

The proclamation of liberty to the captives, and the opening of the prison to those who are bound could surely apply to the marvelous deliverance from the guilt, penalty, bondage, and eventual presence of sin which every child of God experiences, rather than to the opening of the gates of ᾗδης, to let out the Old Testament saints.

I Peter 3:11-20 -- "For Christ also died for sins once for all, the just for the unjust, in order that He might bring us to God, having been put to death in the flesh, but made alive in the spirit; in which also He went and made proclamation to the spirits now in prison, who once were disobedient, when the patience of God kept waiting in the days of Noah, during the construction of the ark, in which a few, that is, eight persons, were brought safely through the water."

Usually quoted together with this passage is I Peter 4:6 -- "For the gospel has for this purpose been preached even to those who are dead, that though they are judged in the flesh as men, they live in the spirit according to the will of God."

Several interpretations of these passages have been suggested:

- (1) Christ went to HADES to preach the gospel to the disembodied saints in the Paradise compartment,
- (2) Christ went to HADES to preach the gospel to the disembodied sinners in the Hell compartment (thereby giving them a second chance)
- (3) Christ went to HADES to preach the gospel to the disembodied sinners in the Hell compartment who never had a first chance
- (4) Christ went to HADES to announce the condemnation of the disembodied sinners in the Hell compartment

However, at best the interpretation would appear to be that Christ did not go to ᾗδης at all ("Thou wilt not abandon my soul to ᾗδης ") but rather that He preached by the Spirit through Noah ("a preacher of righteousness") the gospel of salvation to the unsaved people who were disobedient to the gospel in the time immediately preceding the Flood, those very people who are now in prison (the prison of ᾗδης).

Incidentally, the *New Scofield Reference Bible*, in a footnote on I Peter 3:19, makes the following statement: "The theory that the Lord Jesus, after His crucifixion, preached to the unsaved dead in hades and gave them a second chance is not found in Scripture." Since I Peter 3 speaks of preaching to disobedient persons preceding the Flood, and since I Peter 4 speaks of the preaching of the gospel, this statement is significant, referring as it does to the unsaved dead.

I Peter 3 would therefore best be understood to teach that Christ preached the gospel through Noah to Noah's contemporaries, who rejected Noah's preaching and are now in the prison of ᾗδης. I Peter 4 would best be understood to teach that the gospel was preached in time past to those who have since died, in order that their flesh (sinful nature) might be judged and condemned, and that their spirit might be made alive. Thus I Peter 4 says nothing about ᾗδης.

One strand of development of the descent into hades view is that of a particular understanding of the abovementioned Scriptures; the other strand is