

# UNDERSTAND THE DEATH AND TRIUMPH OF CHRIST

## 1 PETER 03:18–22

### *Introduction*

This is a great passage on the salvation wrought by the death of Jesus Christ. It is also an interesting passage in that it gives us some glimpse into what Jesus Christ was doing while he was dead, that is, between His crucifixion and resurrection. Two significant points are discussed.

- I. The death of Christ (v. 18).
- II. The triumph of Christ (vv. 18-22).

### **I. *1 Peter 03:18 Death of Jesus Christ***

There is the death of Christ. This is a verse that explains exactly what Christ did when He died. In the clearest of terms it tells us why Christ died and what the death of Christ does for man. In fact, this verse explains the death of Christ so clearly that it leaves the hearer without excuse if he fails to understand why Christ died. Because of its clarity every believer should study the verse in all of its depth and memorize it.

1. Christ died once for sins. It was for the sins of man that He died. Man is sinful: he is guilty before God, guilty...
  - of disbelieving God. Just think how often people do not believe God, how often they do not take God and His Word seriously.
  - of disobeying God. Just think how often people transgress and break the law of God.
  - of cursing God. Just think how often people curse and blaspheme the name of God.
  - of rebelling against God. Just think how often people choose to go their own way and do their own thing instead of doing what God says.
  - of rejecting God. Just think how many people reject God.

This is sin — all of this and so much more. Man has transgressed the law of God, and when the law has been broken, the penalty has to be paid. Man has to be judged; he has to bear the punishment for his sins. What is the judgment and punishment? Death. Man has to die and he has to be separated from God forever. Why? Because God is perfect and only perfect beings can live in God's presence. This is the reason man's sin dooms him to death and eternal separation from God. But this is the glorious gospel; this is the declaration of this great verse: Jesus Christ died for our sins. He took the sin and guilt of man upon Himself and bore the judgment and punishment for man.

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Note the words “for sins” (*peri hamartion*). These words are the very words used in the Old Testament for the sin offering (Lev. 5:7; 6:30; cp. Rom. 8:3; Heb. 10:6, 8). The point is clear: Jesus Christ offered Himself or *sin*, He was the fulfilment of the sin — offering itself. This means a most wonderful thing: we can now become acceptable to God. We no longer have to stand before God guilty of sin, for Jesus Christ has died for our sin. If we trust His death to cover us, then sin and its guilt have been removed from us. *In Christ* we stand acceptable to God.

Note one other fact: Christ died *once* for our sins. His death never has to be repeated; His death upon the cross satisfies God completely and covers the sins and death of men forever. How? This is the discussion of the next point.

**1 Cor 15:3** *For what I received I passed on to you as of first importance : that Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures.*

**Gal 1:4** *Who gave himself for our sins to rescue us from the present evil age, according to the will of our God and Father.*

**Rev 1:5** *And from Jesus Christ, who is the faithful witness, the firstborn from the dead, and the ruler of the kings of the earth. To him who loves us and has freed us from our sins by his blood.*

2. Christ died vicariously; He was the just One dying for the unjust. What does this mean? It means two things:
  - a. Jesus Christ was *perfectly just* or righteous. He was sinless: as Man He lived a sinless life. Therefore, He stood before God as the Perfect and Ideal Man. He was the ideal pattern of what every man should be. His righteousness was the ideal righteousness. This means a most wonderful thing:
    - => It means that whatever Jesus Christ did could stand for and cover all men.
    - => It means that His righteousness could stand as the ideal and perfect righteousness. His ideal righteousness could cover every person and make him acceptable to God.
    - => It means that His death could stand as the ideal and perfect death. His ideal death could cover the death of every person and make him acceptable to God.
    - => It means that Jesus Christ could become the ideal and perfect sin-offering for man. His ideal sin-offering could cover every man’s sin — offering and make him acceptable to God.

**John 8:46** *“Can any of you prove me guilty of sin? If I am telling the truth, why don’t you believe me?”*

**2 Cor 5:21** *God made him who had no sin to be sin for us, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God.*

**Heb 4:15** *For we do not have a high priest who is unable to sympathize with our weaknesses, but we have one who has been tempted in every way, just as we are — yet was without sin.*

**Heb 7:26** *Such a high priest meets our need — one who is holy, blameless, pure, set apart from sinners, exalted above the heavens.*

**1 Pet 1:19** *But with the precious blood of Christ, a lamb without blemish or defect.*

- b. Jesus Christ loves man; therefore, He gave His life for man. Man deserves to die and to be separated from God, for he is unjust and sinful. But Christ loves us; therefore He has become our substitute: borne our sin and judgment, condemnation and punishment. Therefore, we never have to die or be separated from God. If we surrender our lives to Christ — if we give ourselves over to Him — His righteousness covers us and His death covers us. *In Christ* we become acceptable to God. But we must always remember why. It is because *Christ died for us: the righteous One died for the unrighteous*. He sacrificed and substituted His life for us.

Note: this is the reason the death of Christ never has to be repeated. Christ never has to die again because He is the Perfect and Ideal Man. As the Ideal Man He has made the perfect sacrifice that satisfied the righteousness and justice of God. He has made the perfect sacrifice once-for-all (see Heb. 7:27; pt. 3, Heb. 9:11-14; 10:5-10).

**2 Cor 5:15** *And he died for all, that those who live should no longer live for themselves but for him who died for them and was raised again.*

**Gal 3:13** *Christ redeemed us from the curse of the law by becoming a curse for us, for it is written: “Cursed is everyone who is hung on a tree.”*

**Heb 2:9** *But we see Jesus, who was made a little lower than the angels, now crowned with glory and honour because he suffered death, so that by the grace of God he might taste death for everyone.*

**1 Pet 3:18** *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.*

**1 John 3:16** *This is how we know what love is: Jesus Christ laid down his life for us. And we ought to lay down our lives for our brothers.*

**Isa 53:5** *But he was pierced for our transgressions, he was crushed for our iniquities; the punishment that brought us peace was upon him, and by his wounds we are healed.*

3. Christ died to bring us to God. How? It is our sin that separates and alienates us from God. It is sin that makes us imperfect and unacceptable to God. But note the most wonderful truth:
- => When Jesus Christ took our sin upon Himself, sin was removed from us. Therefore, we stand before God in the righteousness and sinlessness of Christ. *In Christ* we become acceptable to God.
- => When Jesus Christ took the guilt of our sin and died for us, our death penalty was paid. *In Christ* we no longer have to die or be separated from God.

However, note the critical point: we are acceptable to God only *in Christ*. That is, we must cast ourselves — all that we are and have, our mind, body and soul, our past, present and future — upon Christ. We must believe with our whole heart that Jesus Christ has died for our sins. When we genuinely believe, God accepts us *in Christ*, covering us in His righteousness and death.

**Thought 1.** Note a terrible and tragic fact. Not everyone is *in Christ*. Not everyone believes *in Christ*. In fact, most people curse and reject Christ either by word or act. Few obey God and His Word; few trust Christ; few have given their lives to follow Christ fully and completely. Therefore, few people are covered by the death of Christ; few sins have been forgiven. Most people continue to bear their sins and the guilt of them.

**Rom 5:1** *Therefore, since we have been justified through faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ.*

**2 Cor 5:18-19** *All this is from God, who reconciled us to himself through Christ and gave us the ministry of reconciliation: that God was reconciling the world to himself in Christ, not counting men's sins against them. And he has committed to us the message of reconciliation.*

**Eph 2:13** *But now in Christ Jesus you who once were far away have been brought near through the blood of Christ.*

**Eph 2:16** *And in this one body to reconcile both of them to God through the cross, by which he put to death their hostility.*

**Col 1:20** *And through him to reconcile to himself all things, whether things on earth or things in heaven, by making peace through his blood, shed on the cross.*

**Heb 2:17** *For this reason he had to be made like his brothers 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.*

## II. **1 Peter 03:18–22 Victory and Triumph of Jesus Christ**

There is the triumph of Christ. The triumph is seen in four glorious facts.

1. Jesus Christ was made alive. Jesus Christ was raised from the dead. Most translators say that the words "*the spirit*" refer to Jesus' spirit and not to the Holy Spirit. Jesus Christ was put to death in the flesh, but He was quickened, made alive in the spirit. In either case the meaning is pretty much the same: right after Jesus Christ died in the flesh, His spirit passed into a new life, a life that could not be tempted to sin nor undergo trials and sufferings. Jesus Christ was transferred into heaven, into the spiritual and perfect world or dimension where He lives, in the glory and majesty of God forever.

**Thought 1.** The same giving of life is experienced by every believer. The spirit of every true believer is quickened and made alive in Christ, made alive by God.

And in that glorious day when it is time for the believer to depart this world and go on to live with God, God shall transfer the believer's spirit into heaven. Immediately — quicker than the eye can blink — the believer's spirit will be transferred into heaven, into the perfect and eternal world and dimension of being. The believer's spirit shall be perfected forever; it shall never again be subject to the trials and temptations of this corruptible world. The believer's spirit shall be perfected to live in the glory and majesty of God forever.

**Rom 1:4** *And who through the Spirit of holiness was declared with power to be the Son of God by his resurrection from the dead: Jesus Christ our Lord.*

**Rom 4:25** *He was delivered over to death for our sins and was raised to life for our justification.*

**Rom 6:4-5** *We were therefore buried with him through baptism into death in order that, just as Christ was raised from the dead through the glory of the Father, we too may live a new life. If we have been united with him like this in his death, we will certainly also be united with him in his resurrection.*

**Rom 8:11** *And if the Spirit of him who raised Jesus from the dead is living in you, he who raised Christ from the dead will also give life to your mortal bodies through his Spirit, who lives in you.*

**2 Cor 4:11** *For we who are alive are always being given over to death for Jesus' sake, so that his life may be revealed in our mortal body.*

**Eph 2:1, 6** *As for you, you were dead in your transgressions and sins, And God raised us up with Christ and seated us with him in the heavenly realms in Christ Jesus.*

**Col 3:1** *Since, then, you have been raised with Christ, set your hearts on things above, where Christ is seated at the right hand of God.*

**Col 3:3-4** *For you died, and your life is now hidden with Christ in God. When Christ, who is your life, appears, then you also will appear with him in glory.*

2. Jesus Christ victoriously proclaimed His triumph (v. 19-20). He proclaimed the victory of His death and resurrection to the *spirits in prison* and to the *disobedient of Noah's day*. What does this mean? It means that right after Christ died, between the cross and His resurrection, He went before the *spirits in prison* and proclaimed that God's promise of salvation was fulfilled in Him, the Saviour of the world. But who are the *spirits* to whom He preached?

Scripture says that they were...

- the disobedient who were living upon earth while Noah was preparing the Ark.
- the disobedient toward whom God was long-suffering.
- the disobedient who were not saved during the flood.

This passage definitely says that Christ preached to the spirits of the unbelievers who had lived in Noah's day and were in *prison*, that is, *the prison of hell*. Does this mean that Christ gave them a second chance to be saved? No! It means that Jesus Christ went before them and *proclaimed His triumph*; that is, He went to *vindicate the way of faith* — to proclaim that the faith of Noah was victorious. Noah's life and his proclamation of faith in God were never vindicated in his day. Therefore, Christ Himself went before the spirits of unbelievers and personally proclaimed the victory.

Does this mean that Christ proclaimed His triumph only to the disobedient spirits of Noah's day? Not likely, for none of the Old Testament believers had ever had their faith vindicated and proven. They had only confessed that they believed in God and His promise to send the Messiah and Saviour to the world. They never knew...

- who He would be
- how God would send Him
- how God would use Him to save the world
- when God would send Him

They knew little about the Saviour, but they believed and trusted in Him before a mocking and unbelieving world. Therefore, it is most likely that Christ preached and vindicated the gospel before all the spirits who had disobeyed and rebelled against God. If this is so, then why did Peter focus only upon the disobedient spirits of Noah's day instead of mentioning all the spirits of the disobedient? Verse 21 tells us. Peter's very purpose is to stress how the triumph of Christ saves the believer, and he wants to stress the part that baptism (that is, the cleansing of the conscience) has in salvation. Therefore, Peter uses the saving of Noah and his family through the flooding waters as an illustration of his point.

Whatever the case, the point is this: Christ went before the spirits of the disobedient in the prison of hell and He proclaimed that God's salvation had been completed. He Himself was the Saviour and Messiah of the world, the fulfilment of God's promise of salvation. Noah's faith (and the faith of all believers) was now fulfilled. Noah and the other seven members of His family were truly saved. (See 1 Pet. 3:19-20.)

**Mat 10:22** *“All men will hate you because of me, but he who stands firm to the end will be saved.”*

**Luke 3:6** *“And all mankind will see God's salvation.”*

**John 3:16** *“For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life.”*

**Rom 6:23** *For the wages of sin is death, but the gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord.*

**Eph 2:8-9** *For it is by grace you have been saved, through faith — and this not from yourselves, it is the gift of God — not by works, so that no one can boast.*

**Titus 2:11-12** *For the grace of God that brings salvation has appeared to all men. It teaches us to say “No” to ungodliness and worldly passions, and to live self—controlled, upright and godly lives in this present age.*

**James 1:21** *Therefore, get rid of all moral filth and the evil that is so prevalent and humbly accept the word planted in you, which can save you.*

**2 Pet 3:9** *The Lord is not slow in keeping his promise, as some understand slowness. He is patient with you, not wanting anyone to perish, but everyone to come to repentance.*

3. Jesus Christ saves the believer through baptism: not the baptism by water, but the baptism of a good conscience — wrought by the power of the resurrection of Jesus Christ (v. 21).
  - a. The water which saved Noah and his family is a type of the cleansing that saves us. The water...
    - bore up the ark and saved them through the judgment of God.
    - delivered them from the ridicule and mockery of evil men.
    - delivered them from the corruption of the world and led them to a new life.
    - put to death the old world and gave them the hope of a new world.
    - put to death their old life and gave them a new beginning.
    - saved the race of man and created a new people of God.
    - delivered them from the old world right into the new world.

What is Peter saying? Note the word “symbolizes” (antitupon). The symbol or picture of baptism is just like the water that saved Noah and his family.

- ⇒ The *flooding waters* of Noah’s day picture the judgment of God upon sin. The flooding waters picture how man was saved from a corruptible world and carried into a new world.
- ⇒ The *baptismal water* pictures the judgment of God upon Christ, a judgment of death that was due sinners. It pictures how man is saved from a corruptible life and world and carried into a new life and world by the resurrection of Christ.
- b. Note: Peter says that baptism now saves us, but he *hastens* to explain what he means. He is not saying that the water or act of baptism saves us. Peter is clear about this, as clear as it can be stated.

⇒ It is not the cleansing of the flesh, not the outward form and ceremony that cleanses and saves. We may cleanse the outside with the most scrupulous care, but much more is needed in order to be saved.

⇒ It is the cleansing of a clear conscience wrought by the power of the resurrection that saves a person. The great Greek scholar A.T. Robertson says:

*“Baptism...does not wash away the filth of the flesh either in a literal sense, as a bath for the body, or in a metaphorical sense of the filth of the soul. No ceremonies really affect the conscience (Heb. 9:13f)...[A person is saved] having repented and turned to God and now making this public proclamation...by means of baptism.” (Word Pictures In The New Testament, Vol. 6, p. 119).*

Alan Stibbs says:

*“Peter deliberately adds two statements in parenthesis in order to make unmistakably plain that it is not...the outward form of baptism that saves. It is only Christ who can save through His death and resurrection, not the baptismal water and its administration. Those who would share in this salvation must enter into Christ crucified and risen” (The First Epistle General of Peter: “The Tyndale New Testament Commentaries,” p. 144).*

The *Pulpit Commentary* states the significance of baptism well:

*“The outward and visible sign doth not save if separated from the inward and spiritual grace. The first [baptism] is necessary, for it is an outward sign appointed by Christ; but it will not save without the second; those who draw near to God must have their bodies washed with pure water; but also their hearts sprinkled from an evil conscience (Heb. 10:22). The inner cleansing of the soul results in a good conscience, a consciousness of sincerity, of good intentions and desires, which will instinctively seek after God” (B.C. Coffin. First Peter. “The Pulpit Commentary,” Vol. 22, p. 137.)*

- c. Note that our consciences are cleansed by the resurrection of Christ. How does the resurrection cleanse our consciences?

If God raised up Christ from the dead then it means that Christ is who He claimed to be: the Saviour of the world. Therefore, He is able to save us from our sins. He is able to cleanse us from all sin and to free our consciences. He is able to give us a clear and pure conscience. (See 1 Pet. 1:3.)

**Rom 4:25** *He was delivered over to death for our sins and was raised to life for our justification.*

**Rom 10:9-10** *That if you confess with your mouth, “Jesus is Lord,” and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved. For it is with your heart that you believe and are justified, and it is with your mouth that you confess and are saved.*

**1 Cor 15:1-4** *Now, brothers, I want to remind you of the gospel I preached to you, which you received and on which you have taken your stand. By this gospel you are saved, if you hold firmly to the word I preached to you. Otherwise, you have believed in vain. For what I received I passed on to you as of first importance : that Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures, that he was buried, that he was raised on the third day according to the Scriptures.*

**2 Cor 1:12** *Now this is our boast: Our conscience testifies that we have conducted ourselves in the world, and especially in our relations with you, in the holiness and sincerity that are from God. We have done so not according to worldly wisdom but according to God's grace.*

**Heb 9:14** *How much more, then, will the blood of Christ, who through the eternal Spirit offered himself unblemished to God, cleanse our consciences from acts that lead to death, so that we may serve the living God!*

**1 Tim 1:19** *Holding on to faith and a good conscience. Some have rejected these and so have shipwrecked their faith.*

**1 Pet 1:3** *Praise be to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ! In his great mercy he has given us new birth into a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead.*

4. Jesus Christ saves the believer from all angels, authorities and powers (v. 22). All beings of all dimensions and worlds are in submission to Him. He has gone into heaven and is on the right hand of God. He rules and reigns over all, submitting all to His sovereign will and power.

**Thought 1.** This means a most wonderful thing. Believers need never fear anyone or anything. Christ Jesus the Lord is looking after them. He will provide, protect and deliver through all the trials and temptations of life no matter how terrible and severe.

**Eph 1:19-22** *And his incomparably great power for us who believe. That power is like the working of his mighty strength, which he exerted in Christ when he raised him from the dead and seated him at his right hand in the heavenly realms, far above all rule and authority, power and dominion, and every title that can be given, not only in the present age but also in the one to come. And God placed all things under his feet and appointed him to be head over everything for the church.*

**Phil 2:9** *Therefore God exalted him to the highest place and gave him the name that is above every name.*

**Heb 4:14-16** *Therefore, since we have a great high priest who has gone through the heavens, Jesus the Son of God, let us hold firmly to the faith we profess. For we do not have a high priest who is unable to sympathize with our weaknesses, but we have one who has been tempted in every way, just as we are — yet was without sin. Let us then approach the throne of grace with confidence, so that we may receive mercy and find grace to help us in our time of need.*

**Heb 9:24** *For Christ did not enter a man-made sanctuary that was only a copy of the true one; he entered heaven itself, now to appear for us in God's presence.*

**Isa 9:6** *For to us a child is born, to us a son is given, and the government will be on his shoulders. And he will be called Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace. ■*

## 1 PETER 03:19–20 HELL, JESUS CHRIST, TRIUMPH

*Through whom also he went and preached to the spirits in prison, 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. 1 Peter 03:19–20*

This passage clearly says that Jesus Christ “went and preached to the spirits in prison.” It says in particular that He preached to the souls of those who had lived in the days of Noah but had rejected God’s salvation and long-suffering. What does all this mean? In order to determine the meaning, we must note four points.

1. First, note where the spirits of unbelievers go when they leave this world. Scripture says that the place where unbelievers go is a *prison* (I Pet. 3:19), and the picture in the Greek is actually that of a prison. Just as men put rebellious people into prison, so God shall imprison those who rebel against Him. Scripture even pictures God having Satan bound with a chain and cast into the prison of the bottomless pit. It also pictures God having the angels who rebelled with Satan bound with the chains of darkness and cast into the prison of hell. The point is that hell, the place where unbelievers go after leaving this world, is pictured as a prison. Scripture uses four words or terms to describe the prison. Note how each word or term describes a different section or cell block or compartment to the prison of hell.
  - a. There is the cell block or compartment which is called *Hell* or what the Greeks called *Hades* and the Hebrews called *Sheol*. This is the place where unbelievers go when they die and enter into the next world. Hell is the torment section for the human race, the place where all unbelievers are placed and punished until the end of the world. At the end of the world, they are all taken out of hell and cast into the lake of fire (cp. Lk. 16:19-31. See *Hell Fire*, Mt. 5:22.)

**Mat 10:28** “Do not be afraid of those who kill the body but cannot kill the soul. Rather, be afraid of the One who can destroy both soul and body in hell.”

**Mat 23:33** “You snakes! You brood of vipers! How will you escape being condemned to hell?”
  - b. There is the cell block or compartment of *Tartarus*. This is the place where fallen angels are kept until the end of the world. At the end of the world they too shall be cast into the lake of fire. Note the description of Tartarus. It is a place...
    - of imprisonment where fallen angels are chained in gloomy dungeons (2 Pet. 2:4; Jude 6).
    - of darkness (Jude 6).
    - of punishment (Jude 7).
    - of eternal fire (Jude 7).

Note: some commentators interpret the “sons of God” of Genesis 6:1-4 as angels and say that they are the only angels imprisoned in Tartarus. In this view Tartarus is thought to be the worst of all hells because the sin of Gen. 6:1-4 is thought to be the worst imaginable sin. In this view some of the other angels are said to be imprisoned in the bottomless pit and still others are thought to be roaming throughout the universe working for Satan and oppressing men.

**2 Pet 2:4** *For if God did not spare angels when they sinned, but sent them to hell, putting them into gloomy dungeons to be held for judgment.*

**Jude 1:6-7** *And the angels who did not keep their positions of authority but abandoned their own home — these he has kept in darkness, bound with everlasting chains for judgment on the great Day. In a similar way, Sodom and Gomorrah and the surrounding towns gave themselves up to sexual immorality and perversion. They serve as an example of those who suffer the punishment of eternal fire.*

- c. There is the cell block or compartment called the *Abyss* or the *Bottomless Pit*. This is the place where demons and evil spirits are kept until the end of the world. As pointed out in the previous point, some commentators think that some angels are also imprisoned in the *Abyss*.

**Luke 8:31** *And they [evil spirits] begged him repeatedly not to order them to go into the Abyss.*

**Rev 9:1-3, 11** *The fifth angel sounded his trumpet, and I saw a star that had fallen from the sky to the earth. The star was given the key to the shaft of the Abyss. When he opened the Abyss, smoke rose from it like the smoke from a gigantic furnace. The sun and sky were darkened by the smoke from the Abyss. And out of the smoke locusts came down upon the earth and were given power like that of scorpions of the earth. They had as king over them the angel of the Abyss, whose name in Hebrew is Abaddon, and in Greek, Apollyon.*

**Rev 11:7** *Now when they have finished their testimony, the beast that comes up from the Abyss will attack them, and overpower and kill them.*

**Rev 17:8** *The beast [antichrist], which you saw, once was, now is not, and will come up out of the Abyss and go to his destruction. The inhabitants of the earth whose names have not been written in the book of life from the creation of the world will be astonished when they see the beast, because he once was, now is not, and yet will come.*

**Rev 20:1-2** *And I saw an angel coming down out of heaven, having the key to the Abyss and holding in his hand a great chain. He seized the dragon, that ancient serpent, who is the devil, or Satan, and bound him for a thousand years.*

- d. There is the cell block or compartment called *Gehenna* or the *Lake of Fire*. This is the place where all those who have rebelled against God are to be cast at the end of the world — all unbelieving men, fallen angels, demons and the devil. At the final judgment of unbelievers, the lake of fire is the *final hell* to which all the wicked shall be judged and condemned, and the judgment of Gehenna is said to be eternal.

**Mat 13:41-42** *“The Son of Man will send out his angels, and they will weed out of his kingdom everything that causes sin and all who do evil. They will throw them into the fiery furnace, where there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth.”*

**Mat 18:8** *“If your hand or your foot causes you to sin cut it off and throw it away. It is better for you to enter life maimed or crippled than to have two hands or two feet and be thrown into eternal fire.”*

**Rev 20:10** *And the devil, who deceived them, was thrown into the lake of burning sulphur, where the beast and the false prophet had been thrown. They will be tormented day and night for ever and ever.*

**Mat 25:41, 46** *“Then he will say to those on his left, ‘Depart from me, you who are cursed, into the eternal fire prepared for the devil and his angels.’ Then they will go away to eternal punishment, but the righteous to eternal life.”*

**Rev 20:11-15** *Then I saw a great white throne and him who was seated on it. Earth and sky fled from his presence, and there was no place for them. And I saw the dead, great and small, standing before the throne, and books were opened. Another book was opened, which is the book of life. The dead were judged according to what they had done as recorded in the books. The sea gave up the dead that were in it, and death and Hades gave up the dead that were in them, and each person was judged according to what he had done. Then death and Hades were thrown into the lake of fire. The lake of fire is the second death. If anyone’s name was not found written in the book of life, he was thrown into the lake of fire.*

**Rev 21:8** *“But the cowardly, the unbelieving, the vile, the murderers, the sexually immoral, those who practice magic arts, the idolaters and all liars — their place will be in the fiery lake of burning sulphur. This is the second death.”*

2. Second, note where believers go when they leave this world. Scripture says that the place where believers go is paradise or heaven, and after the end of the world they shall become the citizens of the new heavens and earth.
- a. There is paradise or heaven, the place of perfection and glory where God is perfectly glorified, worshipped and served. It should be noted that some scholars say that paradise is one compartment or place in God’s presence and that heaven

is another compartment or place. They say that paradise was the place where all believers went before Christ, but now, since Christ, believers are much more honoured and glorified. Believers are now taken to the compartment and place of heaven. (See *Paradise*, Lk. 16:23.) However, note this: the word paradise is found only three times in the New Testament.

**Luke 23:43** *Jesus answered him, "I tell you the truth, today you will be with me in paradise."*

**2 Cor 12:2-4** *I know a man in Christ who fourteen years ago was caught up to the third heaven. Whether it was in the body or out of the body I do not know — God knows. And I know that this man — whether in the body or apart from the body I do not know, but God knows — was caught up to paradise. He heard inexpressible things, things that man is not permitted to tell. (Note that Paul says that the third heaven is the same as paradise, v. 2, 4)*

**Rev 2:7** *"He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches. To him who overcomes, I will give the right to eat from the tree of life, which is in the paradise of God."*

Scripture is clear about where believers go since the death and resurrection of Christ: they go immediately to be with Christ. Genuine believers never taste or experience death. They are transferred into heaven, transferred quicker than the eye can blink.

**2 Cor 5:8** *We are confident, I say, and would prefer to be away from the body and at home with the Lord.*

**Phil 1:23** *I am torn between the two: I desire to depart and be with Christ, which is better by far.*

**1 Th 4:17** *After that, we who are still alive and are left will be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air. And so we will be with the Lord forever.*

- b. There is the *new heavens and earth*. The present heavens and earth are to be destroyed by fire and recreated. They are to be remade and created perfect without any seed of corruption whatsoever. The new heavens and earth are to be the eternal dwelling place for both Christ and believers.

**2 Pet 3:10-13** *But the day of the Lord will come like a thief. The heavens will disappear with a roar; the elements will be destroyed by fire, and the earth and everything in it will be laid bare. Since everything will be destroyed in this way, what kind of people ought you to be? You ought to live holy and godly lives as you look forward to the day of God and speed its coming. That day will bring*

*about the destruction of the heavens by fire, and the elements will melt in the heat. But in keeping with his promise we are looking forward to a new heaven and a new earth, the home of righteousness.*

**Rev 21:1-5** *Then I saw a new heaven and a new earth, for the first heaven and the first earth had passed away, and there was no longer any sea. I saw the Holy City, the new Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, prepared as a bride beautifully dressed for her husband. And I heard a loud voice from the throne saying, "Now the dwelling of God is with men, and he will live with them. They will be his people, and God himself will be with them and be their God. He will wipe every tear from their eyes. There will be no more death or mourning or crying or pain, for the old order of things has passed away." He who was seated on the throne said, "I am making everything new!" Then he said, "Write this down, for these words are trustworthy and true."*

**Isa 65:17** *"Behold, I will create new heavens and a new earth. The former things will not be remembered, nor will they come to mind."*

**Isa 66:22** *"As the new heavens and the new earth that I make will endure before me," declares the Lord, "so will your name and descendants endure."*

3. Third, note exactly what this verse says: "He [Christ] went and preached to the spirits in prison." What spirits? Who were the spirits to whom Christ went and preached? Note that the unbelievers of Noah's day are mentioned. But did Christ proclaim His triumph only to them? Not likely. He probably proclaimed His triumph to all those who had rebelled against God from the beginning of time.
  - a. He probably proclaimed His triumph to all the unbelievers in *hell*. He vindicated *the way of faith*, proclaimed that the faith of Noah and of all other believers was victorious. Remember that Noah's faith and life were never vindicated during his lifetime. He was mocked, abused, and rejected by the people of his day. Therefore, Christ Himself proclaimed the victory personally. The same shall be true in the end time. Scripture says that Christ shall vindicate the faith of His followers before all the enemies of God's people. The way of faith will triumph and Christ Himself will once again go before all men and proclaim the triumph of the way of faith. He shall be exalted as Lord, to the glory of God the Father (Ph. 2:9-11; See Eph. 4:8-10.)
  - b. He probably proclaimed His triumph to the fallen angels in *Tartarus*. All through history the fallen angels have rebelled against God and fought to keep the promised seed of the Saviour from coming to earth. They have done all they can to lead men to reject God. Jesus Christ was able to stand before them and proclaim that He was the promised seed, the Saviour of the world, and that the way of salvation was now provided for man.

If the angels in Tartarus are the “sons of God” mentioned in Gen. 6:1-4, then they were trying to destroy the human race and to prevent the promised seed, the Saviour, from ever coming. Christ would then be appearing before them to proclaim that their plan did not work and to vindicate the love and power of God to carry out His will. Christ was able to declare, “Here I am. God’s plan has triumphed; He has now fulfilled His promise of salvation through my death and resurrection. “

- c. He probably proclaimed His triumph to the demons and evil spirits in the *abyss*. He probably vindicated the faith of all believers who had been oppressed by the evil spirits down through the centuries.
  - d. If paradise is a separate place or compartment from heaven, then Christ probably showed Himself to the Old Testament saints in paradise, proclaiming the fulfilment of their salvation. It should also be noted that some interpreters hold that He opened the door to paradise and took the Old Testament saints to heaven with Him when He arose from the dead. Remember: some of the Old Testament believers were raised and appeared to many in Jerusalem when Christ arose (Mt. 27:52-53). This would have been to confirm and strengthen the faith of the early believers — to make them stronger witnesses for the Lord. By seeing their loved ones raised from the dead, they would know beyond any question that Jesus is who He claimed: the Son of God, the Saviour of the world.
4. Fourth, note a significant question: if the fallen angels and demons are in the prison of hell, how then can they attack and oppress man? There are at least two possible answers.
- a. All fallen angels and demons are not in the prison of hell and its various compartments. Some are still able to roam about the universe and have access to oppress and influence men. However, if this is true, why are some imprisoned by God and some are not? Since they are all guilty of rebellion against God, it seems unlikely that God would imprison some and not others.
  - b. The prison of hell is another dimension of being, a spiritual world or dimension of corruption and suffering. It is a world of so much corruption and punishment that it can be called the prison of hell. An example would be the prison of corruption and suffering that man experiences. All men, including believers even after they are saved, are imprisoned and enslaved to corruption and suffering. Perhaps angels and evil spirits live in a sphere, dimension, compartment or section of the spiritual world that is totally corrupt and involves the torment of judgment and punishment. If hell is another dimension of being, a spiritual world of corruption and suffering, then this would explain the influence of angels and demons on this world. The spiritual world definitely has access to the physical

world. Therefore, fallen angels and demons, who are spiritual beings, are able to influence and oppress men so long as men are in the physical world. The spiritual world is a spiritual dimension of being just as the physical world is a material dimension of being. The spiritual world or dimension is much greater in power; therefore, it has access to the physical dimension or world.

Another way to say the same thing is this. Within the spiritual world there are good spirits and bad spirits. Therefore, the spiritual world has a good section or compartment called heaven and a bad section or compartment called hell. Hell, which can be called a prison, has several sections or compartments. As just stated above, the spiritual world or dimension has greater power and has access to the physical world. This would explain why Satan and the fallen angels and the demons of the other world have access to influence and oppress men. This would also fit what we scientifically know today about the possibility of other dimensions of being. □