

Last week we began looking at the passage beginning in 1 Peter 3:18-4:6. We read the passage and I said that there were many truths for us to consider in the passage, but we would only have time to look at one verse and so we only looked at the one verse, 1 Peter 3:18 (READ).

In 1 Peter 3:18 we saw some truths that are at the very foundation of our faith – that Christ suffered once and for all for our sins. We saw that his death on the cross was the one final and perfect sacrifice for our sins – the fulfillment of all the Old Testament sacrifices that God had ordained for His people.

We saw that this sacrifice was the just – that is Jesus Christ – for the unjust – that is, all of mankind – everyone who has ever lived and will live until he comes again. And we saw that this sacrifice brings us, by faith, who were at war with God, near to Him and that we are made alive by the Spirit. That is, the same Spirit that raised Christ from the dead is the same Spirit that lives within us.

But, as we go on in our passage we see that Peter does not end with this. So again, we read 1 Peter 3:18-4:6. Remember, that the chapter and verse divisions are man-made. What we have before us is a letter, such that we would write to friends and families, without chapters and verses. They were put in later to assist us in our study. (READ – 1 Peter 3:18-4:6).

As look at the passage before us, I must point out that this is one of the more difficult passages of the scriptures to interpret. There are a number of different interpretations, and so I will try to summarize them for you in the best way that I can. So let's look at the passage that is before us.

1 Peter 3:19-20 (READ). As we compare scripture with scripture we know that Noah was about 500 years old when God commanded him to build the ark because God was going to destroy the earth by making it rain for 40 days and 40 nights the earth had become very wicked.

As we read in Genesis 6:11-13: *“The earth also was corrupt before God, and the earth was filled with violence. So God looked upon the earth, and indeed it was corrupt; for all flesh had corrupted their way on the earth. And God said to Noah, “The end of all flesh has come before Me, for the earth is filled with violence through them; and behold, I will destroy them with the earth.”*

Now, you have to remember that when God instructed Noah to build the ark, it had not yet rained on the earth, so Noah had no clue what rain was, and also there was no body of water around where Noah was building the ark.

We also know that he was 600 years old when God told him to begin to gather the animals and enter the ark. So, it could have taken Noah about 100 years to build the ark, during which time the scriptures indicate that he told the people that God's judgement was coming – and that they could have repented, which they didn't. But talk about faith – for about 100 years having to endure the ridicule from others while you out building this big boat in the middle of a desert.

The passage that is before us in 1 Peter would indicate that the pre-incarnate Christ went and preached to those were about to be destroyed by the great flood. In other words they had an opportunity to repent and join Noah.

Remember that Jesus, before he was born as a baby in Bethlehem – is the pre-existent 2<sup>nd</sup> person of the Trinity. In the New Testament we read of the pre-existent Christ taking on human flesh in the form of the baby Jesus.

Another interpretation is that in the time between the death of Christ and the resurrection, that Christ went and preached to either the wicked people who were destroyed at the time of Noah – and remember that is why God destroyed the earth because it was very wicked, or another interpretation is that Christ proclaimed victory to those described as fallen angels, or that Christ preached to them after the resurrection at the time of his ascension.

I would say that I don't fully understand the meaning of the various interpretations and that none of them were wrong. But they all indicate that there is victory in Christ. And if conservative, evangelical theologians disagree, then there has to be disagreement. I would note also that no major doctrine or teaching of the scriptures are in question regardless of the interpretation that you have.

Now, as we go on in our passage we see that only eight people were saved during the great flood – Noah, his wife and family. They were the only ones who heeded the warning of Noah that God's judgement was coming.

The passage before us indicates then that the waters of the flood were a type of baptism – 1 Peter 3:21 (READ). Now, we know that baptism is sign of God's grace in the Lord Jesus Christ.

We know, as we compare scripture with scripture, that the waters of Baptism does not save us. It is a sign and seal of God's covenant of grace. While there are many blessings associated with baptism, it does not confer automatic salvation.

This doctrine is know as Baptismal regeneration – as some churches teach – which we reject as unbiblical. This was one of the truths that came out during the Reformation. Our passage specifically tells us that it is not the removal of the filth of the flesh, but that Baptism is a sign of our union with Christ in his death and resurrection.

Consider what our passage says in verse 21 (READ AGAIN). Because of the resurrection of Jesus from dead, those who believe in him are saved – we have salvation because the resurrection is proof that God accepted the sacrifice of Jesus for our sins.

And then, as we read in 1 Peter 3:22 (READ) – we know that Christ is at the right hand of God. We also know that as we confess in our creeds, that he is waiting to come again in judgment.

As we read in Philippians 2, a passage that talks about the humility of Christ, we read: 2:5-11: *“Let this mind be in you which was also in Christ Jesus, who, being in the form of God, did not consider it robbery to be equal with God, but made Himself of no reputation, taking the form of a bondservant, and coming in the likeness of men. And being found in appearance as a man, He humbled Himself and became obedient to the point of death, even the death of the cross. Therefore God also has highly exalted Him and given Him the name which is above every name, that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, of those in heaven, and of those on earth, and of those under the earth, and that every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.”*

In Acts 2:33, in Peter, in talking about the coming of the Holy Spirit says: *“Therefore being exalted to the right hand of God, and having received from the Father the promise of the Holy Spirit, He poured out this which you*

*now see and hear.”*

And in Acts 7:55-56, we read this about Stephen as he was about to be stoned for his witness for Christ: *“But he, being full of the Holy Spirit, gazed into heaven and saw the glory of God, and Jesus standing at the right hand of God, and said, “Look! I see the heavens opened and the Son of Man standing at the right hand of God!”*”

The point is, that there are numerous passages indicating that at this very moment, this is where our Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ is, waiting until the appointed time of his return in glory.

What does this all mean for us as we struggle to live our Christian lives here on earth, until we get to heaven, which we know is waiting for us?

We know that Christ suffered – the just for the unjust. We know that all have had the opportunity to hear the good news of Jesus Christ, and we also know that most have rejected this good news – that he came, (or was coming) to live and to die for the sins of those who believe in him.

So, while we may not know everything about the salvation that we have – that is, the forgiveness of our sins and all the other blessings of our salvation – we know enough.

The Scriptures say that God has given us all things that we know for life and godliness – as Peter tells us in his second letter – 2 Peter 1:3: *“as His divine power has given to us all things that pertain to life and godliness, through the knowledge of Him who called us by glory and virtue,”* He has given us all that we need to know for life in this world, and the world to come.

We know ALL that we need to know – and we know all that is necessary for our salvation. Let us be thankful, rest in the knowledge that God has revealed all that we need to know for life and godliness