

## “Lower Thirds” Material

1 Peter 3:18-22

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**1 Peter 3:18, 21b-22** *For Christ also suffered once for sins, the righteous for the unrighteous, that he might bring us to God, being put to death in the flesh but made alive in the Spirit...through the resurrection of Jesus Christ, who has gone into the heaven and is at the right hand of God, with angel, authorities, and power having been subjected to him.*

**vv. 19-21a** - one of the most obscure passages in all the Bible

- 180 different exegetical combinations for interpreting it.
- Martin Luther - *A wonderful text is this, and a more obscure passage perhaps than any other in the Testament, so that I do not know for a certainty just what Peter means.*

The main point of this passage is anything but unclear.

This passage has an even greater impact, if you were raised in an honor-shame culture, which is the context of most of what we read in the New Testament.

Jesus' life was marked with the blunt force trauma of shame in a thoroughly honor-shame environment.

- Jesus came to the world that he had created, and the world rejected him (**John 1:10**).
- Jesus came to his own people, and his own people rejected him (**John 1:11**).
- Jesus came to the Jewish leaders, and they not only rejected him, they called him a bastard (**John 8:41**; cp. **Luke 1:30-38**) and condemned his work as demonic (**Matthew 12:22-32**).
- Jesus came to his hometown and they rejected him and even tried to throw him over a cliff (**Luke 4:28-29**).
- Jesus' own family shamed him. (**John 7:1-5**; **Mark 3:21**).
- Jesus was even betrayed, denied, and abandoned by his spiritual family (**Mark 14**) and brutally mocked by the Roman authorities (**Matthew 27:27-30**).
- Finally, and worst of all, on the cross, Jesus faced ultimate shame, being forsaken by his own Father. (**Galatians 3:13**; cp. **Deuteronomy 21:23**)

Jesus, died utterly alone in complete shame.

**v. 18a** He was *put to death in the flesh...*

**v. 18b...BUT made alive in the Spirit!** (cp. **Romans 8:11**)

Peter's Main Point: Jesus' Sweet Vindication!

Jesus' unjust shame is turned to eternal fame!

**vv. 21b-22**...*through the resurrection of Jesus Christ, who has gone into the heaven and is at the right hand of God, with angel, authorities, and powers having been subjected to him.*

NOTE: “*subjected to*” - Peter has been harping on this for two chapters—be subject to human authority, even if they badly mistreat you. Jesus is the ultimate example. Now he is vindicated.

Jesus' vindication has direct application to us.

**vv.19-20a** *Christ, being put to death in the flesh, but made alive in the Spirit, in which he went and proclaimed to the spirits in prison because they formerly did not obey, when God's patience waited in the days of Noah while the ark was being prepared.*

### Two Views (out of many!)

**View #1** - “*in which*” refers to “*the Spirit*”

By the Holy Spirit, the pre-incarnate Christ preached through Noah (cp. **2 Peter 2:4-10**; **1:10-11**) to the disobedient people of his day as he built the ark.

Peter uses Noah's preaching and the waters of the great Flood to set up a profound illustration about the meaning of water baptism.

**View #2** - “*in which*” refers to “*made alive in the Spirit*”

In his resurrection by the Spirit, Jesus demonstrated his vindication by pronouncing judgment on the disobedient spirits in Noah’s day.

“*spirits*” is *never* used of human beings in the Bible, unless specifically qualified as such. Otherwise, it *always* refers to angelic or spirit beings.

**Genesis 6** - *the sons of God* (angels) cohabited with *the daughters of man*, the offspring being half-angel, half-human giants known as the *Nephilim*—a counterfeit to the Incarnation.

God promised in **Genesis 3** to provide a Deliverer miraculously through the seed of the woman.

These disobedient spirit beings were kept in prison since the Flood (cp. **2 Peter 2:4**, *Tartarus—pits of darkness*) until the resurrected Christ announced judgment on them.

The true Incarnation: Through the Holy Spirit, Jesus, the God-Man, would be conceived in a virgin maiden, named Mary.

**vv. 20-21** ...*when God’s patience waited in the days of Noah, while the ark was being prepared, in which a few, that is, eight persons, were brought safely through water. Baptism, which corresponds to this, now saves you, not as a removal of dirt from the body but as an appeal to God for a good conscience, through the resurrection of Jesus Christ...*

Peter applies the vindication of Christ to our own future vindication, and baptism symbolizes that truth!

Peter is not saying that water baptism has magical, salvific powers in the rite itself. He underscores that it’s what’s happening in the believer’s heart (an appeal to God for a good conscience) that’s crucial—of which baptism is a sacred symbol.

Baptism pictures our heart’s desire to be joined with Jesus in his death, burial and resurrection. It is a sacred symbol representing that we have entered into Christ’s resurrection victory.

Water baptism says, “*Jesus’ vindication over evil, sin, and death is my vindication!*”

Our living hope in the unjust shame of living as exiles is our future vindication alongside our exalted King.

**1 Corinthians 6:3**, like Jesus, we will judge angels in our resurrection bodies.

**Ephesians 6:12** *We do not wrestle against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the cosmic powers over this present darkness, against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly places.*

**Hebrews 12:2-3** *Look to Jesus, the founder and perfecter of our faith, who for the joy that was set before him endured the cross, despising the shame, and is seated at the right hand of the throne of God. Consider him who endured from sinners such hostility against himself, so that you may not grow weary or fainthearted.*

**Revelation 1:5** *Jesus is the firstborn of the dead, and the ruler of kings on earth. (“firstborn” – We’re next!)*

**Ephesians 1:19-23** ...*the immeasurable greatness of the Father’s power toward us who believe, according to the working of his great might that he worked in Christ when he raised him from the dead and seated him at his right hand in the heavenly places, far above all rule and authority and power and dominion, and above every name that is named, not only in this age but also in the one to come. And he put all things under his feet and gave him as head over all things to the church, which is his body, the fullness of him who fills all in all.*

**Ephesians 2:5-6** *God made us alive together with Christ and raised us up with him and seated us with him in the heavenly places in Christ Jesus.*

**Rejoice when suffering for the name of Jesus, for we are, indeed, blessed! Our vindication is coming, and it may be sooner than we think!**