

Sunday, May 1, 2022 pm

STUDIES IN 1 PETER (20)
The Suffering of Christ for Our Salvation
1 Peter 3:18-22 (1)

As we continue our study of 1 Peter, we have been emphasizing our need to be willing to suffer for His cause. It involves submission and so many other things. In our last lesson we addressed some things we can do to prepare to suffer for doing good. In this lesson, we RETURN to the example of Jesus who was willing to suffer for us. We also find here what is described by some as the MOST difficult passage in the New Testament. While that is a subjective declaration, there is NO question that it is a challenging passage to interpret. And with that in mind I declare up front that I am no certain of my interpretation, but it is one that I believe to be plausible and in line with the context of this passage.

I. Christ suffered for us

- a. We have been reminded before that Jesus is our example – 1 Peter 2:21-24 notes how His suffering is an example to us. Our current text goes further as it explains WHY He suffered for us. Whenever we are facing trials, we can always look to Jesus – He endured the cross for us (Hebrews 12:2-3)
- b. **He suffered once for sins** – His sacrifice was a one-time act for all times. The Hebrew writer would explain this in greater detail – Hebrews 10:11-14, 9:24-28, etc.
- c. **The just for the unjust** – truly Jesus was innocent. His death paid the price that needed to be paid to ultimately produce forgiveness of sins. 1 Peter 2:22, Hebrews 4:15 tempted in all points as we are, yet without sin.
- d. **That He might bring us to God** – John 14:6, while on earth, Jesus declared that He is the way o the Father. Colossians 1:21-22 – we are reconciled to God through Him. Romans 5:2 notes that through Jesus we have access by faith into His grace...
- e. **Being put to death in the flesh, but made alive by the Spirit.** The NASB reads and interprets this phrase differently noting, “... *having been put to death in the flesh, but made alive in the spirit;*”
 - i. Being put to death in the flesh is clearly a reference to His crucifixion. It is by His death that He saved us – Romans 5:6-8,
 - ii. Made alive in the spirit – is debated. It could be a reference to the Holy Spirit bringing Jesus back to life in the resurrection, OR that His spirit (in the same way that we have a spirit) came to life after His death in the spiritual realm. Tying this phrase to the next verse, which sources say needs to match, this could be saying that when Jesus died, He awoke in the Hadean world. I see this as PLAUSIBLE based on the following: (NOTE: This is MY theory, feel free to challenge it).
 1. In Luke 16 Jesus taught the parable of the Rich man and Lazarus – Luke 16:19-31. In that parable, the rich man awoke in torments (obviously a place where ALL the wicked who had died had landed), while Lazarus awoke in Abraham’s bosom – a place of comfort for the righteous. Likely, what we describe as Hades is the waiting place of judgment for all mankind.
 2. As Jesus was dying on the cross, He told the penitent thief, “Today you will be with Me in paradise” Luke 23:43. I believe that this could be the equivalent of Abraham’s bosom – a waiting place for the saved (though Paradise is used differently in the NT in other places – cf. 2 Corinthians 12:4, Rev. 2:7 – both of these likely have reference to heaven). I believe that IF Jesus went to the waiting place after He died – he did NOT go to hell or torments, but to the place of the righteous.

3. In studying the death and resurrection of Jesus apologetically (evidences) – I see conclusive proofs that Jesus was dead – as verified by the soldier that pierced His side (John 19:34), the marveling of Pilate that He was dead so soon (Mark 15:43-45), and the fact that His body was handled by Joseph of Arimathea and others show He was dead. THE POINT: If Jesus was “made alive in the spirit” by awaking in the Hadean realm, this FURTHER verifies that He was completely dead physically.
4. Thus when Jesus was raised from the dead (remember, He committed His Spirit to God – Luke 23:46), it was a genuine miracle. The spirit of Jesus was claimed from that waiting realm of the dead.

II. His judgment during the time of Noah –

- a. ***By whom also He went and preached to the spirits in prison*** – wherever Jesus went He declared the gospel message to them. This leads to a lot of challenging questions that are difficult to answer:
 - i. Did Jesus really preach to the lost? And if so, did He save some who were lost? I believe this to not be a plausible option because it would be providing a second chance after life, something that is contrary to scripture – Hebrews 9:27, John 5:28-29 where Jesus declared a day of judgment for both the righteous and wicked. Also 2 Peter 2:4-5 would dispel that as a possibility.
 - ii. Is this a figurative declaration that finalized the destiny of both the righteous and the wicked? I believe this to be the point. By Jesus fulfilling prophecy and providing the sacrifice that would once and for all forgive sins, His appearance and then resurrection would declare the eternal destiny of those who had passed away. His actions were His message! There is nothing in the text that indicates His preaching at that time saved anyone.
- b. ***Who formerly were disobedient, when once the divine longsuffering of God waited in the days of Noah*** –
 - i. This would be descriptive of the ungodly world during the time of Noah that refused to repent. We know that 120 years prior to the flood, God determined He was going to destroy the world. But by grace, He appeared to Noah with instructions to build the ark (Genesis 6:1-8). 2 Peter 2:4-5 notes that during this time Noah was a preacher of righteousness – likely warning them.
 - ii. ***Formerly disobedient*** – does not mean they were now saved, but rather it is simply pointing to events in times past. The days of Noah would have predated Jesus on earth (and Peter) by nearly 2500 years.
 - iii. The point: Why use the analogy of Noah? Why not the people of Abraham’s day, or the rebellious children of Israel?
 1. I believe the reason has to do with the judgment of God.
 2. Consider 2 Peter 3:1-9 which speaks of the worldly scoffing at God (and the godly) challenging the delaying of God. Peter warns them that they forgot about the judgment of the flood.
 3. Things were like normal when God’s judgment came (cf. Matthew 24:36-39 – where Jesus warned that His coming would be sudden). And at that time, the wicked would be dealt with. Meanwhile, God is longsuffering, just as He was for 120 years as the ark was being prepared and Noah was preaching judgment.
 4. Peter’s point, as these brethren suffered, God is watching and WILL avenge them when the time comes. 2 Peter 3:10 it will happen. 2 Thessalonians 1:5-9 – the wicked will be repaid with tribulation (eternally, cf. Matthew 25:46).

III. Our Salvation

- a. ***In which a few, that is eight souls, were saved through water.*** Noah managed to ONLY save his family that in spite of building the ark and preaching for how ever long he did. 2 Peter 2:5 notes he only saved 8 people – we know it was him, his 3 sons and their wives (Genesis 7:7, Hebrews 11:7)

- b. ***There is also an antitype which now saves us – baptism.*** Peter here reminds these brethren that just as Noah and his family were saved through water, so THEY had been saved with water – baptism. We will address this in our next lesson of this study, as it deserves greater attention.
- c. The point: Peter is writing to a suffering audience. Very likely, they were the minority within that community (God’s people have ALWAYS been a minority). He encourages them to endure.
 - i. The ungodly and worldly were having their way and causing trouble for the faithful few.
 - ii. Peter is just reminding them to remain faithful.
 - iii. Jesus suffered and has redeemed the godly of all times.
 - iv. Jesus, by His life, death and resurrection has presented a message of hope to those who remain faithful
 - v. Jesus KNEW what they were going through and would provide their ultimate deliverance, EVEN if it was after this life (cf. Revelation 2:10, 14:13, Matthew 10:22)

And thus we can see, when we are facing trials in this life, we need to turn to Jesus. He is our ultimate example of suffering AND ultimate deliverance. He also helps us understand that whatever we endure in this life, when we face Him in eternity, if we are prepared, it will be worth it. Consider 2 Timothy 4:7-8. How are you handling difficult trials for Him? Think about it.