

1 Peter 4:6

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

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.

Analysis

Peter explains gospel preaching to the dead. "For for this cause was the gospel preached also to them that are dead" (eis touto gar kai nekrois euēngelisthē). "Them that are dead" (nekrois) likely refers to believers now deceased who heard gospel while alive. The purpose: "that they might be judged according to men in the flesh, but live according to God in the spirit" (hina krithōsin men kata anthrōpous sarki zōsin de kata theon pneumati). They were "judged according to men in flesh"—suffered persecution/martyrdom judged by humans. But "live according to God in spirit"—despite physical death, they live spiritually with God. Gospel preached to them secured eternal life despite earthly death.

Historical Context

This difficult verse generated multiple interpretations. Most likely: gospel was preached to people now dead (believers who died, especially martyrs). Though judged/killed by humans physically, they live eternally with God spiritually. This encouraged living believers—deceased Christian loved ones aren't lost but alive with God despite physical death. Alternative view links to 3:19, seeing Christ preaching to Old Testament dead. Either way, verse affirms gospel's power extends beyond physical death—those who believe live eternally despite earthly death. Early church comforted bereaved believers with resurrection hope—death doesn't end existence for Christians but transitions to life with God.

Related Passages

Romans 10:9 — Confession and belief for salvation

John 3:16 — God's love and salvation

Romans 1:17 — The righteous shall live by faith

James 2:17 — Faith and works

Study Questions

1. How does knowing deceased believers 'live according to God in spirit' despite human judgment/death comfort you regarding Christian loved ones who've died?
2. What does this verse teach about the relationship between physical death and spiritual life for believers?

Interlinear Text

εἰς τοῦτο γὰρ καὶ νεκροῖς εὐηγγελίσθη ἵνα
for this cause For also to them that are dead was the gospel preached that
G1519 G5124 G1063 G2532 G3498 G2097 G2443

κριθῶσιν μὲν κατὰ ἀνθρώπους σαρκὶ ζῶσιν
they might be judged according to men in the flesh live
G2919 G3303 G2596 G444 G4561 G2198

δὲ κατὰ θεὸν πνεύματι
but according to God in the spirit
G1161 G2596 G2316 G4151

Additional Cross-References

Romans 8:2 (Spirit): For the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus hath made me free from the law of sin and death.

1 Peter 3:19 (Spirit): By which also he went and preached unto the spirits in prison;

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