

1. What took place after Jesus was placed in the tomb - were there some things that He had to complete?
2. What all took place between His resurrection and ascension? Also, what occurred at His ascension? (Ephesians 4:8-10 and 1 Peter 3:18-22)
3. We will begin with the first question since it is by far the more difficult to answer.
4. 1 Peter 3:18-22 will be our starting point. It is one of the most problematic passages of Scripture in the NT as a whole. It is very difficult to find any agreement on its precise meaning.
5. The question of what happened between His death and resurrection is not easy to answer, and many Bible scholars have written a considerable amount of material dealing with this passage and the subject matter. (*The Pulpit Commentary - two dozen authors - conflicting positions*)
6. Peter begins with the suffering of Christ and the fact that it was redemptive.
7. Christ would take our place. All of our guilt, sin, suffering, and shame would be transferred to Him.
8. All of His holiness, righteousness, goodness, and acceptance would be transferred to us. He would die so that we might live.
9. Many questions arise as to the identity of the spirits in verse 19, the place of and reason for their imprisonment, the direction of Christ's journey (did He ascend or descend) and the time it occurred, and the content of His proclamation:
 - A. When did Jesus go and preach to the imprisoned spirits? (3 different positions)
 1. Sometime before the incarnation (birth), that is, it was the pre-existent Christ who did the preaching.
 2. Between his death and resurrection.
 3. During or after his ascension.
10. Number 1: we do know that the pre-existent Christ is mentioned more than once in the New Testament. (for example, John 1:1; Philippians 2:6, 7)
11. However, it seems to be out of place to the passage - which appears to begin with the suffering of Jesus Christ - not with the incarnation.
12. Number 2: it appears to be in somewhat of a logical sequence, since Christ's death is mentioned in verse 18, His resurrection in verse 21, and His ascension in verse 22.
13. Furthermore, there are other references in the New Testament which support the idea that Jesus did something between his death and resurrection. (Acts 2:25, 13:35; Romans 10:7; Matthew 12:40)

14. Number 3: His ascension was to the right hand of the Father. His work was completed at this point.
15. Next - so who are these imprisoned spirits?
- A. The description of these spirits is found in verse 20 - as those who had not obeyed God ... *during the days that Noah was building the ark.*
 - B. The people during Noah's time, that is, all the people who perished during the flood. Many have interpreted the text to refer to Christ's preaching through Noah to those who lived while Noah was building the ark. According to this view, Christ was not personally present but spoke by means of the Holy Spirit through Noah. The spirits are not literally in prison but refer to those who were snared in sin during Noah's day.
 - C. Old Testament saints who died and were liberated by Christ between his death and resurrection.
 - D. Christ in the interval between his death and resurrection descended to hell and preached to the sinful human beings who perished during Noah's flood - offering them the opportunity to repent and be saved. Most of those who adopt such an interpretation infer from this that God will offer a second chance to all those in hell, especially to those who never heard the gospel. If salvation was offered to the wicked generation of Noah, surely it will also be extended to all sinners separated from God.
 - E. Angelic beings in general. Linguistically, this can be supported by the use of "spirits" for supernatural beings (for example, "evil spirits," as used in the Gospels). But arguing against it is the reference to the time of Noah.
16. The incarcerated spirits that Peter refers to here seems to be the same ones he mentions in a similar context in his second letter. (2 Peter 2:4-5)
17. What did Jesus preach?
18. Christ did not visit these spirits with an evangelistic message but with a triumphant proclamation.