

Review

Peter's first epistle has most recently told us that even when we are busy doing our best, people will hate us anyway. We are not to let this trouble us. In fact, we are to identify with Jesus in this, because He went through more of this than any of us ever will.

Why did He do this? So that by His wounds, we could be healed (1Pet. 2:24). Following that example, our righteous suffering just might result in the repentance of those who hate and persecute us.

3:18-22 The Just For The Unjust

Jesus was just, and died for the unjust. That's Peter's point. That's how we were brought to God, and that's how others might be brought to God as well: through our righteous suffering.

But there is much more information contained within these verses...

Put To Death In The Flesh, Made Alive In The Spirit

When we were born again, we were symbolically put to death in the flesh, but made alive in the spirit. This is possible because of Jesus' literal death in the flesh. Like His death, His resurrection was also in the flesh - but that was three days and nights later. And so what is this that Peter is talking about, when he mentions that Jesus was "made alive in the spirit, in which also He went and made proclamation to the spirits now in prison"?

He is talking about that which happened between the crucifixion and the resurrection. About what took place during those three days and nights between the time Jesus died and the Sunday morning when He rose from the dead...

He Went

After Jesus died on the cross, we know that His body hung there awhile longer. It was then removed, prepared for burial, and placed in the tomb.

But something stands out about that: There were two criminals

crucified with Jesus. One acknowledged the unjust nature of Jesus' crucifixion, saying He had done nothing wrong.

Luke 23:42-43 And he was saying, “Jesus, remember me when You come in Your kingdom!” And He said to him, “Truly I say to you, today you shall be with Me in Paradise.”

That very day, the thief would be with Jesus in Paradise.

Then, about three hours later, as Jesus died, He...

Luke 23:46 ...said, “Father, INTO YOUR HANDS I COMMIT MY SPIRIT.” Having said this, He breathed His last.

Where was His body that day? Dead on the cross, then wrapped in linen, then buried in a tomb. None of those places were Paradise, and the thief certainly wasn't with Him at any point after they both hung on crosses near one another.

But His spirit, Peter says, was made alive. And His spirit went, in the hands of the Father, to somewhere besides the tomb - somewhere called Paradise. To a place that the thief went as well.

Paradise

Now, where was this Paradise? Romans 10:7 says that Jesus descended into the abyss. Ephesians 4:9 says He...

Eph. 4:9 ...descended into the lower parts of the earth

Jesus's body was still in the tomb, but His living spirit, in the hands of the Father, descended into the abyss, to Paradise.

Paradise was below, down the abyss, in the lower parts of the earth. What would that look like? Jesus had already described it in Luke 16, when He related the events of a rich man and a beggar named Lazarus.

Luke 16:22-26 “Now the poor man died and was carried away by the angels to Abraham’s bosom; and the rich man also died and was buried. In Hades he lifted up his eyes, being in torment, and *saw Abraham far away and Lazarus in his bosom. And he cried out and said, ‘Father Abraham, have mercy on me, and send Lazarus so that he may dip the tip of his finger in water and cool off my tongue, for I am in agony in this flame.’ But Abraham said, ‘Child,

remember that during your life you received your good things, and likewise Lazarus bad things; but now he is being comforted here, and you are in agony. And besides all this, between us and you there is a great chasm fixed, so that those who wish to come over from here to you will not be able, and that none may cross over from there to us.'"

Before Jesus' death, no one ever had their sin erased - it had only been covered. Even the faithful people the Bible who died in faith could not be admitted into the presence of God, because He is righteous and holy, while man is corrupt. Even Abraham, whose faith was credited to him as righteousness, descended, rather than ascended. The writer of Hebrews says,

Heb. 11:13 All these died in faith, without receiving the promises, but having seen them and having welcomed them from a distance, and having confessed that they were strangers and exiles on the earth.

Even those who trusted in God and looked forward to their redeeming Messiah could not enter into God's presence. Their salvation had not been accomplished by Jesus yet. Of course, God had a special place set aside for them. This place was called Paradise, or Abraham's Bosom. It was in Hades (Sheol in Hebrew), which is the abode of the dead. The faithful were carried there by angels and comforted.

But Hades had another side as well, separated from Paradise by a great chasm. This other side was a place of fire and torment.

The people on each side could communicate back and forth, but there was no way to get from one side to the other.

When Jesus died, His spirit descended into the abyss, into the lower parts of the earth, into Hades.

Made Proclamation

What did Jesus do when He got there? It would seem that there were a number of things He accomplished.

Although this is a controversial subject, let me tell you what I have

come to believe regarding this.

Peter tells us that those who were disobedient during the days of Noah and were destroyed in the flood were down there, and Jesus made proclamation to them. Because the King James version of the Bible uses the word "preached" (kay-ROOS-so - "to herald, proclaim") some have gotten the idea that they were being given the opportunity to repent.

But this is clearly not the case. The Bible expressly says,

Heb. 9:27 ...it is appointed for men to die once and after this comes judgment

Those in torment were not given a "second chance," or an opportunity to vacate this place of agony.

The Keys Of Death And Hades

I personally believe that another thing Jesus did at this point was to go over to the side of torment and take back the keys of death and Hades. This would have been in full view of those who were being comforted in Paradise on the other side of the chasm. I have come to this conclusion because Paul told the Colossians,

Col. 2:15 When He had disarmed the rulers and authorities, He made a public display of them, having triumphed over them through Him.

This would explain Peter's statement that...

1Pet. 3:22 ...angels and authorities and powers had been subjected to Him.

And then Jesus told John in Revelation,

Rev. 1:18 "...I was dead, and behold, I am alive forevermore, and I have the keys of death and of Hades."

Leading Captivity Captive

Once Jesus was armed with the keys of death and Hades, He emptied Abraham's Bosom. Paul quoted Psalm 68:18 to the Ephesians, saying of Jesus,

Eph. 4:8-10 ..."WHEN HE ASCENDED ON HIGH, HE LED CAPTIVE A HOST OF CAPTIVES, AND HE GAVE GIFTS TO

MEN.” (Now this expression, “He ascended,” what does it mean except that He also had descended into the lower parts of the earth? He who descended is Himself also He who ascended far above all the heavens, so that He might fill all things.)

Jesus "led captivity captive." All of the faithful ones who had died waiting for the promise - from Adam to the thief on the cross - were taken out of Hades.

Having Gone Into Heaven

Jesus ascended, leading captivity captive. Every one of them was brought into the presence of God, their faith finally being fulfilled. That's why today, Paradise is no longer described as being in the lower parts of the earth. Today, it is in heaven.

Paul spoke to the Corinthians about being caught UP into Paradise (2Cor. 12:4). And Jesus said to the church in Ephesus,

Rev. 2:7 "...To him who overcomes, I will grant to eat of the tree of life which is in the Paradise of God."

Brought Safely Through

Of course we know that Jesus' life after the crucifixion was not just spiritual. He had a bodily resurrection. Three days and nights after being crucified, He rose from the dead, physically alive.

Acts 2:24 "...God raised Him up again, putting an end to the agony of death, since it was impossible for Him to be held in its power."

Death had no power over Jesus, because death is the wages of sin, and Jesus was sinless.

His body also had not begun to decompose during that time. Peter...

Acts 2:31 ...spoke of the resurrection of the Christ, that HE WAS NEITHER ABANDONED TO HADES, NOR DID His flesh SUFFER DECAY.

Jesus had been brought safely through death, much like the eight

people in Noah's family were brought safely through the flood.

Baptism Now Saves You?

Peter then makes a statement - one that has been greatly misunderstood: "baptism now saves you." People have used this phrase to defend the doctrine that people are saved by being baptized in water. But that is terribly out of context.

Peter has not been talking about water baptism. He's been talking about Jesus' death, and safe His re-entry to life from death. That is the baptism which Peter is making reference to now: Jesus' baptism into death. Remember how He had been saying,

Luke 12:50 "But I have a baptism to undergo, and how distressed I am until it is accomplished!"

If you go through and read these verses again, I believe it will be clearer to you: "Christ died and was brought safely through death, just like Noah's family was brought safely through the flood. That flood was an antitype (Gk: "an-TEET-oo-pon") of salvation by submersion - not ours in water, but Jesus' into the earth."

Peter's main point through this epistle - and especially through this section - is that Christ suffered for us, leaving us this example to follow.