

Statements of Early Church Fathers on The Visit of Christ to The Spirit World and The Vicarious Work For The Dead

Compiled By Glen W. Chapman (1996)

(Compiled from the writings of Hugh Nibley)

Tertullian is more specific: "Christ ...did not ascend to the higher heavens until he had descended to the lower regions [lit. lower parts of the worlds], there to make the patriarchs and prophets his compotes."

Tertullian, On the Soul In PL 2:788

"Celsus, making fun of the strange doctrine, asks Origen: "'Don't you people actually tell about him, that when he had failed to convert the people on this earth he went down to the underworld to try to convert the people down there?'"

"We assert that Jesus not only converted no small number of persons while he was in the body . . . but also, that when he became a spirit, without the covering of the body, he dwelt among those spirits which were without bodily covering, converting such of them as were willing to Himself."

Origen, Against Celsus II" 43, in PG 11:864-65

"What then, does not the same economy prevail in Hades, so that there, too, all the spirits might hear the gospel, repent and admit that their punishment, in the light of what they have learned, is just"

Clement of Alexandria Stromata. :VI,6, in PG 9:272.

Origen says John "died before him, so that he might descend to the lower regions and announce [preach] his coming." And again: "For everywhere the witness and forerunner of Jesus is John being born before and dying shortly before the Son of God so that not only to those of his generation but likewise to those who lived before Christ should liberation from death be preached, and that he might everywhere prepare a people trained to receive the Lord."

. Origen, In Lucam Homily (Homily on Luke) 4, in PG 12 :1811.

Origen, Commentaria in Evangelium Joannis (Commentary on John) 2, 30, in PG 14:181.

"John the Baptist died first", wrote Hippolytus, "being dispatched by Herod, that he might prepare those in Hades for the gospel; he became the forerunner there, announcing even as he did on this earth, that the Savior was about to come, to ransom the spirits of the saints from the hand of death. ...Christ is the king of those beneath the earth," says Hippolytus "since he also was reckoned among the dead, while he was preaching the gospel to the spirits of the saints [or righteous ones]." Jesus "became the evangelist of the dead, the liberator of spirits and the resurrection of those who had died."

Hippolytus, Demonstratio de Christo et Antichristo (On Christ and The Antichrist)

"these Apostles, and the teachers who had proclaimed the name of the Son of God, after they had fallen asleep in [the] power and faith of the Son of God preached likewise to the dead and they gave them the seal of the preaching. They accordingly went down with them into the water and came out again. But although they went down while they were alive and came up alive, those who had fallen asleep before them (prokekoimemenoi) went down dead, but came out again living,, for it was through these that they were made alive, and learned the name of the Son of God. It is necessary, he said, for them to come up through the water in order to be made alive; for otherwise none can enter the Kingdom of God . . . therefore even the dead receive the seal.... The seal is of course, the water-"

The Latin version reads: "These Apostles and teachers who had preached the name of the Son of God, when they died in possession of his faith and power, preached to those who had died before, and themselves gave them this seal. Hence [igitur] they went down into the water with them but they who had died before went down dead, of course but ascended living, since it was through them that they received life and knew the Son of God "

Shepherd of Hermas, Similitudes III, 9, 16; We are following the various texts given in Max Dressel, *Patrum Apostolicorum Opera*, (Leipzig, 1863), 548-49, 631.

Codex Vaticanus 3848.

"that it was necessary for the best of the Apostles to be imitators of their Master on the other side as well as here, that they might convert the gentile dead as he did the Hebrew." Elsewhere he says: "Christ visited, preached to, and baptized the just men of old, both gentiles and Jews, not only those who lived before the coming of the Lord, but also those who were before the coming of the Law . . . such as Abel, Noah, or any such righteous man." (unknown missing scripture)

Clement of Alexandria, Stromata III, 6.,in PG 9: 268

"Now if some of them are 'baptized for the dead,' can we not assume that they have a reason for it? Certainly he[Paul] is maintaining that they practiced this in the belief that the ordinance would be a vicarious baptism and as such be advantageous to the flesh of others, which they assumed would be resurrected, for unless this referred to a physical resurrection there would be no point in carrying out a physical baptism."

Tertullian, De Resurrectione (On the Resurrection) 48, in PL 2: 864.

At the beginning of the fifth century Epiphanius reports:

"From Asia and Gaul has reached us the account [tradition] of a certain practice, namely that when any die without baptism among them, they baptize others in their place and in their name, so that, rising in the resurrection, they will not have to pay the penalty of having failed to receive baptism, but rather will become subject to the authority of the Creator of the World. For this reason this tradition which has reached us is said to be the very thing to which the Apostle himself refers when he says, "If the dead rise not at all, what shall they do who are baptized for the dead"

Epiphanius, Against Heresies 1, 28, 6, in PG; 4:384.

In the fourth century, St. Ambrose recalled; but did not approve, the practice:

"Fearing that a dead person who had never been baptized would be resurrected badly [male] or not at all, a living person would be baptized in the name of the dead one. Hence he [Paul] adds: "Else why are they baptized for them" According to this he does not approve of what is done but shows the firm faith in the resurrection" [that it implies].

Ambrose, Comme taria in Epistolam I ad Corinthios (Commentary on the First Epistle to the Corinthians), in PL 117: 280.

"It is the wintertime of the just," the Shepherd of Hermas proclaims, "and it will be a long one, for the Lord "is as one taking a far journey"; at some future time is to burst uporn the world "the summertime of the just"

Shepherd of Hermas, Similitudes 3 and 4, in P.G 2: 955-56.

In Clement, Second Epistle to the Corinthians 5, in PG 1:335, the Lord tells the Apostles: " 'Ye shall be as lambs in the midst of wolves.' And Peter answered him and said unto him, What then if the wolves shall tear the lambs to pieces' Jesus said to Peter: The lambs. have no cause after they are dead to fear the wolves; and in like manner fear ye not them that kill you:' "

"They died in righteous and great purity, and this seal was the only thing they lacked.

For this reason they the Apostles] went down living with them into the water . . . and gave them life . . . and came up out again with them, and were gathered up together with them,

that all might share eternal life."

Shepherd of Hermas, Similitudes IX, 16,6-7

From the Sayings of Jesus

"The testament which our Lord Jesus Christ made with his Apostles after his resurrection from the dead and the instructions which he gave them." .

"I have received all authority from my Father, so that I might lead out into light those who sit in darkness,

"[As resurrected beings] even as my Father raised me from the dead, so you, too, will rise again and be received into the highest heaven.

. "Christ preached 'to them that are dead.' For this reason, says the Lord in the Discourse to the Apostles, 'have I gone below and spoken to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, to your fathers, the prophets, and preached to them, that they might enjoy their rest in heaven.' ...

and with my right hand I gave them the baptism of life and release and forgiveness of all evil, even as I do to you here and to all who believe on me from this time on.

"Christ not only appears as a preacher in the lower world, but also as one administering baptism; and here, too, his activity runs parallel to his earthly mission

"Servants [diakonoi] because they [the dead] will receive the baptism of life and the forgiveness of your sins from my hand through you, . . . and so have part in the heavenly kingdom.

"Another doctrine will arise and with it confusion; for they will seek their own advancement and bring forth a useless doctrine. And it will cause vexation even unto death; and they will teach and turn away those who believed on me and lead them away from eternal life."

Schmidt, Gesprache Jesu

"The Lord tells the Apostles in the Epistle of the Apostles, 'Where my Father is, it is entirely different from this world There you will see lights that are nobler than your kind of light. In the millions of worlds that God has made for his son, every world is different from the others and wonderful in its own radiance.'"

"God is the Father of all the worlds," says 1 Clement, which virtually everybody recognizes as an authentic writing of the early Church. "He knows them; they keep their courses and covenants with Him; He calls them by name, and they answer him from eternity to eternity. As the Father of greatness is in the glorious world, so his Son rules among those cosmoses as first chief lord of all the powers. "