

“Betting My Life on Jesus”
1 Peter 3:18-22
January 14, 2007
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Issa and his wife, Parvah, of Pakistan, attempted this past January (2006) to register the birth of their son, Micah, with the civil population bureau.

Selecting such a Biblical name may have caused the authorities to begin investigating this Christian family.

Issa was arrested July.

At the time of his arrest the convert was told he must renounce Christianity or face years in jail and possible execution for his apostasy.

Under Iran’s judicial system based on Islamic law, anyone who leaves Islam for another religion has committed a capital offense.

Prison officials reportedly tried for days to force him to confess to being involved in illegal drug trafficking.

Using strong psychological pressures, including threats to kill his family and other Christian believers, Issa was interrogated by secret service agents and a professor of Islamic theology, who urged him to recant his Christian faith and return to Islam.

Issa refused to do so.

Iranian court authorities in the Northern city of Rasht have released Issa.

Nearly two months after his arrest, he was granted bail this past August 24th, but the judge introduced new accusations against him at this hearing.

According to unnamed “confidential witnesses,” the judge said, that Issa’s eight-year-old daughter, Martha, allegedly had been trying to lead other children to the Christian faith.

He was reunited with his wife, Parvah, and his two children following his release.

He has moved his family to an undisclosed location, but is subject to be recalled to court.

http://www.prisoneralert.com/pprofiles/vp_prisoner_166_profile.html?_nc=bd138219f7450db9ac93c57a3aa734d5

What if that were you?

Is your Christianity worth that?

What if added to the normal stresses of life was threatening accusations against you because of your faith in Christ?

What is it, in your experience that pushes you to the very edge of your faith and forces you to ask what you really believe?

I have a friend who, for 15 years, has stood in the “public square” promoting and defending the values of the Christian faith in our society.

Because he has been in prominent positions where his influence could make a difference, powerful enemies have retaliated.

He has been ridiculed and vilified in the press and now, by those enemies, he has been accused of improprieties that threaten his ability to even make a living.

How many times might he have been tempted with the thought of “Is my Christianity worth it?”

Through the years, few other Christians seem to have cared very much for what he was putting his reputation and even his livelihood on the line.

Time after time he would lose battles and see injustice prevail.

He would do the right thing only to have it swallowed up by the wrong.

People love to tell stories about how truth and justice finally prevail because of the perseverance of godly people.

But what do you think and do when you realize that more often than not, they don’t prevail and lies and injustice continue unabated.

There are some inspiring exceptions to the old adage that “nice guys finish last” but it seems usually true.

It would be so much easier to just get along by going along, by just adopting a “live and let live” attitude.

Christianity is not an easy religion.

Jesus makes huge demands on us as his followers.

Luke 14:26 “If anyone comes to me and does not hate his father and mother, his wife and children, his brothers and sisters—yes, even his own life—he cannot be my disciple.

Mark 8:34 “If anyone would come after me, he must deny himself and take up his cross and follow me.

Romans 8:13 “For if you live according to the sinful nature, you will die; but if by the Spirit you put to death the misdeeds of the body, you will live,

Colossians 3:5-8 “Put to death, therefore...sexual immorality, impurity, lust, evil desires and greed... you must rid yourselves of all such things as these: anger, rage, malice, slander, and filthy language from your lips.

Get serious about your Christianity and you will find yourself on the outside of a lot of groups.

Stand up for what is right and you can easily find yourself disadvantaged.

Spend serious amounts of your time and money for the work of the Kingdom of God and you may well end up just tired and poor while others who call themselves Christians take long vacations and have all the latest comforts.

Is it worth it?

Our text for today is 1 Peter 3:18-22.

But to understand it best, we must also read some of the context.

Please stand and follow along in your Bible as I begin reading at 1 Peter 3:13-22 “Who is going to harm you if you are eager to do good? ¹⁴ But even if you should suffer for what is right, you are blessed. “Do not fear what they fear; do not be frightened.” ¹⁵ But in your hearts set apart Christ as Lord. Always be prepared to give an answer to everyone who asks you to give the reason for the hope that

you have. But do this with gentleness and respect, ¹⁶ keeping a clear conscience, so that those who speak maliciously against your good behavior in Christ may be ashamed of their slander. ¹⁷ It is better, if it is God's will, to suffer for doing good than for doing evil.

(Now we get to our text for today, and an interesting text it is)

¹⁸ “For Christ died for sins once for all, the righteous for the unrighteous, to bring you to God. He was put to death in the body but made alive by the Spirit, ¹⁹ through whom also he went and preached to the spirits in prison ²⁰ who disobeyed long ago when God waited patiently in the days of Noah while the ark was being built. In it only a few people, eight in all, were saved through water, ²¹ and this water symbolizes baptism that now saves you also--not the removal of dirt from the body but the pledge of a good conscience toward God. It saves you by the resurrection of Jesus Christ, ²² who has gone into heaven and is at God's right hand--with angels, authorities and powers in submission to him.”

Pray.

You will notice that verse 18, which begins our text for today, starts with the word “for” which can also be translated “because” or “since.”

Peter indicates that what he will write next is about the same subject.

So what is the subject?

Verse 14 captures it, “Even if you should suffer for what is right, you are blessed.”

Peter is making the case for why doing the right thing, following Christ, is best even if you suffer for it.

Again I would remind many of us, **that** is relatively easy to say until we are in the middle of suffering for being Christian or until we must make a Christian-value decision that will likely result in us being deprived or ridiculed or even mistreated.

Now it is rightly asked how verses 18-22 speak to this issue.

There are some rather obscure ideas introduced here.

What do Jesus' preaching to spirits in prison, Noah's flood thousands of years earlier, and baptism has to do with being blessed even in suffering?

Or to put it in the words I've been using thus far, **how can being treated unjustly because of our faith, be worth it?**

This is admittedly a difficult passage BUT it becomes less difficult if we keep the main point in focus.

Peter is going to remind them of certain truths about Jesus and their relationship to Jesus that should encourage them even if they are suffering for their faith.

First of all, so you can see the basic facts that Peter is presenting to make his point, I'm going to set aside for the moment an important but parenthetical section of the text – verses 19-21.

Verses 19-21 contain those difficult sections of the passage.

Now let me liberally paraphrase the text with those verses set aside:

I will start at verse 17: 1 Peter 3:17-22 "It is still better to do good even if God allows you to suffer for it. Because Christ died for your sins, one fully-adequate time, the righteous Jesus dying for the unrighteous you, to bring YOU to God (importantly speaking not only of your relationship to him now but more to the point, your relationship to him in the future) – Jesus was truly physically put to death – but he was also truly raised from the dead... (leave out the parenthetical verses 19-21) And Jesus has gone into heaven and is in the place of authority ruling over everything visible and invisible.

Grammatically, Jesus' death, resurrection, and ascension form the infrastructure of the passage.

Looking at the verses this way, we see the three ideas Peter uses to make his main point:

Even if God wills that you should suffer for being a Christian, for doing what is right, it is worth it because:

1. When Jesus suffered, he suffered **to bring you to God.**

2. Secondly, yes he truly died but he also rose triumphantly from the dead, and as we will see, announcing the defeat of sin and death.
3. And thirdly, and maybe most to Peter's point, Jesus is now in heaven in sovereign control of **everything** accomplishing his goal of bringing you to God.

To express it more succinctly, Even if we suffer, obeying God is worth it because Jesus is Lord and He, and we who follow him, will be vindicated in the end.

Suffering is not the final word; justice will prevail, wrongs will be righted, and slander, ridicule and persecution will be avenged.

Now before coming back to the main point again I want you to see how the difficult verses of 19-21 fit into Peter's encouragement of his readers and us.

But remember it is Peter's main point of the final vindication of Christ and his suffering followers that guides us in our understanding of these more difficult verses.

1 Peter 3:19-21 "Through whom also he went and preached to the spirits in prison ²⁰ who disobeyed long ago when God waited patiently in the days of Noah while the ark was being built. In it only a few people, eight in all, were saved through water, ²¹ and this water symbolizes baptism that now saves you also--not the removal of dirt from the body but the pledge of a good conscience toward God. It saves you by the resurrection of Jesus Christ..."

Nearly all commentators agree that Peter says Jesus somehow went somewhere and preached something to someone.

Whether he did this between his death and resurrection or after his resurrection is debated. (Some suggest he did it through Noah in Noah's time – I think the temporal sequence of verses 19-20 makes that highly unlikely.)

But as a straightforward reading of the words suggest; Jesus did this sometime during his death/resurrection experience.

What did he do? He preached.

We are not told what he preached.

Though it is not the usual word for it, this word “preached” is sometimes used of preaching the gospel but that would mean Jesus here did something inconsistent with the rest of Scripture, which doesn’t allow for an after-death “second chance.”

Hebrews 9:27 says, “Man is destined to die once, and after that to face judgment.”

However the word here translated “preached” can also mean proclamation, and in this case a proclamation not of good news but probably of judgment.

Proclamation of judgment certainly matches the context, which is not about evangelism but is about final vindication, justice prevailing.

So Jesus is probably proclaiming judgment but to whom and where?

1 Peter 3:19-20 “He went and preached to the spirits in prison ²⁰ who disobeyed long ago when God waited patiently in the days of Noah while the ark was being built.”

The “who” Peter calls the “spirits...who disobeyed long ago” before the flood.

As we know from Genesis 6, the time of the flood was a time of unprecedented evil.

Genesis 6:5 “The LORD saw how great man’s wickedness on the earth had become, and that every inclination of the thoughts of his heart was only evil all the time.”

The only God-followers to be found on the whole earth were Noah and his family.

I don’t know, but I suspect it was this well-known ancient evil time that came to Peter’s mind when he thought about the godly suffering-minority in his own time.

Peter wants us to know that Jesus did something about those evil people that ought to give us encouragement in the face of evil.

Whether the “spirits” are fallen angels (2 Peter 2:4) as some suggest, or other evil supernatural beings (Genesis 6:1-4) as others suggest, or are the mass of human beings of Noah’s day whose “every inclination of the thoughts of his heart was only evil all the time” is not critically important to the point Peter is making.

As to where the spirits were, Peter tells us only that they were in prison.

The OT Hebrew word for where the dead go is “sheol.”

The NT Greek word for the place of the dead is “hades.”

In both cases, the word is often accompanied with the idea of it going down (Numbers 16:30; Matthew 11:23) as into the grave, into the earth.

Even though today, as the NT tells us, when believers die they go immediately into the presence of God, unbelievers go to and remain in sheol or hades (what we commonly call “hell”) awaiting the return of Christ and final judgment.

So what is Peter here teaching that is encouraging?

If Jesus announced that justice would finally prevail over that incredibly evil time, evil people, and even demonic forces, it surely could prevail over the situations, people and even supernatural opposition those early Christians were facing.

Jesus is and will be victorious!

I think this is one of the teachings of that phrase in the Apostles’ Creed when we say:

Jesus “was crucified, dead, and buried.

He descended into hell.

The third day He arose again from the dead.”

Jesus confirmed the certain judgment awaiting all who oppose God and his people.

I think Peter is saying that as certainly as God judged those who opposed him in Noah’s day so he will judge those who oppose him in your day.

Now having Noah in mind, Peter wants to make another point from that time of the flood.

1 Peter 3:20-21 In it only a few people, eight in all, were saved through water, ²¹ and this water symbolizes baptism that now saves you also--not the removal of dirt from the body but the pledge of a good conscience toward God. It saves you by the resurrection of Jesus Christ..."

And so now secondly, as surely as God **saved his own people** in Noah's day, though they were few in number, so he will save you who belong to him, who have been saved by the resurrection of Jesus.

Now admittedly, Peter uses what to us is rather ambiguous language when he writes, 1 Peter 3:20-21 "a few people, eight in all, were saved through water, and this water symbolizes baptism that now saves you also..."

Clearly Peter is drawing a comparison between the floodwater of Noah's day and the water of baptism.

And he states that in both cases water saved.

Evangelicals get nervous when anyone uses language that suggests baptism saves someone.

I think it is quite fair to suggest that no one would accuse Peter of truly suggesting that in either case the water actually did the saving.

Clearly God saves but in both cases water is instrumental.

But that doesn't answer everything for us Evangelicals.

For some would say, "See, water baptism is the means that God uses to save us."

But that goes beyond what Peter says.

In fact to avoid a misunderstanding about the role of water baptism in salvation Peter adds these words, 1 Peter 3:21 "baptism that now saves you also, not the removal of dirt from the body but the pledge

of a good conscience toward God. It saves you by the resurrection of Jesus Christ...”

Peter says baptismal water can't remove dirt from the body.

Now if Peter were talking about physical dirt from your physical body he would be wrong because water can indeed help clean our bodies.

But the word translated “body” should be more literally translated “flesh” and that helps us understand that what Peter is saying here is that baptism can't deal with the sins of our flesh – our sinfulness.

Instead, Peter writes, baptism is symbolic of something that is internal – “the pledge of a good conscience.”

In conversion to Christianity and in the baptism that symbolizes that conversion, we respond to God's grace in repentance and faith – we are pledging to follow Christ.

This is reflected in the question-answer dialog that is part of our baptism ritual:

Do you renounce the evil powers of this world, which rebel against God and corrupt and destroy the creatures of God?
Do you renounce all sinful desires that draw you from the love of God?
Do you turn to Jesus Christ and trusting him alone accept him as your saving-Lord?

Your baptism is symbolic of your faith in what Christ has done – or as Peter ends this explanation, “It saves you by the resurrection of Jesus Christ...”

You might say, if that is what Peter meant, why didn't he say that?

First of all Peter is quite clear that we are not saved by anything but by grace alone through faith alone in Christ alone.

But we do well to remember that Peter did not share our nervousness about baptism.

It was inconceivable in Peter's day that one who professed repentant-faith in Jesus Christ wouldn't demonstrate that faith by the first step of obedience of baptism.

After all, it was the Jesus we are following who said we are to be baptized.

But I come back to the point – Peter is simply reminding them that they belong to God.

They are baptized believers who have pledged their allegiance to Jesus Christ and Jesus will not fail them.

I often say to baptismal candidates, "Someday you may doubt that you believed; memories of what we only think about grow dim.

But you don't forget or doubt that you got wet in front of several hundred people. Your baptism is a tangible expression of your intangible faith.

As surely as God saved Noah in his day, so God will save them.

As certain is the resurrection of Jesus, so certain is your salvation by Him.

But Peter's words in our text don't only point back to the certainty of our conversion – our new relationship with God through the death and resurrection of Jesus.

Just as importantly his words point to what happened to Jesus after his resurrection.

1 Peter 3:21-22 "It saves you by the resurrection of Jesus Christ, ²² who has gone into heaven and is at God's right hand--with angels, authorities and powers in submission to him."

Jesus didn't just provide forgiveness he also provided victory.

Peter wants us to see Jesus as he is **now**.

We don't see him as hanging on a cross.

We see him in all his power, glory and sovereignty.

There is no power or person in heaven or on earth that can thwart his will.

This passage sets forth the grand truth of Christ's resurrection, his ascension and his rule over all things (even over those who opposed God in times past and those who oppose him now).

The point is similar to final chapters of the book of Revelation and to Romans 8:38-39 "For I am convinced that neither death nor life, neither angels nor demons, neither the present nor the future, nor any powers, neither height nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God that is in Christ Jesus our Lord.

If Christ has been vindicated, as demonstrated in his resurrection and ascension, and we are in him, then we too will be vindicated in the end.

This is assurance full and true.

It will be worth it all.

2 Corinthians 4:16-18 "Therefore we do not lose heart. Though outwardly we are wasting away, yet inwardly we are being renewed day by day. ¹⁷ For our light and momentary troubles are achieving for us an eternal glory that far outweighs them all. ¹⁸ So we fix our eyes not on what is seen, but on what is unseen. For what is seen is temporary, but what is unseen is eternal.

In 2002, police and militia burst into Mua Say So's home and beat and tortured his four married brothers in front of their families.

His younger brother, Mua Bua Senh, died after he was beaten twice mercilessly.

Seeking justice for his brother's murder, So tried to put pressure on the government.

He photographed his brother lying in the coffin along with a sign that said, "Beaten to death because of following the gospel."

Because of this action, he was later arrested and charged with the murder.

During his hearing in April 2003, Mua Say So was sentenced to three years in prison for murdering his brother and for falsely accusing the police.

He lost his house, and his wife fled with their children to a safe area.

While in prison, now for 1382 days, he has been forced to break rocks for construction projects.

The police told him if he would deny God, he would be released. He continues to stand firm in his faith, following Jesus.

http://www.prisoneralert.com/pprofiles/vp_prisoner_162_profile.html?_nc=bd138219f7450db9ac93c57a3aa734d5

Is Christianity worth it?

What do I BELIEVE?

1 Peter 3:17-22 “It is better, if it is God's will, to suffer for doing good than for doing evil. “For Christ died for sins once for all, the righteous for the unrighteous, to bring you to God. He was put to death in the body but made alive by the Spirit... Jesus Christ, who has gone into heaven and is at God's right hand--with angels, authorities and powers in submission to him.”

1 Peter 1:3-5 “Praise be to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ! In his great mercy he has given us new birth into a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, ⁴ and into an inheritance that can never perish, spoil or fade—kept in heaven for you, ⁵ who through faith are **shielded by God's power** until the coming of the salvation that is ready to be revealed in the last time.”

Other Notes

“The burden of verses 3:18-22 is that the readers of the epistle have no reason to fear because Christ has won the decisive victory on their behalf by his resurrection and journey to heaven; their baptism is the token of their participation in that victory.” Michaels, *1 Peter*, 201

“The purpose of both passages (2:22-25 and 3:18-22) is to set forth Jesus Christ, first as the supreme example of the behavior required of the epistle’s readers, and second as the One who, by his redemptive work, made such behavior possible.” Michaels 196)

2:22-25 discusses Jesus’ behavior through his passion and death.

18 “For Christ died for sins once for all,

Peter **does** make the same point that Hebrews makes about Jesus’ death being a one-time event (“once for all” as opposed to over and over again like the Jewish sacrifices not “once for all people” as some argue for unlimited atonement) **BUT Peter’s main point is the effect that death has for us, which he will go on to describe.** Clearly Peter speaks of the sacrificial nature of Christ’s death but he doesn’t elaborate on it here.

18b “the righteous for the unrighteous,

The substitutionary aspect of Jesus’ death is likewise pointed out but not camped on here as earlier in 1:19 “a lamb without blemish or defect” and 2:22 “He committed no sin, and no deceit was found in his mouth.”

Consistent with Romans 5:6-8 “You see, at just the right time, when we were still powerless, Christ died for the ungodly. ⁷ Very rarely will anyone die for a righteous man, though for a good man someone might possibly dare to die. ⁸ But God demonstrates his own love for us in this: While we were still sinners, Christ died for us.

Thus far Peter is reiterating what he spelled out in 2:22-25 **but now he moves beyond it to the great truth of the resurrection and final vindication (of which we are a part since we are in Christ).**

18c “to bring you to God.

The unrighteous have been made righteous to make us fit for a relationship with a holy God.

Is becoming a Christian the whole story or is there more.

Clearly we have come to God in one sense but there is more to come – glorification, in the presence of the Lord Jesus forever.

Romans 5:1-2 teaches the same thing but the emphasis here on the former aspect: Two ideas: present right relationship with God AND future vindication, glory.

Romans 5:1-2 “Therefore, since we have been justified through faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ,² through whom we have gained access by faith into this grace in which we now stand. **And we rejoice in the hope of the glory of God.**

Peter is writing to encourage them so the “bring you to God” certainly in light of the context (v22) speaks to final victory not just immediate positive relationship with God.

18d “He was put to death in the body but made alive by the Spirit,

The body/spirit distinction here is not between material and immaterial but between life before (with its mortal limitations) and life after (with its immortal freedoms).

“The flesh-spirit contrast is not between Christ’s body and soul but between his two states of existence – in the realm of the earthly human life before his death and in his glorified state of existence after his resurrection.” (Jobes, 239)

The body/spirit distinction here is not between material and immaterial but between life before (with its mortal limitations) and life after (with its immortal freedoms).

19a “through whom also he went and preached to the spirits in prison

In the context of vindication – it is most likely that the point of referencing this event is that Christ proclaimed victory over the even

past evildoers (or possibly even the demonic forces rampant in Noah's day).

NASB "in which" compared to NIV "through whom."

"in which" seems to connect to Christ's resurrected body and spirit.

"through whom" seems to connect to the Spirit.

I think the more natural reading is that concurrent with his death/resurrection experience (not necessarily between) Jesus went and preached to the spirits in prison.

Jesus, in his risen state, or by the Spirit (by whom he was raised from the dead) went...

19c "through whom also he went and preached to the spirits in prison

"also" may be translated "even" – "He even went..." emphasizing the extent to which he went – the unlikely place to which he went, emphasizing his universal reign which verse 22 also does.

The "spirits" are clearly connected to verse 20a and Noah: "who disobeyed long ago when God waited patiently in the days of Noah while the ark was being built.

In the NT the word "spirits" is rarely used of human beings (Hebrews 12:23) but is much used of supernatural beings (especially demons).

So are these human beings or supernatural beings (demons)?

It could be either – the evidence is not conclusive.

When did he preach to them?

The NASB adds a word that is not in the text "now" (now in prison) and thus apparently takes the approach that Christ has preached to them before his death/resurrection (preincarnate presence of Christ through Noah preaching to them?) but "now" they are in prison.

The NIV leaves the time open – but it seems most natural to understand the text as meaning that sometime during his death/resurrection experience he did this.

What did he "preach" to them? Good news or judgment?

The word "preach" here is not the usual Petrine word for preaching good news (euangellion) but a different word (karusso) meaning proclaim or announce.

It seems most likely that the proclamation is one of judgment indicating Jesus' triumph.

If it is supernatural spirits (fallen angels) who Jesus preached to, it would be consistent with Jude 1:6 “And the angels who did not keep their positions of authority but abandoned their own home--these he has kept in darkness, bound with everlasting chains for judgment on the great Day.”

But the patience of God in the following description would not seem to focus on fallen angels but it does focus on human beings.

2 Peter 3:9 “He is patient with you, not wanting anyone to perish, but everyone to come to repentance.

Where did he preach to them? In prison.

2 Peter 2:4 “For if God did not spare angels when they sinned, but sent them to hell, putting them into gloomy dungeons to be held for judgment...”

But the unbelievers of Noah’s day (and all subsequent unbelievers) are likewise in Sheol (Hebrew) or “Hades” (Greek) – being kept there until the Day of Judgment.

Apostles’ Creed – “He descended into hell”

Many consider the phrase “descended into hell” to be nothing more than another way of saying he died.

Richard Phillips of Tenth Presbyterian church writes, “Therefore, when we say, **“He descended into hell,” we are simply recalling that Jesus came under the power of death, and went to the place of the dead until His resurrection.** Hell, in that terminology, is not the place of final judgment, but the place of all the dead awaiting judgment. He went to the place of the dead, being under the power of death until His resurrection... In the Old Testament, and even during the life of Christ, the dead are presented in Hades. For instance, in the parable of the rich man and Lazarus, Jesus says, *“The time came when the beggar died and the angels carried him to Abraham’s side. The rich man also died and was buried. In hell, where he was in torment, he looked up and saw Abraham far away, with Lazarus by his side”* (Lk. 16:22-23). This whole scene takes place in hell, that is, in Hades. On one side of hell, as it were, is paradise, where Abraham and Lazarus are. On the other side, beyond a great chasm, hell is really hell, and that is where the once greedy rich man now is. This also seems to agree with what Jesus said to the thief on the nearby cross who believed in Him: “*Jesus*

answered him, "I tell you the truth, today you will be with me in paradise"(Lk. 23:43). Presumably, then, Jesus went to hell, proclaiming his victory to those given over for damnation, while actually staying in the paradise precincts. http://www.tenth.org/qbox/qb_000716.htm

But the 1 Peter text says that he proclaimed something there. WE must not think of the place spatially for we are describing spirit not material body.

Jesus went to the place of the dead.

ON this see especially J.I. Packer *I Want to Be a Christian*, 64

“Jesus entered Hades and Scripture tells us what he did there. First by his presence he made Hades into Paradise for the penitent thief and presumably for all others who died trusting him... Second he perfected the spirits of the OT believers bringing them out of the gloom which Sheol, the pit, had hitherto been for them into this same Paradise experience. This is the core truth of the Medieval fantasies of the “harrowing of hell.” Third, 1 Peter 3:19 tells us that he “made a proclamation to the imprisoned spirits who have rebelled in antediluvian times.”

The proclamation could not have been an offer of salvation because the Scripture in many places teaches the truth of Heb 9:27 “man is destined to die once, and after that to face judgment.” The proclamation must have been victory.

20a “who disobeyed long ago when God waited patiently in the days of Noah while the ark was being built.

NASB “who once were disobedient.”

“Once” and “long ago” are the same word in Greek

Regardless of whether the “spirits” are human or supernatural, the point is that Jesus proclaimed judgment on them.

The “patience” of God indicates to me that Peter is talking about human beings because I don’t know of any such patience toward the angels (demons) who fell from heaven but we do know of God’s patience toward people. 2 Peter 3:9 “He is patient with you, not wanting anyone to perish, but everyone to come to repentance

BUT Peter has moved to a new thought:

God’s patience and the salvation of some by water.

20b-21 “In it only a few people, eight in all, were saved through water, ²¹ and this water symbolizes baptism that now saves you also--not the removal of dirt from the body but the pledge of a good conscience toward God. It saves you by the resurrection of Jesus Christ,

Interesting that “people” is a translation of “souls.” This would seem to argue for “spirits” likewise being used earlier of people. The immaterial is used to stand for the whole person.

“Typology is the analogy between two events, people or institutions in history where the former (type) foreshadows the latter (antitype) in one or more definite and notable ways.” Jobes, 251

Noah’s flood was and continues to be an event that displays God’s judgment on sin and his salvation of those who believe him. It is a type of same judgment by God against sin in the end. Jesus used the Noah story to make this point in Matthew 24:37-39 “As it was in the days of Noah, so it will be at the coming of the Son of Man. ³⁸ For in the days before the flood, people were eating and drinking, marrying and giving in marriage, up to the day Noah entered the ark; ³⁹ and they knew nothing about what would happen until the flood came and took them all away. That is how it will be at the coming of the Son of Man.

The comparison here and elsewhere in the Bible is of those who believe with those who don’t.

Heb 11:7 “By faith Noah, when warned about things not yet seen, in holy fear built an ark to save his family. By his faith he condemned the world and became heir of the righteousness that comes by faith.”; 2 Peter 2:5 “if he did not spare the ancient world when he brought the flood on its ungodly people, but protected Noah, a preacher of righteousness, and seven others”

Ironically the very water that judged unbelievers saved the believers. 1 Corinthians 1:23 “we preach Christ crucified: a stumbling block to Jews and foolishness to Gentiles, ²⁴ but to those whom God has called, both Jews and Greeks, Christ the power of God and the wisdom of God.

Peter has presupposed (and stated earlier) the inward cleansing (1:2, 22) now turns to its outward expression. “A good conscience is the product of the Spirit’s purifying work in a person’s heart on the basis of “obedience” to the Christian gospel, but “good conscience” by itself does not save. Only God can save and God’s willingness and power to save are visibly and audibly invoked in baptism.” (Michaels, 216)

It’s not the outward washing but the inward pledge that is the instrument – the outward washing is the symbolic demonstration of that pledge.

Baptism is the human act directed toward God just as faith is.
Baptism is the outward expression of the inward faith.

It isn’t that baptism saves but what saves is what baptism symbolizes – our faith (pledge) in the resurrected Christ.

The word baptism symbolizes the whole process of becoming a Christian. (Marshall, 130)

The objective is Christ’s death/resurrection
The subjective is faith symbolized in baptism.

Amazingly the very water that judged unbelievers saved the believers. Something akin to the cross in 1 Corinthians 1:23 “we preach Christ crucified: a stumbling block to Jews and foolishness to Gentiles,²⁴ but to those whom God has called, both Jews and Greeks, Christ the power of God and the wisdom of God.

21 “and this water symbolizes baptism that now saves you also-- not the removal of dirt from the body but the pledge of a good conscience toward God. It saves you by the resurrection of Jesus Christ,

“Baptism is not asking God for a ‘good conscience;’ it is rather ‘out of a good conscience’ or a pure heart, that a person submits to baptism.” (Michaels, 216)

The salvation that baptism symbolizes is not automatic but must represent a true pledge of a good conscience toward God – this is repentance and turning to Christ.

“Unjust suffering for doing good...means that one is living out that pledge to God taken at baptism for a lifetime devoted to serving him.”
Jobes, 235

The Baptism is a pledge. A sacrament – Sacrament meaning, “oath of allegiance.”(See any dictionary)

The “pledge” is the trust and commitment to Christ that is entailed in conversion. We respond to God’s grace in repentance and faith – a pledge to follow Christ.

The good conscience is not how we feel about ourselves but is the truth of what we now have (right standing with God) by God’s grace. A “good conscience” and a “pure heart” are very similar.

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It’s not the outward washing but the inward pledge that is the instrument – the outward washing is the symbolic demonstration of that pledge.

It saves you by the resurrection of Jesus Christ,

“It” refers to baptism.

“The resurrection of Jesus Christ is what makes an appeal or pledge to God “out of a good conscience” efficacious, and guarantees eternal life to the one baptized.” (Michaels,218)

The faith is our response, the baptism is symbolic but the object of our faith and ritual is the resurrection of Jesus.

Remember that Peter is giving his readers reasons to have confidence even in the face of opposition.

22 “who has gone into heaven and is at God's right hand--with angels, authorities and powers in submission to him.

Three truths:

He has gone into heaven

He is at God's (The Father's) right hand

He has authority over everything and everyone.

This presupposes the first two elements of the summary of Christ's journey: death and resurrection (death in the flesh and alive in the spirit) and now adds the third – his ascension to the Father in heaven.

Romans 8:34 “Christ Jesus, who died—more than that, who was raised to life—is at the right hand of God and is also interceding for us.”

“God's right hand” signifying royalty and authority alongside the Father.

“with angels, authorities and powers in submission to him.”

All authority is given to him in heaven and on earth.

Nothing is outside his authority and control.

Hebrews 2:7b-8 “you crowned him with glory and honor and put everything under his feet.” In putting everything under him, God left nothing that is not subject to him. Yet at present we do not see everything subject to him...”

Ephesians 1:19-21 “That power is like the working of his mighty strength, which he exerted in Christ when he raised him from the dead and seated him at his right hand in the heavenly realms, far above all rule and authority, power and dominion, and every title that can be given, not only in the present age but also in the one to come.”

Both Peter and Paul speak of it as an accomplished fact while Hebrews acknowledges that it is not yet fully implemented.

Not that the future is now but that the future is assured.

Mark 10:29-31 "I tell you the truth," Jesus replied, "no one who has left home or brothers or sisters or mother or father or children or fields for me and the gospel ³⁰ will fail to receive a hundred times as much in this present age (homes, brothers, sisters, mothers, children and fields--and with them, persecutions) and in the age to come, eternal life. ³¹ But many who are first will be last, and the last first."

Matthew 5:11-12 "Blessed are you when people insult you, persecute you and falsely say all kinds of evil against you because of me. ¹² Rejoice and be glad, because great is your reward in heaven, for in the same way they persecuted the prophets who were before you.

John 14:1-3 "Do not let your hearts be troubled. Trust in God; trust also in me. ² In my Father's house are many rooms; if it were not so, I would have told you. I am going there to prepare a place for you. ³ And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come back and take you to be with me that you also may be where I am.

Romans 8:38-39 "For I am convinced that neither death nor life, neither angels nor demons, neither the present nor the future, nor any powers, ³⁹ neither height nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God that is in Christ Jesus our Lord.

1 Thessalonians 4:16-17 "the Lord himself will come down from heaven, with a loud command, with the voice of the archangel and with the trumpet call of God, and the dead in Christ will rise first. ¹⁷ After that, we who are still alive and are left will be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air. And so we will be with the Lord forever.

Revelation 21:3-7 "Now the dwelling of God is with men, and he will live with them. They will be his people, and God himself will be with them and be their God. He will wipe every tear from their eyes. There

will be no more death or mourning or crying or pain, for the old order of things has passed away.” He who was seated on the throne said...I am the Alpha and the Omega, the Beginning and the End... He who overcomes will inherit all this, and I will be his God and he will be my son.”