

Easter Sunday
I Peter 3:
Ark and Resurrection

Sermon

Hobart, April 20th, 2014

Devonport, April 26th, 2014

Launceston, April 27th, 2014

I Peter 3:18-4:10

¹⁸ Christ suffered* for our sins once for all time. He never sinned, but he died for sinners to bring you safely home to God. He suffered physical death, but he was raised to life in the Spirit.*

¹⁹ So he went and preached to the spirits in prison— ²⁰ those who disobeyed God long ago when God waited patiently while Noah was building his boat. Only eight people were saved from drowning in that terrible flood.* ²¹ And that water is a picture of baptism, which now saves you, not by removing dirt from your body, but as a response to God from* a clean conscience. It is effective because of the resurrection of Jesus Christ.

²² Now Christ has gone to heaven. He is seated in the place of honor next to God, and all the angels and authorities and powers accept his authority.



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* Or *in spirit*.

* Greek *saved through water*.

* Or *as an appeal to God for*.

INTRODUCTION:

I. MOVIE; NOAH

A. CONTROVERSIAL;

1. Some of you have seen it
 - a) All of us have read, many times, the story of Noah and the ark in Genesis 6-
2. But however we feel about the liberties and interpretations of the Hollywood version
 - a) Nevertheless the overall message is clear,
3. The director Aronofsky says Noah's story tells of "new life emerging from old."
4. In the end, in Genesis and in Aronofsky's movie, there is a new beginning, with all the evil and resultant suffering washed away, and the opportunity for mankind to start afresh with God, each other, and the creation

B. THE RESCUE OF NOAH AND HIS FAMILY AND THE EARTH IS A HELPFUL BACKGROUND AND METAPHOR OF THE MESSAGE OF EASTER

1. Today we are celebrating the resurrection of our Saviour, and what it means for us and all creation
2. Our text is I Peter 3, that refers to both Jesus' resurrection and to Noah and the flood
3. It is a challenging, but helpful passage in helping us celebrate the salvation we have through Jesus' resurrection

C. PRAYER

BODY:

II. I PETER 3:18-4:10

A. PETER'S FIRST EPISTLE WAS WRITTEN TO THE CHURCHES IN WHAT IS NOW NORTHERN TURKEY WHO WERE SUFFERING PERSECUTION.

1. Bible Knowledge Commentary;

This epistle could be understood as a handbook written for ambassadors to a hostile foreign land.

The purpose ... of 1 Peter was to encourage Christians to face persecution so that the true grace of Jesus Christ would be evidenced in them (5:12).

Peter concretely linked doctrine with practice. The *new birth* gives a living hope to those in the midst of persecution. *New behavior* is required to demonstrate the grace of God to an unbelieving and hostile world. And *new responsibilities* are placed on the leaders and members of the body of Christ since they should stand together as living stones against the onrushing tide of persecution.

Those who read 1 Peter are encouraged to lift their eyes from present problems and trials and behold the vistas provided by an eternal perspective. For though believers may for a while suffer grief in trials, they wait for an inheritance that can never perish, spoil, or fade.¹

B. THE WHOLE MESSAGE OF EASTER IS THE SAME;

1. God wants to rescue us from the results of sin, the results of living apart from him

a) He does so through Jesus taking on these results upon himself in his life and death

b) And winning victory over them through his Resurrection

(1) Bringing us new life in harmonious, loving fellowship with God and one another

2. So we find this message of Easter both in the story of Noah, and in I Peter

¹Walvoord, J. F., Zuck, R. B., & Dallas Theological Seminary. (1983-c1985). *The Bible knowledge commentary : An exposition of the scriptures* (839). Wheaton, IL: Victor Books.

I Peter 3:18-4:10

¹⁸ Christ suffered* for our sins once for all time. He never sinned, but he died for sinners to bring you safely home to God. He suffered physical death, but he was raised to life in the Spirit.*

3. This is the encouraging message of Easter

- a) Jesus who never sinned, died in our place and was resurrected to bring us safely home to God.
- b) His death and resurrection lift us out of our world of darkness, sin and suffering into God's redeemed and restored new world

4. This gives us hope

- a) And it also gives us the opportunity to live the new life in the Spirit
- b) To participate in the life of God and participate in the building of the new world that is God's life and kingdom on earth, which is "as it is in heaven".

5. This is the life we look forward to when we are finally raised at Jesus' return

- a) But it is what we get to participate in part, right now, today
- b) Which is what Peter is talking about in his letter

C. NOW COMES A DIRECT COMPARISON TO NOAH AND THE ARK

1. It also contains one of the more difficult passages in Scripture

¹⁹ So he went and preached to the spirits in prison— ²⁰ those who disobeyed God long ago when God waited patiently while Noah was building his boat. Only eight people were saved from drowning in that terrible flood.*

* Some manuscripts read *died*.

* Or *in spirit*.

* Greek *saved through water*.

D. SPIRITS IN PRISON

a) It would seem these are those from before the flood, and perhaps all the disobedient, all those who have rejected God and are to that point “unsaved”.

2. One view is that the *spirits* being preached to were those evil spirits and powers that led mankind to sin before the flood, and that Jesus has delivered us completely from them and all that they led mankind into.

3. Others believe the spirits in prison were those humans, now in the grave, who disobeyed God before the flood

4. Bible Knowledge Commentary

3:19-20. Through whom . . . He . . . preached to the spirits in prison has been subject to many interpretations. Some believe Peter here referred to the descent of Christ’s Spirit into hades between His death and resurrection to offer people who lived before the Flood a second chance for salvation.

...The “spirits” (*pneumasin*, a term usually applied to supernatural beings but also used at least once to refer to human “spirits”; cf. Heb. 12:23) are described in 1 Peter 3:20 as those who were disobedient **when God waited patiently** for **Noah** to finish building **the ark**.

The “spirits” referred to in 1 Peter 3:20 are probably the souls of the evil human race that existed in the days of Noah. Those “spirits” are now “in prison” awaiting the final judgment of God at the end of the Age.

The problem remains as to *when* Christ preached to these “spirits.”²

5. Some believe that Christ preached to them at the time through Noah

6. But others believe Jesus preached to them himself when he entered death and the grave

a) William Barclay;

If Christ descended into Hades and preached there, there is no corner of the universe into which the message of grace has not come. There is in this passage the solution of one of the most haunting questions raised by the

cf. *confer*, compare

² The Bible Knowledge Commentary

Christian faith—what is to happen to those who lived before Jesus Christ and to those to whom the gospel never came? There can be no salvation without repentance but how can repentance come to those who have never been confronted with the love and holiness of God?...

This is the point that Justin Martyr fastened on long ago; “The Lord, the Holy God of Israel, remembered his dead, those sleeping in the earth, and came down to them to tell them the good news of salvation.”

The doctrine of the descent into Hades conserves the precious truth that no man who ever lived is left without a sight of Christ and without the offer of the salvation of God.

It may well be that we ought to think of this [phrase “he descended into hell”] as a picture painted in terms of poetry rather than a doctrine stated in terms of theology. But it contains these three great truths—that Jesus Christ not only tasted death but drained the cup of death, that the triumph of Christ is universal and that there is no corner of the universe into which the grace of God has not reached.³

7. Others, like Karl Barth believed that in that time when Jesus died, Jesus took the full consequence of sin, and suffered the separation from God that sin brings, for us and as one of us.

a) But that he brought God’s life into our death, and raises us and brings us safely home to God, to new life in the Spirit

¹⁸ Christ suffered* for our sins once for all time. He never sinned, but he died for sinners to bring you safely home to God. He suffered physical death, but he was raised to life in the Spirit.*

8. The message for the “spirits in prison” is the salvation that is made possible for them through his death and resurrection

a) The message is in the actual event in which Jesus entered into the prison that sin destines us all to in order to open the way out through his victorious resurrection

³ William Barclay, *The Letters of James and Peter*, p.242-243

* Some manuscripts read *died*.

* Or *in spirit*.

b) The message is that he entered into our death, our hades, our hell so we could be raised out of it with him

9. Just as he walked out of his tomb of burial, all have the opportunity and invitation to be delivered out of their state of guilt and sin, of death and condemnation, and share in his new life, raised in the Spirit and brought safely home to God.

E. THIS IS THE HOPEFUL MESSAGE OF EASTER

1. That all sinners may be led by Christ out of sin, death and darkness into his new life, both those who are dead and those who are alive.

¹⁹ So he went and preached to the spirits in prison— ²⁰ those who disobeyed God long ago when God waited patiently while Noah was building his boat. Only eight people were saved from drowning in that terrible flood.*

²¹ And that water is a picture of baptism, which now saves you, not by removing dirt from your body, but as a response to God from* a clean conscience. It is effective because of the resurrection of Jesus Christ.

F. THE FLOOD AND BAPTISM

1. Peter draws the analogy between the flood and baptism
2. But neither the waters of the flood, nor the act of baptism actually save us
 - a) What saves us is our response to God's offer of salvation through Jesus' resurrection
 - b) What saved Noah was his response to God's offer of salvation through waters of the flood in the ark
3. In baptism we renounce sin and independence from God, and give thanks for our rescue and pledge our faith and thanks and commitment to God and Jesus our Saviour and risen Lord who leads us into the new life with him.

* Greek *saved through water*.

* Or *as an appeal to God for*.

4. Baptism also pictures our having being given a clean conscience to make a new start

a) The Bible Knowledge Commentary;

Baptism represents a complete break with one's past life. As the Flood wiped away the old sinful world, so baptism pictures one's break from his old sinful life and his entrance into new life in Christ.⁴

5. In both the story of Noah and in the message of Easter and baptism;

a) God in his mercy brings an end to the old life and the evils and wickedness that comes from replacing God as the authority in our lives

(1) And through his dramatic action, the flood, and Jesus' death, he completely buries and washes away the old

(2) And through the ark, and Jesus' resurrection we are delivered free into God's new world

²² Now Christ has gone to heaven. He is seated in the place of honor next to God, and all the angels and authorities and powers accept his authority.

G. BOTH IN THE FLOOD AND IN JESUS'S RESURRECTION AND ASCENSION, JESUS TRIUMPHS OVER ALL EVIL POWERS

1. In spite of trials and persecutions we experience from the world around us, we have the reassurance that Jesus is with us and for us

2. That from God's right hand he is our Lord and Saviour, saving, protecting, guiding and enabling us to live the new life, knowing that nothing can separate us from his love and salvation

1. Peter goes on to emphasise how we are to live that new life, now we have experienced it

I Peter 4:1 So then, since Christ suffered physical pain, you must arm yourselves with the same attitude he had, and be ready to suffer, too. For if you have suffered

⁴ The Bible Knowledge Commentary,

physically for Christ, you have finished with sin.* ² You won't spend the rest of your lives chasing your own desires, but you will be anxious to do the will of God. ³ You have had enough in the past of the evil things that godless people enjoy—their immorality and lust, their feasting and drunkenness and wild parties, and their terrible worship of idols.

a) Since Christ has suffered for sin in his human life, and ultimately by dying on the cross, we need to be prepared to suffer while we live God's life in this world

⁴ Of course, your former friends are surprised when you no longer plunge into the flood of wild and destructive things they do. So they slander you. ⁵ But remember that they will have to face God, who will judge everyone, both the living and the dead.

⁶ That is why the Good News was preached to those who are now dead*—so although they were destined to die like all people,* they now live forever with God in the Spirit.*

⁷ The end of the world is coming soon. Therefore, be earnest and disciplined in your prayers. ⁸ Most important of all, continue to show deep love for each other, for love covers a multitude of sins. ⁹ Cheerfully share your home with those who need a meal or a place to stay.

¹⁰ God has given each of you a gift from his great variety of spiritual gifts. Use them well to serve one another.

H. WE ARE TO USE THE OPPORTUNITY OF OUR NEW LIVES

1. To be prayerful
2. To continue to show deep love for others
3. To be hospitable and giving to those in need
4. To use the gifts we have been given to serve, as Jesus did
5. To be a witness of the new life in the midst of this old world that will soon come to an end

* Or *For the one [or One] who has suffered physically has finished with sin.*

* *Greek preached even to the dead.*

* Or *so although people had judged them worthy of death.*

* Or *in spirit.*

CONCLUSION:

I. AS WE READ REGARDING THE MAIN MESSAGE OF I PETER:

Those who read 1 Peter are encouraged to lift their eyes from present problems and trials and behold the vistas provided by an eternal perspective. For though believers may for a while suffer grief in trials, they wait for an inheritance that can never perish, spoil, or fade.⁵

I. KARL BARTH TALKS ABOUT JESUS' RESURRECTION ON THE THIRD DAY:

The third day a new life of Jesus begins; but at the same time on the third day there begins a new *Aeon*, a new shape of the world, after the old world has been completely done away and settled in the death of Jesus Christ.

Easter is the breaking in of a new time and world in the existence of the man Jesus, who now begins a new life as the conqueror, as the victorious bearer, as the destroyer of the burden of man's sin, which had been laid upon Him.

In this altered existence of His the first community saw not only a supernatural continuation of His previous life, but an entirely new life, that of the exalted Jesus Christ, and simultaneously the beginning of a new *world*.

...The war is at an end—even though here and there troops are still shooting, because they have not heard anything yet about the capitulation. The game is won, even though the player can still play a few further moves. ...The clock has run down, even though the pendulum still swings a few times this way and that.

It is in this interim space that we are living; the old is past, behold it has all become new. The Easter message tells us that our enemies, sin, the curse and death, are beaten. Ultimately they can no longer start mischief. They still behave as though the game were not decided, the battle not fought; we must still reckon with them, but fundamentally we must cease to fear them anymore.

If you have heard the Easter message, you can no longer run around with a tragic face and lead the humourless existence of a man who has no hope. ...we are invited and summoned to take seriously the victory of God's glory

⁵Walvoord, J. F., Zuck, R. B., & Dallas Theological Seminary. (1983-c1985). *The Bible knowledge commentary : An exposition of the scriptures* (839). Wheaton, IL: Victor Books.

in this man Jesus and to be joyful in Him. Then we may live in thankfulness and not in fear.

The Resurrection of Jesus Christ reveals, it completes this proclamation of victory. To those who know this, the break between the old world and the new is proclaimed. They have still a tiny stretch to run, till it becomes visible that God in Jesus Christ *has* accomplished all for them.

1. As we read from Barclay; we are reminded of three things from what Jesus accomplished;

...that Jesus Christ not only tasted death but drained the cup of death, that the triumph of Christ is universal

and that there is no corner of the universe into which the grace of God has not reached.⁶

B. PRAYER

⁶ William Barclay, *The Letters of James and Peter*, p.242-243