

**QUESTION AND ANSWER BIBLE STUDY
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SUBJECT: 1 PETER 3:19

1 Peter, Chapter 3, verse 19, which reads, *by whom also He went and preached to the spirits in prison.* The focus is what does 1 Peter 3:19 mean? There are various views that I have found in researching this that people have postulated.

One view is the Catholic faith essentially teaches that this passage speaks on "purgatory," where when Christ died, he went to the hellish area of purgatory and preached to people who were lost so they could have a second chance. Now this view should automatically raise some red flags to anybody that knows the Bible. It should automatically raise some eyebrows because of the problems that it creates. We read of a place called heaven and we read of a place called hell, and we even read of a place called hades, but we do not read of a place called "purgatory." We have never read of a place where you can have your sins purged after you die. In the book of Hebrews, Chapter 9, verse 27, what do we see as the pattern? Heb 9:27, *And as it is appointed for men to die once, but after this the judgment.* So the pattern is you live, you die once, judgment follows. The pattern is not we live, we die once, we get preached to, and hopefully, we can repent after we are dead and then judgment follows. If you live in this, life this is the time for repentance; this is the time to find grace; this is the time to get right with God. The time to secure salvation is now, not after you die.

Furthermore, any doctrine that pits one verse against another is a doctrine that has no credence. The idea, or the purgatory doctrine that says you can go to a place where you can have your sins purged through time and punishment after you die is not taught in 1 Peter 3:19 as some may assert. Who is Peter speaking of? It says the spirits in prison who were what? If you look at verse 20, specifically what people are in view? Okay, those who were disobedient? Those who were disobedient when? When once the Divine longsuffering waited "in the days of Noah." So, insisting on "purgatory" in 1 Peter 3:19 pits scripture against scripture because what you are eventually going to have is God showing favoritism and partiality to a group of people that died in the Noachian deluge, and yet, we never see anywhere else in the Bible where He is going to talk to somebody else after they die and preach to them so that they can be saved. Why of all generations, the generation that taunted Him enough so that He would send down the doom of cataclysmic deluge upon the entire world. Why that generation of all people? That generation of people was violent and sexually immoral to the extent that God was sorrowful that He even made man and then He destroyed the world. Violence ran wild everywhere. Why would He go to them and preach to them in this so-called place of "purgatory" to save them and not the people who died outside the grace of Christ? But make no mistake about "who" He is specifically talking to in this verse 19, to the people in the days of Noah. . It doesn't say that he is talking about any other group of people and so it creates some problems to take "purgatory" to this verse.

A second view that some believe is that this passage is teaching that Jesus was simply raised from the dead to preach to the gentiles, in general, who are practitioners and prisoners of sin. And I agree that Jesus died and that He arose, in part, to have the gospel taken to the Jews and the gentiles alike, but that is not who Peter is speaking of here. Again, the first two words of verse 20 should eliminate that when we look at the subject "who formerly." Whose formerly? Those disobedient souls in the days of Noah. He is referring back to a time of history, looking back to the longsuffering of God in a time of history.

Others believe that Peter's main subject here, obviously defined by the context, deals with suffering, of which I agree. Now let's just go ahead and read 1 Peter 3:18 through 20. *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. Now previous to this we see that he teaches on suffering, verse 13, *And who is he who will harm you if you become followers of what is good?* And verse 14, *But even if you should suffer for righteousness' sake, you are blessed. And do not be afraid of their threats, nor be troubled.* and then he says, verse 15, *But sanctify the Lord God in your hearts, and always be ready to give a defense to everyone who asks you a reason for the hope that is in you, with meekness and fear; 16 having a good conscience, that when they defame you as evildoers, those who revile your good conduct in Christ may be ashamed. 17 For it is better, if it is the will of God, to suffer for doing good than for doing evil.* So the context here is definitely about suffering. Unjust suffering. Suffering that you have not instigated but yet you are bearing. And so the lesson is for these Christians, you know you are going to suffer, but I want you to look at the example of Christ. Verse 18 looks at His personal ministry and how He suffered in the flesh, the days of His flesh. He suffered once for sins, the just for the unjust. Why? That He might bring us to God. Where? Being put to death in the flesh but made alive by the Spirit. He was put to death. Where was He put to death? In the flesh. When He lived in the flesh He was put to death. He tasted death for everyone. And then he reaches back to a period of time when Christ also showed longsuffering and that is during the days of Noah, **during the days of Noah.** And so, this position would say, consequently, the preaching in verse 19 is Christ preaching spiritually or through the agency of Noah to a world that then-existed. This is the view that makes the most contextual sense and it is the view that makes the most consistent sense with the Bible in general.

If you look at verses 18 through 20, you see at least six things. One is Christ suffered in the flesh for sin. A second thing is that He suffered in this death to do what? Why did Jesus come to earth? What is the point of Him dying according to verse 18? To bring us to God. There is a reason. It is not just that He said I want to go down there to feel what it feels like to bleed red. I want to go down there to see what it feels like to get mocked. I want to go down there and see what it feels like to suffer. That is not why, there was a reason. To bring us to God. Number three, Christ was made alive in the Spirit. That is what it says here in verse 18, being put to death in the flesh but made alive by the Spirit. And this, by the Spirit, could have two ideas, one is that the Holy Spirit raised Him up, and the second idea is that He raised Himself up by His own Divine power. Whatever medium you want to subscribe to it makes no difference to me. I see both in scripture but I specifically see that He does have the power to lay himself down and raise himself up that is according to John, Chapter 10, verses 17 and 18. Fourth, we see by whom, the Spirit, either the Holy Spirit or His Divine nature. Number five, He went and preached to the spirits in prison. These spirits were formerly disobedient. Number six, the Divine longsuffering waited in the days of Noah. Any questions or comments thus far; I am going to get into some more.

So we can see that He did sort of bring us to God and the death of Christ is obviously a second component isn't it? Without the death of Christ there is no gospel, there is no church, there is no reason for you and I being here, or for that matter, no reason for you and I even knowing each other. I should still be out wandering around the prairies of the Dakotas and doing my own thing. I should definitely not be here on some mission to preach Christ if there is no crucifixion and if there is no subsequent resurrection, none of us have a hope in heaven. Make no mistake about it, the world that then-existed was a world filled with violence. It was a world that, to a large degree, proved the nature of God's longsuffering. Think about it, with every board that was prepared for this massive ark, the cries, the screams, the murder, the violence, the sexual immorality continued to flow. It continued. There was not a whole lot of good going on in the world. The good that was going on in the world was around and close to the proximity to wherever Noah was. There was a lot of evil, and so for a long period of time that this ark is being built, God is waiting, waiting, waiting.

Some questions come up and so these questions that I have will help provide some depth into this discussion. Number 1 is, how could Peter be referring to the time while these sinners lived on earth if he refers to them as spirits in prison? In other words, if Peter is referring to these guys being preached to in Noah's time, how could he refer to them as spirits? How could we refer to people living on the earth as spirits in prison. Were they spirits then or were they like all men are on earth, embodied spirits? So the answer, I think, seems to be that they were embodied spirits; they were not disembodied spirits. They

were living on earth with a body of flesh. What does Peter mean then when he says spirits? He preached to the spirits. Well, the answer seems evident to me that Peter is describing how they were while all the time he was writing 1 Peter. While he was writing 1 Peter, not when they were being preached to, but while he is writing this verse, they are spirits in prison; that is, spirits, souls in hades while he is writing this, but that certainly is not the way it was when they were being preached to. The purgatory business doesn't hold any water. Not any water there. Such a statement doesn't require that we think Jesus went to hades to preach to them. They were preached to when Noah was alive; they did not repent when Noah was alive and so they died and went to prison, but the prison for the soul, **prison for the soul**, 2 Peter 2:5. Let's read that. 2 Peter 2:5, *and did not spare the ancient world, but saved Noah, one of eight people, a preacher of righteousness, bringing in the flood on the world of the ungodly.* Who was Noah? A preacher of righteousness. So were these people being preached to? Yes, they were being preached to by Noah.

And now read Hebrews 11:7, *By faith Noah, being divinely warned of things not yet seen, moved with godly fear, prepared an ark for the saving of his household, by which he condemned the world and became heir of the righteousness which is according to faith.* He was divinely warned. Who do you think warned him? God. God warned Noah about what? A flood. Why a flood? Because the world is violent, evil, God regrets that he even made man, and so in a sense what is Noah going to say? I am building an ark. Why are you building an ark? Because the world is corrupt and God is going to destroy it with water. Is he preaching? Yes. But who is really preaching? Yes, God, exactly. And here in the forefront of our passage, we know that this is a working of Christ in the Old Testament, isn't it? You can see that. We could state that the gospel was preached to those who died.

I like walking around in the cemeteries. It is good to look at the stones. Every one of those stones has a life story that they represent. And you know what, you can say that the gospel was preached to the dead. Whether their life was moved by the Bible or not, I am pretty confident that the people that I have walked among knew the Bible, that it was available, that it had a message for them back then in the 1800's or whenever they lived. So I can say the gospel was preached to those who died but that doesn't necessarily mean that we took the gospel to them in hades and preached to them. But it simply means that when they were living the gospel was there; it was available. Likewise, you can look at a broken life. Look at the life of a Christian, for example. You can look at the broken lives in prison and you can comment on the broken life that is there because of the wicked ways that got them there and you can say, those evil people. Those criminals in prison had prosperity, happiness, wealth available to them. In fact, wealth and prosperity were available to them in prison but that doesn't mean that in the prison place wealth and prosperity was available to them, but rather before they went into prison they sacrificed a good life for a broken one because of whatever foolish conduct and criminality that they had engaged in. I think that is the way we need to approach verse 19.

Another question is, When did Jesus preach to them? We answered that. Jesus preached to them through Noah when what? The Divine longsuffering waited. You see that in verse 20. You go back to our text here in 1 Peter 3:19. It says he went and preached to the spirits in prison who were formerly disobedient, when? When once the Divine longsuffering waited in the days of Noah. When did He preach to them? When the Divine longsuffering waited they were being preached to. They were also being rebellious and disobedient back then, but that was to their dismay, obviously, when the flood waters came, but that was the only time where there was longsuffering extended to them. Once those lungs stopped breathing and that heart stopped pumping the Divine longsuffering was gone. Once the waters began to come down from the heavens and up from the foundations of the world, the Divine longsuffering was over. They squandered their chance. No preaching going on after you die, not for you to be saved anyway; your destiny is sealed. The Bible teaches that through and through.

So how did Jesus preach to them? The answer again is through the instrumentality of Noah, through the agency of Noah. It is not some strange doctrine to say that. The Bible teaches us everywhere, you go to 1 Thess 4:9, *But concerning brotherly love you have no need that I should write to you, for you yourselves are taught by God to love one another.* Okay, how did God teach the Church of Christ at Thessalonica? Did Jesus ever go to Thessalonica in person to teach them this? No. So how did God teach them? Okay, through Paul. Not directly but indirectly through an apostle or whoever is

ministering to them, God taught them. He taught them the old or the new law that was given by Jesus long ago in John 13:34 and 35, you need to love one another. They should already know that.

Look at John 6:44. I love this one; it is so clear. John 6:44 and also John 45, 44 *No one can come to Me unless the Father who sent Me draws him; and I will raise him up at the last day. 45 It is written in the prophets, And they shall all be taught by God. Therefore everyone who has heard and learned from the Father comes to Me.* So, no one comes to the Father, or no one comes to Me unless the Father who sent Me draws him. The first question is, How does God draw them? The answer to that is in the text by necessary implication you might say; how does he answer it? Or what is the answer? How does God draw you? Have you been drawn? Does God draw today? No, I am not talking about drawing lines, I am talking about drawing you, bringing you, luring you? We were drawn when we heard and learned. **Heard and learned.** Yes, if you look at it, no one can come to Me unless the Father who sent Me draws him; then if you get down to verse 45, it is written in the prophets, they shall be taught by God. The teaching of God draws is what that is saying. God only draws through teaching, that is His lure, and if that is not good enough for you, you are resisting the luring, the drawing of God, that is an open act, a hostile act of obstinacy; the teaching is not good enough. That is how He draws you in is through His teaching, that is how I was drawn in and that is how you were drawn in to be a christian. The Spirit is not going to jump on you in a dark alley at night, overtake you, overshadow you; He is not going to grab you and handcuff you and force you to come. He is going to draw you through teaching. Then we ask a second question, a followup question is, How does God teach us because that is what it says here, you are taught by God. So, how are they taught by God? Through the Word. What Word? Do you have to have an appointment to talk to God in heaven, or maybe God is going to show up at my dinner table tonight and we are going to open the Bible or He is going to tell me verbally? No, the Bible. What does He say?

Kathleen: I have seen so many people in the world that are looking for God; they are seeking Him. They don't know how or why, what they are seeking; they are looking for something. They are looking for God. (More comment here that is indiscernible)

Men seek; God draws. And unless you are seeking, you are not going to be drawn.

Kathleen: You can tell somebody something, and they don't want to hear it if they don't have the right heart.

I agree, but again, you have the teaching there, and that is what weeds out the curiosity seeker versus the committed. The curiosity seeker may come and say, "Well, okay that is cool" and then leave or he may even say, "that is not cool and I am going to leave but I wanted to see what you are all about." The committed person is going to think that is what it says that is what I am going to do, and that is why they go from place to place looking. Because they are truly committed to finding the truth, I believe that God will work providentially with them to bring them in to contact with the truth.

Kathleen: Indiscernible except for: Of course, if you are truly looking you will find it.

Right. Then there is another word that Jesus uses in Luke 13, he says "strive" to enter. So you have seeking, obviously, but something more than that, it is striving; it is pressing in. You are going to be head over feet to get into it.

Visitor (Bill Simmons) comment: (Most of this comment indiscernible)

Yes, it does, and there is some even in the church that are advocating a double revelation theory. One is that you learn about God here and you can also learn about God in the creation. I grant that you learn that there is a God in the creation. You learn that there was massive destruction when you look at the rock layers, when you see the fossils, but you don't know how, necessarily, or when these things occurred without special revelation. The revelation of nature is great; I agree with your comments totally, but it is not going to tell you how to live right with God. It is not going to answer a lot of the questions that you have about the past or your future for that matter. You have to go to special revelation in order to get

those answers and that is the Bible. Why did God give it to us. There is no other religion under the earth that has produced a Bible except those who believe in the one true God. There is a reason for that; the one true God gave the Bible. These other gods; these other things that people worship, they didn't produce it.

John David: (Most is indiscernible) It has to do with teaching creationism and evolutionism. Should it be taught in a school environment, both of them, or should just creation be taught?

Creation should be taught wherever the created are. The reason I say that is because it is a matter of history and that is the way I approach creation. The Book of Genesis is a history of the heavens and the earth. It is not a nice little fable story that you can believe in if you want to or not want to. What we have resulted in, in a hundred years time roughly, it has went from being illegal to teach evolution during the Scopes trial to being illegal to teach creation and that is just is not right. It tells you the trend that our nation is going into. It is getting God out of everything and once you take God out of the picture we fail. Any education system that rids itself of God, all of those systems in the past that have sought to take God out of the picture, have pretty much failed. So, I say, teach creation but make sure you teach it the way it is authorized in the scripture. I don't want to use the evolution-creation. I don't want the blending of the two.

John David: (Not discernible)

Right.

Visitor (Bill Simmons) comment: I would admonish to not let people get away with saying that the constitution requires the separation of state and church, or state and religion. For one thing, the religions of atheism, agnosticism, heathenism, modernism, etc., etc., these religions are taught in the school system that are supported by the state. First of all, to say the least, I want to be benevolent, since sincere people argue that a section of what the constitution does say is that we should not establish a religion so when they say that there was a comment by one of our early fathers of our country that we should build a wall, suggesting that there should be a wall built, but the constitution requires only that we not establish a religion which is being done by the state in our schools starting from at least elementary all the way through university systems so they violate their own objections. They are hypocrites when they argue these things. What they mean is pure religion before God the Father, they don't want that; they don't want creation; they don't want anything to do with the God we believe in or the Bible we believe in, but their gods and their bibles, they are okay. And probably that is what the constitution is talking about is our belief in God and the Bible but it should not be the state, the state should not establish a church. Don't let them get away with saying there has to be a wall of separation that is not what the constitution says.

That is a great comment. I hope you caught the comment "the religion of atheism" because it is a religion. Their belief is unbelief. What do atheists believe? There are a whole lot of things they believe.

Numerous comments here that are not all discernible.

Sarah: Comment regarding a discussion with a person in school who called her a pseudoscientist.

They are actually using that against you?

Sarah: Yes, they are using that word.

That is an interesting thing, so what does he believe? (Sarah's answer is indiscernible.)

So who is the true pseudoscientist? See the difference between you and him is that neither one of you can prove your foundational core beliefs; however, you can say I know someone that was there who is an eyewitness that tells me that; you don't have that. So, scientifically, you are the pseudoscientist. I am

not.

Visitor comment: Again, let's have them define the word "prove". If they are going to prove chance evolution empirically, it cannot be done. And if I am going to prove God empirically (indiscernible), but I can prove God by logic much better than they can prove no God by logic. It depends on how you define proof.

It is, and whether you are dealing with it in a mathematical, hands on way; obviously, you cannot observe it in the sense that you can repeat the creation, for example. But you have a body of evidences that lends credence to this has to be right. That is how we are with everything, you cannot prove who your mom and dad are literally. You accept who they were but you don't recall empirically being there at the birth day, but you accept it because of the overwhelming body of evidence.

Kathleen: And they are having to explain how everything comes from nothing, nonliving material.

Yes, you are in a catch 22 as an atheist because you have to teach that everything here either came from nothing or matter is eternal which points to intelligence.

Comments here indiscernible.

Oh, obviously does, from amoeba to man versus God to man. You connect the dots. What is harder to believe, that me and amoeba or me and the this virus that I have in my throat right now are distant cousin. Think about it; if everything came from nothing.

Sarah: (Indiscernible)

Terry: I just want to know how dust came alive and became an amoeba?

There are numerous other comments here on a variety of subjects that are too time-consuming to try to transcribe.

So we go back to John, Chapter 6, they will be taught by God. It is written in the prophets they will be taught by God and then he defines the teaching process of hearing and learning. If you go back to Isaiah, Chapter 2, there is an interesting statement made here. Isaiah 2, verse 3, *Many people shall come and say, "Come, and let us go up to the mountain of the Lord, to the house of the God of Jacob; He will teach us His ways, and we shall walk in His paths." For out of Zion shall go forth the law, and the word of the Lord from Jerusalem.* My question is, when did the law go out of Jerusalem or Zion? When you answer that you find out when, specifically, Isaiah refers to God teaching His people. When was that?

John David: Indiscernible.

Yes, and in Acts 2

John David: Indiscernible.

Yes, it all began there in Acts, Chapter 2, in Jerusalem that is where the gospel began as far as the first gospel sermon being preached after Jesus ascended to the Father. God is teaching the people in Acts, Chapter 2, but He is using the apostles, howbeit still, it is the Holy Spirit. They could not say now open up your Bibles to Acts, Chapter 2, we are making history here, this is what God has said we are supposed to tell you. No, they are saying it and I wish we had it recorded now. Another passage that teaches that Jesus teaches men, not personally face to face but through the agency of men, is Ephesian, Chapter 2, verse 17, and Ephesian, Chapter 4, verse 21. Ephesian 2:17, *And He came and preached peace to you who were afar off and to those who were near.* Now He is talking about Jew and gentile in the context here in Chapter 2; those who were near, Jews, and those who were afar off, gentiles, but how did Jesus go and preach to those at Ephesus? The same way that He taught those in Thessalonica, right?

Through the apostles and the apostles' doctrine. Ephesian 4:21, *If indeed you have heard Him and have been taught by Him, as the truth is in Jesus.* The idea is that when Paul and the others were standing before men it was as if God himself was there, as if Jesus himself was there imploring them to obey and do what is right. In fact, isn't that what 2 Corinthians 5:20 says? We are going to wind it down, 2 Corinthians 5:20, *Now then, we are ambassadors for Christ, as though God were pleading through us; we implore you on Christ's behalf, be reconciled to God.* As though God were pleading through us, see? Ambassadorship, if you will. It is as if Christ himself, on behalf of God Paul was standing there, not as his own person with his own doctrine, his own authority, but the authority of the crucified Christ who raised and ascended to heaven.

So, this seems like it makes the most sense, 1 Peter 3, winding it down. Verse 19, Jesus preached to them the same way He preached to the Ephesians, the same way He preached to the Thessalonians, the same way He preached to those in Jerusalem and that is through the agency of man who were given the message from heaven. 1 Peter 3:19 is a comforting text; it is a beautiful text if you put it into context. It is not a scary one. It has a strong message even for us today. Our God is a God of longsuffering. Don't overlook that. When the world was rank with violence and immorality, God waited; His longsuffering did. It waited not because it is slack but because it desires all men to be saved, 2 Peter, Chapter 3, verse 9. So, Noah, the message that he had came out of heaven and was given to them, similarly Jesus in the New Testament came before men with the same message from heaven or a message of faith, of gospel. In fact, He is called the Word, in the beginning was the Word. He is carrying forth the message so to speak. And so we come to the New Testament, we see Jesus placing in action the nature of longsuffering. He allowed the insults, the mocking, the evil plotting, even the torture of the cross He allowed to occur to display the longsuffering and graciousness of God.

For the Son of Man did not come to seek to destroy men's lives but to save them, Luke, Chapter 9, verse 56. God allowed the ark to be built to save men in Noah's day too. I have no doubt that when Peter links Noah here to Christ that Noah had a lot of suffering. You know it. Think about living in the most violent age the world had ever seen as a person who is building an ark that needs water that the world had not seen around that ark and here you are building it. Rain? What is rain? Flood? You are a crazy old man. You can picture the insults and yet Noah was there with the message he had and the ark message to save the world. It is big enough to save pretty much whosoever would come but they did not come except for eight people--Noah, his wife, three sons and three daughters. But there is another day coming for the Lord too. It is called the day of God. It is called the day of the Lord. It is the day of His wrath, of his vengeance. It is a time when the world will be engulfed, not with water, but with what? Fire. 2 Peter 3 deals extensively with that and we need to understand that Jesus came to die in order to build the church so that men may be saved. He built it with the awesome design of His blood. It is sustained, not by gopher wood, but by the Word of God. He lives, abides and lives forever. As Noah's ark was covered with pitch, the church is covered with what? Every soul who has been in Christ has been baptized into His what? Death. Yes, His blood where the reconciliation of God is. No one entered into the New Testament ark, the church, except through the door. In Noah's day, there was one door. You cannot get into the ark any other way but one door. In the New Testament church Jesus said what? I am the door, John, Chapter 10, verse 9. He also said in John 14, verse 6, that no one comes to the Father except through Me that is what He said. And no one enters into Christ except through what? If you look at every verse in the New Testament, every verse, what are you going to find as the only action that places you into Christ? Baptism. Yes, it is not faith alone; it is not repentance alone; it is not confession alone. You must be baptized. Baptism is said to be into Christ, Galatians 3:27, Romans 6:3 and 4. You cannot be baptized unless you believe and repent. God's system is not entered into Christ any other way than to be baptized. This is why baptism is the antitype--not the prototype, not the type. Baptism in 1 Peter 3:21 is the antitype, the real thing, the real deal. It is God's system of saving men today. Men scoff at His plan; they scoff at the ark. Do you know what the New Testament ark is? It is the church. They scoff at the church. Some even deny that Jesus is a credible savior. They also deny that Noah was probably sane. I am sure there are many saying that he is insane. Men scoff at the coming of judgment as they scoff at the coming judgment of water. Men still scoff at the church and they scoff, as we discussed, even that there was a global flood. Others may verbally accept Christ but then belittle the church and say, "Oh attend the church of your choice." Can you imagine that in Noah's day, you know, get in the ark of your choice. That is what people believe today, get into the church of your

choice. It does not have anything to do with God's choice but get into the church of your choice. I thought it had everything to do with God's choice. If someone had said that, build the ark of your choice, would it have worked. I wonder if I lived back in Noah's day and I think maybe he has something, maybe there is going to be a flood but I am not going to fool with an ark, I am going to build me a yacht. Do you think it would save me?

Terry: Sure. I am sure that people would think that one ark is just as good as another.

Sure and it is just as sick today when people take the same attitude to the Christ. They may say verbally I believe Jesus is who He is (tape ran out)

Transcribed by
Mary Caton