

The Forgotten Ministry of Christ: Preaching Beyond the Grave

written by Alfred Persson | November 11, 2025



Jesus preached to the dead

5 Who shall give account to him that is ready to judge the quick and the dead.

6 For for this cause 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. (1 Pet. 4:5-6 KJV)

The “dead” in 1 Peter 4:5, 6 can’t have different meanings, the first “the living and dead” of the entire earth; the second only “the spiritually dead” that Peter and church preached to; because “the dead” in v. 6 is linked to its predecessor in v. 5. “For this [same] cause was the gospel preached ALSO to them that are dead”.

A paraphrase of Peter’s point:

5 The [mockers 1 Pet. 4:4] will give an account for their rejection of the gospel to God who is ready to judge the living and the dead [of all mankind].

6. For this reason the gospel was preached ALSO to the dead [who never accepted the gospel], so all are judged equally as men in the flesh [who died unbelieving], but [then repent and choose to] live according to God’s gospel in the Spirit.

All who die without Christ are judged according to the Gospel of God as unsaved men in the flesh (1 Pet. 4:6), they go to Hell (Lk. 16:23; Jn. 5:28-29; Rev. 20:13). In Hell they can repent and believe the Gospel and then live according to God's gospel in the Spirit (1 Pt. 4:6; 1 Cor. 5:5) eagerly waiting for Judgment Day (Heb. 9:27-28; Zech. 9:11). Their torment purges away both self-deception and bondage to sin so free will is absolutely free. Torment ends when the free will choice is made to "live according to God in the Spirit". Those rejecting Christ's ransom continue in torment keeping open their opportunity to repent before Judgement Day, and have their names written among the living in the Book of Life (Rev. 20:13-15; Ps. 69:28; 1 Cor. 5:5).

Its possible to repent and believe in Hades. That is proved by the "spirits in prison" who were saved when Christ preached to them. If they weren't, they couldn't be a "like figure" "antitype" to the Church. Just as the Church is saved by the Gospel when it gives the "answer of a good conscience toward God" through the resurrection of Jesus Christ, so were the "spirits in prison" saved Christ preached to after His crucifixion.

18 For 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,

19 by whom also He went and preached to the spirits in prison,

20 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.

21 There is also an antitype which now saves us— baptism (not the removal of the filth of the flesh, but the answer of a good conscience toward God), through the resurrection of Jesus Christ, (1 Pet. 3:18-21 NKJ)

Was this a "one off", one-time event? Evidently not, Jesus tells us to "marvel not", the dead (in the grave) hear His voice, and all "doing" (ποιήσαντες, aorist active)" good [living according to God in the Spirit] will rise unto resurrection of life; and they "continuing (πράξαντες aorist active)" in evil [rejecting God's offer of salvation] rise unto a resurrection of damnation. The "doing" and "continuing" are active until the resurrection:

28 Marvel not at this: for the hour is coming, in the which all that are in the graves shall hear his voice,

29 And shall come forth; they that have done (ποιήσαντες, aorist active) good, unto the resurrection of life; and they that have done (πράξαντες aorist active) evil, unto the resurrection of damnation. (Jn. 5:28-29 KJV)

Some object the dead cannot "do good", but "doing (4160 ποιέω poieo) good (18 ἀγαθός agathos)" is a moral choice the dead can make (Luke 16:19-31).

Moreover, Paul says the “spirit may be saved” after the “destruction of the flesh” “in the day of the Lord Jesus”, i.e., on Judgment Day. That locates the saving event after he died:

5 To deliver such an one unto Satan for the destruction of the flesh, that the spirit may be saved in the day of the Lord Jesus. (1 Cor. 5:5 KJV)

Compare:

13 And the sea gave up the dead which were in it; and death and hell delivered up the dead which were in them: and they were judged every man according to their works.

14 And death and hell were cast into the lake of fire. This is the second death.

15 And whosoever was not found written in the book of life was cast into the lake of fire. (Rev. 20:13-15 KJV)

Only those “not found written in the book of life” are cast into the lake of fire after rising from Hades, which implies “some were found written in the book”. If they were saved before physical death, they already passed from death into life before Judgment Day (John 5:24-25) and wouldn’t be in Hades.

James L Boyer classifies “if anyone” (ei tis) a “first class conditional” and says:

(“if this”, then that is true) which may imply nothing beyond the logical connection.-“First Class Conditions: What Do They Mean,” Grace Theological Journal, Spring 1981.

However, John is observing and states factually what happened. That requires a reality beyond a logical connection.

I will ransom them from the power of the grave; I will redeem them from death: O death, I will be thy plagues; O grave, I will be thy destruction: repentance shall be hid from mine eyes. (Hosea 13:14 KJV)

*As for thee also, **by the blood of thy covenant I have sent forth thy prisoners out of the pit wherein is no water.** (Zec. 9:11 KJV)*

God’s Plan for the Lost

Elect Rise From Hell On Judgment Day?

Lazarus and the Rich Man: Can the Rich Man Repent and be Saved?

Preaching to the Dead (Postmortem Evangelism)

What did the apostle John reveal when he said: “It is the last hour”?

Where Is The Judgment Of Fallen Angels?

The Origin of Satan and Demons

The Coming False Christ and His Followers Revealed