



DID THE DEAD, BEFORE MESSIAH (CHRIST), GO TO SPIRIT PRISON?

By George Lujack

Yeshua (Jesus) did not go to hell and visit with souls in spirit prison. The dead know nothing. There is no consciousness in death, nor is there a spirit prison for the dead. All who have ever died are awaiting the resurrection of the dead. The dead did not formerly go to spirit prison, before Yeshua's (Jesus') resurrection, and now go straight to heaven or hell. This belief is based on a few misunderstood verses from the first book of Peter.

1 PETER 3:18-20 (NKJV):

For Messiah (Christ) also suffered once for sins, the just for the unjust, that He might bring us to God, being put to death in the flesh but made alive by the Spirit, by whom also He went and preached to the spirits in prison, who formerly were disobedient, when once the Divine longsuffering waited in the days of Noah, while the ark was being prepared, in which a few, that is, eight souls, were saved through water.

How should we interpret the meaning of 1 Peter 3:18-20? These verses must be read in the context of other related Scripture verses.

ACTS 26:23 (NKJV):

The Messiah (Christ) would suffer, that He would be *the first to rise from the dead*, and would proclaim light to the Jewish people and to the Gentiles.

Yeshua (Jesus) was the first to rise from the grave (to eternal life). If one believes that ever since Adam, people rose from the grave and were sent to spirit prison, this is a faulty understanding according to Acts 26:23, along with many other corresponding Scripture verses that declare that the dead are unconscious, unaware of the passage of time, and know nothing (Ecclesiastes 9:5; Psalm 115:17). If the dead went to a spirit prison, they would be aware and would know that they were in some kind of spirit prison. Yeshua Messiah (Jesus Christ) was the first to rise from the dead to eternal life. Adam, Noah, and all the Old Testament patriarchs before Messiah (Christ) therefore could not have been risen from death to be sent to spirit prison.

What then of 1 Peter 3:18-20? Who did Yeshua (Jesus) visit and how? Spirits in prison refer to *living spirits* (human beings) in actual prisons. When God made Adam, he was made a living spirit (or soul - Genesis 2:7). While we may tend to think the word 'spirit' does not pertain to living beings, Scripture often uses the word 'spirit' in this manner.

GENESIS 2:7 (KJV):

YHWH (the Lord) God formed man of the dust of the ground, and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life; and man became a living soul.

Yeshua (Jesus), as the Messiah, preached to spirits (human souls) metaphorically in prison, that is, sinners in bondage to sin, to declare the truth and set them free.

JOHN 8:31-36 (NKJV):

Then Yeshua (Jesus) said to those Jews who believed Him, “If you abide in My word, you are My disciples indeed. And you shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free.”

They answered Him, “We are Abraham’s descendants, and have never been in bondage to anyone. How can You say, ‘You will be made free’?”

Yeshua (Jesus) answered them, “Most assuredly, I say to you, whoever commits sin is a slave of sin. And a slave does not abide in the house forever, but a son abides forever. Therefore if the Son makes you free, you shall be free indeed.”

MATTHEW 9:12-13; MARK 2:17; LUKE 5:31-32 (NKJV):

Yeshua (Jesus) said to them, “Those who are well have no need of a physician, but those who are sick. I have not come to call the righteous, but sinners, to repentance.”

THE GRAVE IS A PRISON THAT HOLDS THE DEAD CAPTIVE

ISAIAH 61:1 (NKJV):

“The Spirit of YHWH (the Lord) God is upon Me, because YHWH (the Lord) has anointed Me to preach good tidings to the poor; He has sent Me to heal the brokenhearted, to proclaim liberty to the captives, and the opening of the prison to those who are bound; ...”

LUKE 4:18 (NKJV):

“The Spirit of the Lord is upon Me, because He has anointed Me to preach the gospel to the poor; He has sent Me to heal the brokenhearted, to proclaim liberty to the captives and recovery of sight to the blind, to set at liberty those who are oppressed;”

Yeshua (Jesus) did not come to open detention prisons of the world to set convicted criminals free. People still languish and die in prisons to this day. Yeshua (Jesus) conquered death and in doing so liberated people from the bondage of sin and made way to open the prison grave for the captive saints bound in it.

MATTHEW 27:51-53 (TLV):

And behold, the curtain of the Temple was split in two, from top to bottom. And the earth quaked and rocks were split apart. And the tombs were opened, and many bodies of the saints who were sleeping were raised to life. And coming forth out of the tombs *after His resurrection*, they went into the holy city and appeared to many.

Not much is known about the saints who were resurrected after Yeshua’s (Jesus’) resurrection when their tombs were opened, that is who and how many they were, but presumably, Yeshua (Jesus) preached to these saints upon their resurrection and instructed them to enter Jerusalem to appear and testify to many persons there. It can be surmised that their testimony was, in sum and substance, that Messiah (Christ) is risen and has made way for the captives of the grave to be set free.

JOHN 5:25-29 (NKJV):

“Most assuredly, I say to you, the hour is coming, and now is, when the dead will hear the voice of the Son of God; and those who hear will live. For as the Father has life in Himself, so He has granted the Son to have life in Himself, and has given Him authority to execute judgment also, because He is the Son of Man. Do not marvel at this; for the hour is coming in which all who are in the graves will hear His voice and come forth—those who have done good, to the resurrection of life, and those who have done evil, to the resurrection of condemnation.”

The grave, figuratively speaking, is likened to a prison in which all who have ever died are held captive (Psalm 49:15). Yeshua (Jesus) will release the captives of the grave: the righteous to everlasting life and the wicked to everlasting condemnation.

Yeshua (Jesus) also visited spirits, that is living saints, being held in Roman prisons. Yeshua (Jesus) sent an angel to free Peter after King Herod had seized Peter and put him in prison (Acts 12:1-17). Yeshua’s (Jesus’) Spirit freed Paul and Silas while they were being held and beaten in a Roman prison (Acts 16:16-40).

ACTS 9:3-5 (NKJV):

As he journeyed he came near Damascus, and suddenly a light shone around him from heaven. Then he fell to the ground, and heard a voice saying to him, “Saul, Saul, why are you persecuting Me?” And he said, “Who are You, Lord?” Then the Lord said, “I am Yeshua (Jesus), whom you are persecuting...”

Yeshua, through His Spirit, visited Paul and blinded him on the road to Damascus. Paul, before being blinded on the road to Damascus and becoming an apostle, was certainly a spirit who was formerly disobedient.

Scripture declares that when we die, we remain in a state of death until the resurrection. We don’t go to spirit prison, purgatory, heaven, or hell upon death. To believe otherwise is to believe the oldest lie of Satan with a twist... that we don’t really die when we die, *because our spirit lives on* (Genesis 3:1-5). Eve was deceived by Satan, believed the lie that she would not die, and committed the original sin.

When 1 Peter 3:18-20 is read with a proper precept-upon-precept understanding, it should be interpreted in the following manner:

1 PETER 3:18-20 (NKJV) [WITH INTERPRETATION]:

For Messiah (Christ) also suffered once for sins [ON THE CROSS], the just for the unjust, that He might bring us to God, being put to death in the flesh but made alive by the Spirit [MADE ALIVE BY GOD THE FATHER THROUGH THE HOLY SPIRIT], by whom [BY HIS SPIRIT] also He went and preached to the spirits in prison [TO SAINTS IN ROMAN PRISONS], who formerly were disobedient [BUT BECAME OBEDIENT AND RIGHTEOUS], when once the Divine longsuffering waited in the days of Noah while the ark was being prepared, in which a few, that is, eight souls, were saved through water [WHEN ONCE YESHUA (JESUS) THE DIVINE WAITED IN LONGSUFFERING, SINCE THE DAYS OF NOAH, FOR THE TIME THAT HE WOULD COME AS THE MESSIAH TO SAVE HUMANITY AS AN ATONEMENT SACRIFICE FOR MAN'S SINS AND BRING US TO GOD THE FATHER, AS HE ONCE SAVED EIGHT LIVING SPIRITS ON NOAH'S ARK FROM THE FLOOD WATERS].