

22T01a Tough Questions? – 1 Peter 3v19

Hello my friends. Thanks for joining me today for an @ the PUNLA coffee table.

Even if you have been a Christian for a long time, there are some things in the bible and in the traditions of the modern church that are tough to understand. I find many of these downright confusing. Some of these have troubled me for years.

We want to ask those “tough questions” and then do the research to see if we can find or develop a better understanding for these “tough questions”.

Today, I want to talk about one of the bible scriptures that makes most of us scratch our heads. 1 Peter 3:19. If you don't know this scripture it appears Peter is telling us that Jesus preached to the people from the days of Noah. Let's read it. *“¹⁹So He went and preached to the spirits in prison— ²⁰those who disobeyed God long ago when God waited patiently while Noah was building his boat. Only eight people were saved from drowning in that terrible flood. (1 Peter 3:19-20 NLT)*

Let's pray. Heavenly Father please guide our discussion today. Help me to stay out of the way, so you can use me. We trust you and we know you have promised the wisdom we need to understand your word in the Bible. Help us to let the Holy Spirit lead us and guide us. Bless our time together and I pray all these things in your name Lord Jesus. Amen.

So, typically when I bible study this verse, we skate by it by saying there are just things in the bible we don't understand. And that is true. No one really understands this completely. But I do think we can consider some explanations that may help us to be less confused by this.

First, Noah and the time of Noah is mentioned three times in the new testament. Here in 1 Peter 3:19 and also in 2 Peter 2:5 and Hebrews 11:7. The time of Noah was a time of extreme human depravity, so much so God destroyed all living things on land except for those on a boat built by Noah, 9 human souls and lots of animals. The other times Noah is mentioned in the new testament it is an example of the judgement of God for the wicked, like Sodom and Gamora, like the days of Noah. These are examples of the fact God is going to Judge and punish the wicked.

So, what do people say about 1 Peter 3:19. Well, there are a lot of theories. Some say Jesus went to hades between His death on the cross and resurrection, and while he was in hades, he preached the gospel to the people from the time of Noah. Others say, Jesus went to hades later maybe after his ascension. And there are many variations on this. But all say Jesus preached the gospel to people who were dead in hades or hell or prison. Our Catholic brothers and sisters, think Jesus went to purgatory.

All of this is wild conjecture. But why would Jesus preach the gospel to one specific group after they died.? Some use this scripture to justify their belief that you can still be

saved after death. Catholic believe you can be saved from purgatory. Others say, this is evidence that are fate is not sealed at death. To be clear this scripture does not say any of this. This scripture does not speak about the outcome of this preaching or does it. The scriptures do not speak about purgatory or second chances after death. The Bible says in Hebrews, *And just as each person is destined to die once and after that comes judgment, (Hebrews 9:27 NLT)*

Now please read all of chapter 9 of Hebrews to understand the context of this but the author is explaining that Jesus died once as a sacrifice to take away the sins of many. And then this verse. Each person dies once then face judgement, which does not sound like a second chance after death, not even those from the days of Noah.

Okay, if we can agree for the moment that the author of Hebrews is telling us, what we do in this life matters and we need to get it right before we die. Then what?. What do we do with 1 Peter 3:19. Seems like a conundrum? But is it really? Let's look at the text closely again with a little more context starting in verse 17. *¹⁷Remember, it is better to suffer for doing good, if that is what God wants, than to suffer for doing wrong!* *¹⁸Christ suffered for our sins once for all time. He never sinned, but he died for sinners to bring you safely home to God. He suffered physical death, but he was raised to life in the Spirit. ¹⁹So he went and preached to the spirits in prison— ²⁰those who disobeyed God long ago when God waited patiently while Noah was building his boat. Only eight people were saved from drowning in that terrible flood. ²¹And that water is a picture of baptism, which now saves you, not by removing dirt from your body, but as a response to God from a clean conscience. It is effective because of the resurrection of Jesus Christ. “(1 Peter 3:17-21 NLT)*

So, look carefully at end of verse 18 along with verses 19 & 20. He, that is Christ, was raised to life in the Spirit... in the Spirit. Then Peter continues, So he went and preached to the spirits in prison or in hell. Some translations say in which or also. the Greek seems to infer something more like “in the same way” or “also in such manner.”

I read a theory on this which was the first to make sense to me. This author stated that this text might mean that Jesus preached to the people of Noah's day in the Spirit. In the Spirit may refer to the Holy Spirit. This author connects the dots and says when the Holy Spirit comes upon a prophet and that prophet tells the people what God is saying. So, it is very possible that what Peter was saying is that Noah preached with the Spirit to the people of his day. This is a possible way how the Jesus or God in the Spirit could have preached to those from the days of Noah whose spirits are now in prison in Hades.

Let's look at a few English translations of verse 19.

- By which also he went and preached unto the spirits in prison; (KJV)
- by whom also He went and preached to the spirits in prison, (NKJV)
- in which He also went and made proclamation to the spirits in prison, (NASB)
- in which He also went and preached to the spirits now in prison, (AMP)

So, let's read it one more time with this thought in mind and see if it could be a plausible explanation using the Amplified Bible. ¹⁸For indeed Christ died for sins once for all, the Just and Righteous for the unjust and unrighteous [the Innocent for the guilty] so that He might bring us to God, having been put to death in the flesh, but made alive in the Spirit; ¹⁹in which He also went and preached to the spirits now in prison, ²⁰who once were disobedient, when the great patience of God was waiting in the days of Noah, during the building of the ark, in which a few, that is, eight persons [Noah's family], were brought safely through the water. “ (1 Peter 3:18-21 AMP)

I'll leave it up to you. But I personally, think this is the best explanation I've ever heard. Of course, that does make it right or true. I have seen many others that hold this perspective as I researched this. But if you are not convinced, it's okay. Reality is we don't need to completely understand every verse in the bible. Not understanding this, does not in any way affect how we follow Jesus.

Father God, thank you for giving us the resources and sources to answer these tough questions. we know you know all things. Guide our process and give us the wisdom we need to understand what you want us to know and be stratified not to know the things you choose not to explain. Thank you for giving us the Holy Spirit to guide us and help us. Help us to open the Bible and ask our questions, so you can reveal what you want us to know. I pray these things in your name Lord Jesus, Amen

Thank you for joining me @ the PUNLA Coffee Table today, I hope you'll join us for the rest of the series about the "Tough Questions" that we struggle with as Christians.

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See you next time @ the PUNLA Coffee Table. God bless.