

PETER'S EPISTLES

1 Peter: Living In Conflict With The Culture

XV. Wise Living In View Of Christ's Perfect Example, 1 Peter 3:18-4:6

B. Christ's Example Through Noah Before A Godless World (1 Peter 3:19-21)

I. Introduction

- A. Several believers in different states of the nation have reported on the increasing difficulty they face in living in accord with Bible truth since doing so conflicts with the godless world's deteriorating culture around them.
- B. "First Peter was written to Christians . . . whose stand for Jesus Christ made them aliens and strangers in the midst of a pagan society" (Bible Know. Com., N. T., p. 837), so we study 1 Peter for insight and edification.
- C. 1 Peter 3:19-21 gives a brief digression from discussing Christ's example of functioning well in His suffering to His ministry through Noah to his godless world before the Genesis Flood. We view it for our edification:

II. Christ's Example Through Noah Before A Godless World, 1 Peter 3:19-21.

- A. Having provided guidelines in 1 Peter 3:13-17 for our conduct as believers living in a godless world, Peter began to write on the perfect example of Christ in His suffering by ungodly men on the cross, *Ibid.*, p. 850.
- B. However, 1 Peter 3:19-21 briefly digressed from discussing Christ's example in His suffering and death to note His exemplary ministry through Old Testament Noah to his godless generation before the Genesis Flood:
 1. 1 Peter 3:19-20 "has been subject to many interpretations" (*Ibid.*, p. 851), and we note the two major ones:
 - a. Some teach Peter announced Christ's descent into Hades between His death and resurrection "to offer people who lived before the Flood a second chance for salvation," *Ibid.* However, Hebrews 9:27 claims it is appointed unto man once to die, and after that the judgment, not a second chance for salvation.
 - b. Others claim Peter announced Christ's descent into hell after His crucifixion "to proclaim His victory to the imprisoned fallen angels referred to in 2 Peter 2:4-5" (*Ibid.*), but the context directs Peter's human readers on Christ's example of living in a godless world of people, not with relating to fallen angels.
 2. The word "spirits" in 1 Peter 3:19 is used at least once of human "spirits" in Hebrews 12:23 (*Ibid.*), so the "spirits" to whom Christ preached were those "who were disobedient when God waited patiently for Noah to finish building the ark," *Ibid.* Christ did this preaching through Noah to his generation, and the spirits of those in Noah's generation who rejected that message are *now* in prison in the spirit realm awaiting the Revelation 20:11-15 Great White Throne judgment. (Ryrie Study Bible, KJV, 1978, ftn. to 1 Peter 3:19)
- C. Furthermore, Peter added that his believing readers were **physically** saved through water baptism similar to how Noah's family was **physically** saved through the ark during the Genesis Flood, 1 Peter 3:21. We explain:
 1. Peter could *not* have meant that one is spiritually saved by water baptism in violation of Ephesians 2:8-9.
 2. Rather, the **context** of the Epistle of 1 Peter provides us the correct interpretation (as follows):
 - a. Peter's first epistle was written to the **diaspora** (1 Peter 1:1), a technical term that was used in Peter's day in the Greek translation of the Hebrew Scriptures for the "dispersion of the Jews among the Gentiles" during the Babylonian Captivity. (Arndt & Gingrich, A Grk.-Eng. Lex. of the N. T., 1967, p. 187)
 - b. However, Peter's Hebrew readers were **Christians** (1 Peter 1:2) who had been "dispersed" into Gentile nations (1 Peter 1:1) by persecution from their countrymen (Acts 8:1; 12:1; 28:22). What caused them to be persecuted had been their decision to have a pure conscience before God by making a public testimony to be Christians by way of the public act of believer's baptism! (1 Peter 3:21b)
 - c. Significantly, Christ had predicted that Jerusalem was doomed to be destroyed by a Gentile invasion due to sin (Luke 21:20-21), so Peter likened the practice of believer's baptism performed to obtain a clear conscience before God as **physically** saving the lives of his Hebrew readers from Jerusalem's destruction as it had led them to flee from persecution in Israel much like the ark had **physically** saved Noah's family from the worldwide Genesis Flood, 1 Peter 3:21.

Lesson: Christ's spirit through Noah preached of God's righteousness to Noah's generation during the 120 years that the ark was being built, and Peter's believing Hebrew readers like Noah's family had similarly been physically saved from death by heeding the preaching of Christ's Gospel in their era and then practicing believer's baptism.

Application: (1) May we like Christ through Noah's preaching in his day faithfully uphold the truth to our generation, and (2) may we like Noah's family heed that truth for blessing in our era. [(3) May we resist those theological views that claim Christ went to Hades or hell at His death, for He went to Paradise, Luke 23:42-43.]