

PREACHING TO THE DEAD IN HADES
That They Might Live in the Spirit
by
St. Maximus the Confessor

"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 Peter 4:6)

It is a usage in Scripture to interchange the tenses and to render one by another; the future as past, and the past as future, and the present as expressing a time preceding it or following it, as is evident to them who are well experienced in Scripture. Some say that the Scriptures call "dead" those who died before the coming of Christ, for instance, those who were in the time of the Flood, at Babel, in Sodom, in Egypt, as well as others who in various times and ways received the varied penalties and terrible afflictions of the divine judgments. These men were punished not so much for their ignorance of God as for the outrages they imposed on one another. It was to them, according to [St. Peter], that the great message of salvation was preached when they were already judged as men in the flesh, that is, when they received, through life in the flesh, punishment for crimes against one another, so that they could live according to God, in the spirit, that is, the soul; *being in Hades, they accepted the preaching of the knowledge of God, believing in the Saviour Who descended into Hades to save the dead.* So, in order to understand [this] passage in [Holy Scriptures] let us take it in this way: *the dead, judged in the human flesh, were preached to precisely for the purpose that they may live according to God by the spirit.*

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Questions and Answers to Thalassius, #7.