taking up again of **in the Spirit,** recapitulating some former act also done in the  
Spirit: “put to death in the flesh, but  
made alive in the Spirit,—that Spirit in  
which also, ere He was made alive with  
the full resurrection life, He &c.” And  
this I incline to think the sense of the  
passage: **in which** referring not to the  
complex resurrection life, but properly and  
strictly to the spirit, in which the Lord  
never ceased to be, even when His complex  
life of body and soul was dissolved. When  
again Wiesinger says that **went and  
preached** cannot be understood of the  
time intermediate, because in no case can  
we think of our Lord’s state in death in  
dualistic wise, so that while His body was  
held by the bands of death, His Spirit  
should be carrying on the Messianic work,  
—I answer, why not? Surely the reply to  
the penitent thief implies a *going,* and in  
that going a joy and triumph sufficient to  
be the subject of a consoling promise at  
that terrible moment. And might not the  
reasoning be turned, with as much propriety? Might not we say that it is impossible to conceive of our Lord during  
that time as *other than* employed in the  
spirit in which He continued, not to exist  
merely, but to live? That, granted that  
His dying words imply a special delivering  
of his Spirit into the hands of his Father,  
and by consequence, a resting of his Spirit  
in those Hands in the death-state,—yet  
must we not conceive of His Spirit as going  
thither, where “the righteous souls are in  
the hand of God?” And if so, who shall  
place a limit to His power or will to communicate with any departed spirits of  
whatever character? So that, while I  
would not say that the conditions of the passage  
are are not satisfied by the supposition  
the event happened after the Resurrection, I believe there can be no reason  
for saying that they are not, on the other  
hypothesis. And I own, that the **in which**  
also inclines me to this other. It seems  
most naturally to be taken as a resumptive  
explanation of **in the Spirit,** with a view  
to something (ver. 21) which is to follow;  
and the in, capable indeed of being otherwise explained, yet seems to favour this  
idea,—that the Lord was strictly speaking  
*in the Spirit,* when that happened which  
is related.

From all then which has been said, it  
will be gathered, that with the great majority of Commentators, ancient and modern, I understand these words to say,  
that our Lord, in His disembodied state,  
did go to the place of detention of departed  
spirits, and did there announce His work  
of redemption, preach salvation in fact, to  
the disembodied spirits of those who refused to obey the voice of God when the  
judgment of the flood was hanging over  
them. Why these rather than others are  
mentioned,—whether merely as a sample  
of the like gracious work on others, or for  
some special reason unimaginable by us,  
we cannot say. It is ours to deal with the  
plain words of Scripture, and to accept its  
revelations as far as vouchsafed to us.  
And they are vouchsafed to us to the  
utmost limit of legitimate inference from  
revealed facts. That inference every intelligent reader will draw from the fact  
here announced; it is not purgatory, it is  
not universal restitution; but it is one  
which throws blessed light on one of the  
darkest enigmas of the divine justice: the  
cases where the final doom seems infinitely  
out of proportion to the lapse which has  
incurred it. And as we cannot say to  
what other cases this *preaching* may have  
applied, so it would be presumption in us  
to limit its occurrence or its efficacy. The  
reason of mentioning here these sinners,  
above other sinners, appears to be, their  
connexion with the type of baptism which  
follows. If so, who shall say, that the  
blessed act was confined to them?

**21, 22.]** The persons and the things  
compared must be carefully borne in mind.  
The *few* in Noah’s day were saved by  
water; we also are saved by water. The  
*antitype* to that water on which the ark  
floated, saving its inmates, is the water of  
baptism; but as ours is a spiritual, not a  
material rescue, so the *antitype* is not the  
washing of our flesh by that water,—the  
form in which it is applied to us, as the  
bearing up their ark was the form in  
which their water was applied to them,—but a far nobler thing, the clearness and  
purity of our inner consciousness towards  
God: and this saving power of the water  
of baptism in our ease is by virtue of the  
resurrection and exaltation of Christ, into  
whose death and resurrection we are baptized. Thus by our very profession we are  
united to Him in sufferings as in glory.