

was the gospel preached also to them that are dead, that they might be judged according to men in the flesh, but live according to God in the spirit."

There are at least five interpretations of these passages. Let me list them for you.

- (1) Christ went to Hades to preach the gospel to the pious dead of the Old Testament.
- (2) Christ went to Hades to preach the gospel to those who perished in the Flood, who had had little or no opportunity to hear or believe it.
- (3) Christ went to Hades to declare the just condemnation of those who were disobedient to the external call of the gospel, not only in the period immediately preceding the Flood, but during the ages from Adam to Christ.
- (4) Christ went to Hades to preach the gospel to all men who had previously died, having only the revelation of Nature, as well as those who through ignorance or stubborn prejudice had refused the revelation of Grace.
- (5) Christ did not preach in Hades, but rather preached by the Holy Spirit through Noah to the unsaved people who were disobedient to the gospel in the time immediately preceding the Flood, and who are now in prison.

I would highly recommend the fifth interpretation. It has the fewest problems, both exegetically and theologically, does not keep the Old Testament saints waiting for salvation for an interminable period, proposes no wholesale or retail condemnations, and affords no "second chances" to those who didn't accept the gospel the first time around.

Now with an alternate explanation of these Scriptures which are used to support the view, there is no further need to feel that we must hold it as an article of faith. But we must say more.

This view of the descent into Hades arises out of two movements of thought. First, the idea that during the Old Testament period Sheol or Hades consisted of two compartments, one of them a Paradise of bliss and