

## Tartarus By Arlen Chitwood<sup>1</sup>

### CHRIST'S PROCLAMATION

**“Because Christ also suffered for sins once, 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;**

**In which also he went and preached [delivered a proclamation] unto the spirits in prison, that aforetime were disobedient, when the longsuffering of God waited in the days of Noah, while the ark was a preparing, wherein few,**

**That is, eight souls, were saved through water” (I Peter 3:18-20, ASV).**

The “spirits” in this passage are said to have sinned during days preceding the Flood. For this reason not only are they imprisoned but Christ also appeared in their presence at a time following their imprisonment and delivered a proclamation. The *time* and *purpose* of this proclamation center around the *reason* for their sin, and the passage must be interpreted with this in mind.

These imprisoned spirits cannot be identified as descendants of Adam. The dead from the lineage of Adam are never referred to as being in prison; nor are individuals from the human race, living or dead, ever called “spirits.” Man has a *spirit*, but he himself is never called a “spirit.” Scripture speaks of the “spirits of just men” (Heb. 12:23) and refers to Christ, *following His resurrection*, as a “quickening spirit” (referring to His position as Life-Giver in His resurrection body [*a spiritual body* — I Cor. 15:44, 45 — a body of *flesh* and *bones*, the same body which had been placed in the tomb, but now possessing the Spirit rather than the blood as the life-giving, animating principle of the body]). But the descendants of Adam cannot be referred to by the use of the word “spirit” in this sense, for they have not received such bodies, with the possible exception of Enoch, Moses, and Elijah.

Among God’s created beings, only *angels* are called “spirits” in the Word of God:

**“Who maketh his angels *spirits*, and his ministers a flame of fire. Are they [angels] not all ministering *spirits*, sent forth to minister for them who shall be heirs of salvation?” (Heb. 1:7b, 14).**

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<sup>1</sup> This article was taken from Arlen Chitwood’s book Jude. You can find this book, as well as many others, on his website, [www.lampbroadcast.org](http://www.lampbroadcast.org).

The “spirits” in I Peter 3:19 can only be identified as the *angels* who sinned by taking upon themselves the form of man, leaving their positions of power in the heavens, and cohabiting with women in the human race during days preceding the Flood. The prison in this passage is *Tartarus*; and according to both II Peter 2:4 and Jude 6, these angels are not only confined in this prison but they are chained, awaiting judgment.

The word for “preach” in I Peter 3:19 is *kerusso* in the Greek text, which means, to “make an announcement.” The word itself gives no indication concerning either the type announcement or the content of the message. These things must be determined from the context or other related Scripture. *Kerusso* appears numerous times throughout the New Testament and is almost always used in connection with proclaiming some facet of the gospel message. In these passages, either the Greek word *euaggelion* (“gospel,” “good news”) or other related qualifying words appear with *kerusso* to make this connection (e.g. Matt. 4:23; I Cor. 1:23). However, there is nothing in I Peter 3:18-20 which would even remotely connect *kerusso* with the gospel message. In fact, the word *could not* refer to the proclamation of the gospel. The message in this passage is directed to “spirits [angels],” and the gospel is for the descendants of Adam, not angels. *Kerusso* is used in I Peter 3:19 in the same sense that it is used in Rev. 5:2 – a proclamation concerning *something other* than the gospel.

The *time* of this proclamation did not occur, as many infer, between Christ’s death and resurrection while He was in *Hades*; nor, as others infer, did this proclamation have anything to do with the strange interpretation which is termed “the preaching of Christ [by the Holy Spirit] through Noah” during days preceding the Flood. I Peter 3:18, 19 clearly reveals that Christ delivered this proclamation Himself, *following His resurrection*.

In verse eighteen, Christ was “put to death in the flesh, but made alive in the Spirit.” At the time of His death, Christ possessed a “soulical [*psuchikos*]” body of flesh, blood, and bones. The life-giving, animating principle of this body was the blood (Lev. 17:11). But at the time of His resurrection Christ possessed a “spiritual [*pneumatikos*]” body of flesh and bones, without blood. The life-giving, animating principle of this body was the Spirit of God. The body which Jesus possessed following His resurrection was the same body He possessed before His death. The words “soulical” and “spiritual,” in the preceding respect, have to do with the life-giving, animating principle of the body (cf. I Cor. 15:44-50).

The thought in verse eighteen is continued in verse nineteen by the statement, “In which also he went and preached [delivered a proclamation] unto the spirits in prison.” In verse eighteen, Christ was put to death in a soulical body and then raised in a spiritual body. Then, in verse nineteen, Christ went to *Tartarus* and delivered a proclamation to the angels who were responsible for the judgment of the Flood.

The word, “which” (v. 19), is a translation of the Greek relative pronoun, “*ho*.” A rule of Greek grammar states that the relative pronoun must agree with its antecedent in both gender and number. “*Ho*” is a singular case form of the word which can be either masculine or neuter (both case forms in this instance are the same in the Greek text, but the feminine is different).

The wording in verse eighteen, in the English text, would seem to allow for two possible antecedents to be considered: “flesh,” and “Spirit.” However, in the Greek text, “flesh” is a feminine word and thus cannot be the antecedent. “Spirit,” on the other hand, is a neuter word. Consequently, the antecedent of “which” can only be “Spirit” (a neuter relative pronoun agreeing with its neuter antecedent).

With this in mind, note what is in view insofar as the time and manner of the proclamation are concerned. In verse eighteen, Christ was “made alive in the Spirit.” Jesus possessed a resurrection body animated by the Spirit. Then verse nineteen states, “In which also he went and preached [delivered a proclamation] unto the spirits in prison.” The relative pronoun, “which,” with its antecedent “Spirit,” can only refer to His resurrection body. Jesus, *IN* His resurrection body, went to *Tartarus* for the specific purpose of making an announcement to a select group of imprisoned angels.

These angels imprisoned in *Tartarus* had sought, under Satan, to corrupt the lineages of all the families of the earth in order to prevent the appearance of man's Redeemer. But now, the very One Whose appearance they had sought to prevent stood in their presence. Not only this, but He stood there in His *resurrection body* with His work of redemption *completed*. He had met Satan face to face in the wilderness, showing that He was fully qualified to redeem that which Adam forfeited in the fall. He then paid redemption's price at Golgotha, His Own shed blood. Man's redemption was now not only an accomplished fact, but redeemed man could ultimately realize the purpose for his creation in the beginning.

The only proclamation which Christ could have delivered to the imprisoned angels in *Tartarus* would have had to center around the fact that what they had attempted to do preceding the Flood was for naught. The resurrected Christ stood in their presence; and not only would He, as the Last Adam, one day take the kingdom, but the angels in *Tartarus* could now look forward to only one thing: *remaining chained, awaiting judgment*.

Satan and the angels continuing to reign with him could, likewise, now look forward to only one thing: biding their time, awaiting the day Christ takes the kingdom, followed ultimately by their consignment to the *lake of fire* "prepared for the devil and his angels."

