

**Schedule of Meeting Times:**

WKAC 1080 AM Sunday 7:30 AM  
Study Sunday 10:00 AM  
Worship Sunday Morn 11:00 AM  
Worship Sunday Eve 5:00 PM  
*Singing every 2<sup>nd</sup> Sunday evening*  
Study Wednesday 7:00 PM

**Preacher / bulletin editor:**

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**"...the prophets who prophesied of the grace that would come to you **made careful searches** and inquiries, **seeking to know what person or time the Spirit of Christ within them was indicating as He predicted the sufferings of Christ and the glories to follow,"****

—1 Peter 1:10,11



# The Bible . Examiner

*"Examine everything carefully..." 1 Thessalonians 5:21 NASB*

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# THE SPIRITS IN PRISON

*By Marshall E. Patton / Robert F. Turner*

**Servants during January:**

**Songleader:** Dwight (4), Stanley (11), Larry (18), Dwight (25)

**Reading:** Mike

**Announcements:** Stanley

**Table:** Larry, Marty, Mike

**Wednesday Lesson:** Larry (7), Stanley (14), Kris (21), Larry (28)

**Area Meetings:**

**Eastside,** 2/15-17, Scott Smelser;

**Oakland,** 2/21-25, Stephen Rouse;

**Pepper Road,** 2/21-25, Jesse Flowers;

**Hays Mill church of Christ**

21705 Hays Mill Road

Elkmont, AL 35620

*Marshall Patton and Robert Turner wrote for different periodicals, but both were asked regarding "the spirits in prison," from 1 Peter 3:18-20. The following are their answers.*

*These questions were asked of Marshall Patton in the June 1967 edition of "Searching the Scriptures": "How does one show that 1 Peter 3:18-20 offers no support to the Catholic doctrine of purgatory? Who were the spirits in prison? Where and when were they preached to?"*

The verses in question read as follows: "For Christ also hath once suffered for sins, the just for the unjust, that he might bring us to God, being put to death in the

flesh, but quickened by the Spirit: By which also he went and preached unto the spirits in prison; Which sometime were disobedient, when once the longsuffering of God waited in the days of Noah, while the ark was a preparing, wherein few, that is, eight souls were saved by water."

In answering the above questions I would like to reverse the order somewhat and take the last first and the first last.

The answer to the first question can best be understood and appreciated by following this order.

The identity of the spirits in prison may be established from verse twenty: "Which sometime were disobedient [The ASV says 'that aforetime were disobedient'], when once the longsuffering of God waited in the days of Noah." They were the wicked antediluvians. There is no way to make the language include anyone else. The word "prison" simply identifies the abode of these spirits at the time Peter wrote the epistle, namely, Hades or the realm of departed spirits. The abode of wicked spirits after their departure and before the judgment is often pictured under the figure of a prison, 2 Pet 2:4; Jude 6.

The question of where the preaching was done is perhaps the most difficult of all. It can hardly be answered with certainty until it is determined when the preaching is done. Each depends upon the other and each throws light upon the other. Whatever answer is given must harmonize with all else revealed in the word of the Lord. Negatively, it should be observed that nothing in the text demands the conclusion that the preaching was done while the spirits were in prison. In fact, the fair import of the language would cause one to conclude that the preaching was done "in the days of Noah, while the ark was a preparing." Peter

simply speaks of them as they were when he wrote (spirits in Hades) and not as they were when the preaching was done (disobedient people in the days of Noah). Remember, the Spirit of Christ was in the prophets of old testifying beforehand the sufferings of Christ, and the glory that should follow," 1 Pet 1:11. Noah was a preacher of righteousness, 2 Pet 2:5, and through him Christ preached to the wicked before the flood.

It is thought by some that Christ went and preached to spirits in Hades (the realm of departed spirits) while his body was in the tomb. Based upon this concept follows the Catholic doctrine of purgatory. That this view is in error is evident from the following:

(1) There is nothing in the text or elsewhere which affords proof of this position. It is a mere assumption.

(2) The spirits preached to were disobedient in the days of Noah. Why, then, would Jesus preach only to this limited number while in this realm of departed and disobedient spirits? Why not preach to all of them? Would not this make Him a respecter of persons? Yet, the Bible plainly says that He is not, Acts 10:34.

(3) The view that Christ preached to such with a view to saving them contradicts all those passages that teach that at death our destiny is sealed. Judgment, remember, is based upon the deeds done in the body, 2 Cor. 5:10.

(4) Furthermore, this view contradicts the lesson taught by Jesus in Luke 16:19-31. There is a great gulf between the righteous and the wicked in Hades over which none can cross—they are eternally separated. Nothing done after death can change the eternal destiny of man, Heb 9:27. The doctrine of purgatory is wholly without scriptural foundation.

*In his April 1969 edition of "Plain Talk," Robert Turner was asked, "To what does 1 Peter 3:18-20 refer?"*

It was by the power of the divine Spirit that Jesus offered Himself upon the cross, Heb 9:14, and was resurrected, 1 Pet 3:18.

The spirit of Christ was in the Prophets of old, as they proclaimed divine truth, 1 Pet 1:10,11—even in Noah, a preacher of righteousness, 2 Pet 2:5—as he pled with the people of his day to turn to God.

The context of the passage under study is that of urging Christians to be faithful, even in the face of persecution, 1 Pet 3:12,14,16; 4:1ff. It seems v18ff says that Christ, in Spirit, tried to get the people of Noah's time to accept truth and be saved (from the destruction pending); and that today He has died for us. But, as then, only those who did His bidding were saved, so today, we must endure persecution, "arm yourselves likewise with the same mind" of Jesus Christ, in order to be saved. "Spirits in prison" may have been those in bondage to sin in Noah's day or the same, now in prison, lost, because they did not heed Noah's preaching. 

## *Remember in Prayer*

Please continue to pray for **Betty; Carolyn; Deborah and Serenity; Hazel; John, Sylvia, and Paige Pollard; Joshua and Kayla V; Pam B, Kaylee, Julie and Violet; and Pam McNatt.** Remember also our national, state, and local leaders; and brethren

throughout the US and world suffering persecution or otherwise: such as those in Russia, Ukraine, Israel, Zimbabwe, Nigeria, Iran, Afghanistan, Venezuela, China, and Cuba. 