of evangelicalism.
    - John Piper: “Baptism is a calling on God. It is a way of saying to God with our whole body, "I trust you to take me into Christ like Noah was taken into the ark, and to make Jesus the substitute for my sins and to bring me through these waters of death and judgment into new and everlasting life through the resurrection of Jesus my Lord." (<https://www.desiringgod.org/messages/what-is-baptism-and-does-it-save>)
      - Note that he simply changes what Baptism is to make the passage confirm his beliefs.
    - GotQuestions: “any interpretation which comes to the conclusion that baptism, or any other act, is necessary for salvation, is a faulty interpretation. (<https://www.gotquestions.org/baptism-1Peter-3-21.html>)
      - Note the eisegesis!
- Rightly divide the words, removing them from our dispensation, and thus our salvation, placing them into the dispensation where they belong and concerning the salvation of which Peter speaks. This is only done by a small group of “right dividers.”