1 Peter

Alright, let’s open in prayer: “Father, thank you for the short break, and rest, and the
time to reflect on your son's resurrection and its meaning and significance for our lives,
personally, and as your people corporately. Father, now, as we turn to those documents that
witness to, and testify to your resurrected son and our Lord and Savior, I pray that you’ll
give us wisdom and insight. Give us patience as we listen to material that is in some
respects very foreign to us, and I pray that we will learn to read it through the eyes, and hear
it through the ears, of those that first heard it and read it; and at the same time, be better
equipped to understand its ongoing significance for us as your people today. In Jesus’ name
we pray, Amen.”

Now there's no quiz so just sit back, take a deep breath and relax. Just an
announcement as far as what's going on in the next couple weeks, there is one more exam
to take before the final exam. The final exam is comprehensive over all four exams, but the
good news is, it only covers material found in the first four exams. There will be no new
material, so if there's stuff that I tested over the Gospels, or things I did not test you over in
the Gospels, it will not appear in the final. The final is comprehensive over the material in
the first four exams. So we’ll talk more about that, but you do have one more section exam,
number four, that covers Hebrews through Revelation. That will occur sometime on
Monday-- either Monday or Wednesday of the week before finals, it will probably be
Monday, I think.

Now, the other thing too is--and this is going to really upset and disappoint you--is,
I'm going to miss the entire week before finals. So there will be no class except for
whatever day, which is probably Monday, that's the ninth, May 9th. Monday, May 9th, will
probably be section exam four, over Hebrews through Revelation, and I will have an
assistant who will be monitoring, giving you and monitoring that exam, because I'll be
gone. My son is graduating from Colorado Christian University, and then getting married the weekend after that, so we’ll be staying out there the whole week. So I am so sorry that you have to miss New Testament for an entire week, but then I'll be back for final exam week and whatever the slot is that is designated for us for the final is when that will be.

That means that next week sometime there will be the fourth and final extra credit review session. That will cover material for exam number four, which again, will be Monday, the ninth. So that's kind of a heads up as far as where we're headed. So today, and Friday, all of next week, and then the following week, there will be no class except for Monday, exam number four, over Hebrews and Revelation, but then no class Wednesday or Friday. But obviously there’s no class Friday, and the final exam will be the next thing, next momentous event after that. Will there be a review session for the final? Yes, I can probably offer an extra credit review session for the final exam as well. I’ll have to think about that logistically, as far as who might do that. I haven't decided yet, but again, it will be worth your while to attend. A quiz grade? Yes, I don’t remember I’ll have to sit down and see what I did in the past, I can’t remember what the percentage. But, yes, and it’ll be big.

Will you have access to the test you’ve taken before? Yes, you can pick those up and if some of you have kept copies, that's fine, if you want to get a copy of the exam to answer the question portion with the multiple-choice you can do so. Again, I’m not going to be around next year so I don't care what you do with them. I doubt that the person that replaces me is going to use them, so they won’t be of any use to anybody, really. So if you want to pick those up after you've taken the fourth exam, to study for it any time before, that is fine. And we’ll talk a little bit more about the final, before I leave and then again there'll be an extra review session, hopefully for the final as well. If I can fit it in, I hope I can.

Alright, what I want to do is, move on to the last section of short letters leading up to the final book of the New Testament, the book of Revelation, and I want to slow down just a little bit and give these-- like we did with James-- a little bit more time because, usually what happens is, I’ve said two things, number one, usually by the time the semester comes to a close, most New Testament classes haven't gotten very far into Paul's letter, sometimes
you get bogged down in books like Romans, and Galatians, and Ephesians, and First Corinthians, and you can see why, for very good reasons.

And second, these books, because they come near the end of the New Testament and because they seem to be so overshadowed by Paul's teachings and letters, they often get a very short treatment, so I'm going to reverse that and maybe, again, we don't have a lot of time, but maybe spend just a little bit more time with some of these letters like, Hebrews, James, I and II Peter and especially I John. 2 and 3 John we’ll look at very, very briefly, but spend a little time in those. Again, because they often are tucked away between Revelation and Paul's letters, they often don't get a lot of attention. So we’ll give them maybe just a little bit more attention than they might usually get.

So, having said that, I want to move on to the next letter in the New Testament. So we’ll open up another piece of the early church's mail, and pull out a letter that we have labeled: I Peter. Now what is interesting about this letter just at first glance is, the letter is named, much like James, according to the person who wrote it, not according to the recipients of the letter. We’re used to that with Paul's letters, where all the letters are named according to the persons that they are addressed to, but James, Peter, and I, II, and III John will be named or labeled according to the person who has actually penned the letter.

Now, the first thing to talk about with the book of the 1 Peter is, to understand something of the circumstances that produced the letter. I Peter, like James, seems to be written, in other words there seems to be a common pattern, at least with some of the letters, and that is for a prominent Christian leader, such as James or Peter-- who was a leader in the Christian church in Jerusalem--to write a letter to Christians who are disbursed over a wide geographical area. So Peter begins, “Peter, an apostle of Jesus Christ, to the exiles of the dispersion in Pontus, Galatia, Cappadocia, Asia, and Bithynia,” so you see the same pattern you saw in James. I Peter and James share this characteristic feature of a well-known Christian leader in the church who now addresses a very wide group of readers, spread over a wide geographical area.

We saw James’ address to Jews who were dispersed, and now I Peter is addressed to Christians who are likewise dispersed over large geographical area. He calls them exiles.
But unlike James, I Peter is not addressing Jewish Christians but is probably addressing Gentile Christians. Although, we'll see one of the things Peter does is, he takes language from the Old Testament what applied to Old Testament Israel and now applies it to the Church. So, he will describe his readers as those who are “chosen and elect,” which was language used of Israel, he will refer to them as “a holy people,” he will refer to them as “a holy nation and a royal priesthood;” taking all this language out of the Old Testament, and using language that ethnically applied to the nation of Israel-- now applying it to this transcultural group called “the church” that consists of both Jews and Gentiles. So that's one thing you need to get used to when you read the Old Testament, you will find that frequently. Old Testament language, used to refer to Israel, now applied in the new setting, to refer to the church that consists of both Jews and Gentiles.

Now, two other things about the circumstances of I Peter: first of all, in chapter five, verse nine, the author says, “…resist, be steadfast in your faith, for you know that your brothers and sisters in all the world are undergoing the same kinds of sufferings.” Now this is very important because it's often been thought that I Peter, as well as some of the other books in the New Testament, were addressing Christians who were undergoing some kind of Emperor-wide, or officially sanctioned persecution. So we often have this notion of: literally every town in the Roman Empire had legions of soldiers marching through the streets, and they were going from house to house dragging Christians out in the streets and beating them, or beheading them, or dragging them off to the arena to be devoured by wild animals or something like that. That probably was not true in the first century very often, and certainly was not true of I Peter. I Peter seems to be addressing a situation where the Christians are mainly suffering the kinds of things as the verse I just read, 5:9 suggests, that were common for Christians in general. Christians would have experienced more unofficial and local kinds of pressure and suffering. That is, most of the suffering they would've experienced, was not from the Roman government, not from Roman soldiers marching around in the streets, driving them out and beating them or something like that. But most of the suffering would have been at the local level, and local pressure to conform; and the kind of ostracism, the kind of ridicule, and perhaps even physical pain, that
would've been inflicted on Christians. That would have been true for Christians living in many locations throughout the Roman Empire. So the situation of 1 Peter then, again, is probably not some official Emperor-wide persecution sanctioned by the Emperor, sending Roman soldiers out to cause Christians all kinds of problems. But again, just the kind of persecution and ostracism and ridicule that would've taken place at a local level and more sporadically spread throughout the Roman Empire.

Furthermore, another clue we get to the circumstances of the letter is in verse thirteen of chapter five. Peter ends the letter by saying this, “your sister church in Babylon, chosen together with you, sends you greetings, and so does my son, Mark.” Babylon, by this time, seems to have become a code word for the city of Rome. So apparently, Peter is writing this letter from Rome, that he calls Babylon. Later on, hopefully, we will look at a section in the book of Revelation that clearly identifies the city of Rome as Babylon, using an Old Testament term. Now that term is applied to the city of Rome in the first century and Peter seems to pick up on that. To put this all together, Peter then, seems to be one of Jesus apostles who was living in Rome. Now he seems to write a letter to Christians who are experiencing the same kind of ostracism and ridicule and suffering that Christians would've experience routinely, but sporadically, throughout large sections of the Roman Empire of the day.

Also notice how widely spread they are, in 1:1 that we just read, “to the exiles of the dispersion in Pontus, Galatia, Cappadocia, Asia and Bithynia.” Those five names were all provinces of Rome in Asia Minor. Remember way back in the first week of classes? Of course you remember that far back, but we talked a little bit about the Roman Empire and Roman government, and one of the ways that they managed their large empire was dividing it up into provinces. And of these five names, one of them you're already familiar with, Galatia; we suggested that the book of Galatians is probably written to a cluster of churches in the southern part of the Roman province of Galatia. So these are Christians then, spread out throughout the Roman province of Galatia, who at various times sporadically, are suffering at just the local non-official levels. They are suffering various kinds of persecutions in ridicule, and social, and physical ostracism, at the hands of their
pagan neighbors. So now, to put this together, basically Peter's writing a letter to encourage them to remain steadfast in living out their faith in a hostile environment, in the context of that kind of suffering—however unofficial it is and however varied and spread out it is—but encouraging them to maintain their steadfastness in Jesus Christ, in this context, in the midst of this kind of environment.

The purpose of the letter, in a sense, can be summarized by noting a theme that occurs throughout Peter in a disproportionate amount of times to its space. For example, the verb form, “to suffer.” The verb form that Peter uses for suffering, 12 of its 41 occurrences. The verb form occurs 41 times as a verb throughout the New Testament, 12 of those instances occur in I Peter. And again, that’s significant— as short and small a book like I Peter is, compared to the entirety the New Testament, that's a large number of occurrences. Furthermore, the noun’s form of that same word, that same root word for suffering that Peter uses, a fourth of the time that the noun form occurs in the New Testament— a fourth of those occurrences, that is, four out of 16—occurs in I Peter. So this cluster of the usages of this term related to suffering, suggests something about Peter's purpose and what he's trying to do in his main theme. And again, I think one of the things he's trying to address is to encourage Christians and to instruct them on how to respond in the face of the different types of suffering that they are undergoing, especially at the hands of a pagan society; even though it, again, it has not yet heated up to the point of some official Emperor-wide persecution, where Christians are being dragged into the arena and things like that, it hasn't gotten to that point yet. But still, the occurrences of these instances are significant enough apparently, that Peter sees the need to write to Christians to instruct them on how to deal with this.

Now because of that, Peter can be divided into two sections rather easily, that both relate to this theme of suffering. The first one, in the first three chapters, Peter actually calls upon his reader— it's interesting, he doesn't immediately call upon them to simply endure suffering and to be able to put up with it. Instead, it is intriguing that, and not only in the first three chapters, but woven throughout the book, that part of Peter's instruction, as far as the way they are to deal with suffering, is by maintaining appropriate Christian conduct in
the midst of that suffering, and that is mainly that they will live holy lives. This is where you find the quotation from the Old Testament, “be holy as I am holy.” This is where-- we will look at this text in a moment-- but one of the things Peter does, in chapter two, is describe the church as a holy temple. So basically what Peter is doing is, he's telling them that the way that they should respond to this hostility is through purity, but they do that by creating a community. Peter does not call on them to do this on their own, but instead he calls on them to create community, a holy temple-- and we will look at that theme in just a moment. So, the way they are to maintain this appropriate conduct, and the only way that they will ultimately be able to resist the attempt to cave to this pressure and this suffering, is by forming and creating a holy community, a Temple, which Peter calls the church.

Chapter 4 and 5 this is where Peter does go into more detail by calling his readers to persevere and one of the main things that he does is, he uses Christ as an example of one who did not retaliate. So he calls them to persevere by maintaining their Christian witness, by not retaliating. And this is where Peter, over and over he uses the example of Jesus as one who did not retaliate. He uses the example of Isaiah, chapter 53, and the suffering servant that we have often quoted. Easter-- Peter alludes to that, all to demonstrate that his readers, like Christ, should refrain from retaliating and take revenge even though they may suffer unjustly at the hands of this local sporadic persecution and the pressure and ostracism that they're facing and ridicule.

So that's kind of how Peter is set up, it can in some respects be divided between these two sections. But much like the book of Hebrews, Peter alternates back and forth between his exposition, what he says about Christ, and what he says about the church and exhortation, as far as how they're to respond. We saw that Hebrews did that, it flip-flopped back and forth between exposition, the indicative and the warning sections, or the imperative commands. Peter does something similar; he flip-flops back-and-forth between his exposition and then his exhortation. Largely, then, it can be divided into these two sections.

But again, it's interesting to see the heart of Peter's instruction when he addresses the Christians to withstand suffering, it's not just, a reflexive action, or a passive action, or kind
of digging in and preparing for the long run; Peter's instructions are all about maintaining an appropriate Christian witness in context and appropriate Christian conduct—maintaining holiness, creating a community, and refusing to retaliate. I find Peter's instructions regarding suffering as rather intriguing that he wouldn’t just tell them to persevere and to endure, but it's more active, they are to maintain their witness and to maintain appropriate Christian conduct, and not retaliate; to pursue purity even in the midst of what they are facing.

Now one important part of I Peter's teaching is what he says about the church, and we find the lengthiest description of that in I Peter chapter two, where he says, “you come to him a living stone, though rejected by mortals yet chosen and precious in God’s sight, and like living stones let yourself be built into a spiritual house, to become a holy priesthood, to offer spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ. For it stands scripture: ‘see I am laying in Zion a stone, a cornerstone, chosen and precious, and whoever believes in him will not be put to shame.’ To you then who believe, to those of you who believe, he is precious,” or that should better be translated, “there is honor,” “for those of you who believe, there is honor, but for those who do not believe, the stone the builders rejected has become the head of the cornerstone.” Then verse 9, “but you instead, you are a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, God's own people, in order that you might proclaim the mighty acts of him who called you out of darkness and into his light.”

Now I want to draw attention to this, notice Peter's use of Old Testament language by comparing the church to not only a building, but also a Temple. This was very common in early Christianity, in fact, interestingly, this was very common in another Jewish movement, the Qumran community. Remember we talked about the Essenes, that could have had as their slogan, “let's withdraw.” The Essenes who went off in the desert and formed their own Qumran community? Part of that was, because they were upset with, and they had rejected, the physical Temple at Jerusalem. They understood their own community too, in a sense, to be a spiritual temple in the interim period until God would come, restore and rebuild the physical Temple. So it's interesting in the Qumran literature
you read this language about them being, or metaphorically, comparing the members of the community to stones and comparing the community to a Temple and to a household, to a building.

Peter and early Christians do the same thing. We saw that Paul's letters; that he frequently compared the church to a Temple and the members to the stones that made up the Temple; and now Peter does the same thing. And what is going on in this is, the Old Testament Temple was emblematic of God's presence with his people. The Old Testament Temple symbolized God's very dwelling with, and his presence with, his covenant people Israel. When the Temple was destroyed because Israel sinned, God brought in Assyrian Babylon to cart them off into exile, the Temple was destroyed, and the prophets, such as Isaiah and Ezekiel anticipated the day when God would one day rebuild and restore the Temple as the place where he would dwell among his people.

Interestingly, the New Testament then sees the Temple-- the promises and predictions of a rebuilt Temple-- ultimately fulfilled in Jesus, and his church's followers. So that's why you have Peter and Paul and others taking physical Temple imagery from the Old Testament and now applying it to the people themselves, the church. Now the church is the true Temple of God. The church is the place where God now dwells with his people, no longer through a physical structure, no longer in a physical building. That’s why, this is a side note, this is why personally, I don't think the physical Temple will ever be rebuilt in Jerusalem, or if it is it will have nothing to do with prophecy, because the New Testament is clear that the rebuilt Temple that the prophets predicted now gets fulfilled in Jesus, and the church, not in another physically rebuilt Temple. So the Temple has already been rebuilt, it’s already been established, or better yet, it is being rebuilt and established through Christ and the church that he is now building.

So Peter talks about Christians as living stones being built up to form this spiritual dwelling, this place where God dwells. So the true locus of God's presence is no longer in the physical Temple of the Old Testament, nor any other physical building but now is the people of God themselves. Hence Peter can call the church this building that’s made up of living stones, the very temple of God. The purpose of this, or the function of this, is
twofold. Number one is, by reminding the readers that they are a holy temple this will motivate them to pursue the kind of life that Peter wants them to. Remember, part of Peter’s strategy is not just to get them to withstand suffering, but to do so by maintaining purity, and maintaining their testimony and appropriate Christian conduct. Part of that is reminding them that they actually constitute this Temple, in fulfillment of the Old Testament. If they are this pure Temple where God dwells, then they must demonstrate that by the way they live, especially in the midst of the hostility and the hostile environment in which they find themselves.

But I think there may be another issue too, and that is, for those who are suffering dislocation, for those who are exiled, and are described as exiles and suffering dislocation, and suffering persecution and ridicule-- by calling them this Temple, and this house build up of all these members this would be a way of socially establishing their identity. So in other words, if they need somewhere to go, if they have nowhere to belong to, if the world is a hostile place they need to have a sense of belonging, they need to have something to belong to, and so Peter says, “you do, you are part of this holy Temple that is being continually built up in each individual member as a building stone.” So both a motivation for purity and holiness in the midst of suffering, but also a sense of belonging and identity to those who find themselves scattered around and find themselves in a hostile world, and a hostile environment.

Now, probably one of the most troubling passages in the entire New Testament is found in I Peter. It’s found in chapter three, starting in verse 18, let me read it to you. “For Christ also suffered for sins,” so that's not unusual, that Peter's main theme, he's demonstrating that just as Christ suffered without retaliating, so should his followers. So it says, “for Christ also suffered for sins once for all, the righteous for the unrighteous, in order to bring you to God. He was put to death in the flesh but made alive in the spirit in which also he went and preached to the spirits who were in prison.” That's interesting. “Who in former times did not obey when God waited patiently in the days of Noah, during the building of the ark, in which a few, that is eight persons, were saved through water.” Now what in the world is this story about Jesus going to the spirits in prison and he
preaches to them? And then it says these spirits were the ones who were present in the day when Noah built the ark? Where does Peter get this story of Christ going to these spirits in prison? Who are these spirits in prison that Jesus preaches to? What does he preach to them? Where are they imprisoned? When did Jesus go there and do this? What does this have to do with Noah and Genesis 6, and the story of the ark? What in the world is Peter doing?

In my opinion, this is probably one of the most troubling passages in the whole New Testament, as far as trying to make sense of what it's about and how we understand it. Now part of this goes back to or may influence a section of the Apostle’s Creed that we cite quite frequently. So let’s cite this together, this is just part of it, “I believe in Jesus Christ who was crucified, dead, and buried. He descended into hell, the third day he rose from the dead.” And that’s just a section of the Creed obviously, but the phrase I want to focus on is, “he descended into hell.” Now these other three descriptions of Christ are clearly attested in the New Testament that Christ died, he was dead and he was buried, and obviously that he rose from the dead on the third day. You find those all together in one section in I Corinthians 15. But this reference to Christ descending into hell, one of the places that we apparently get that from is I Peter, chapter three, 18 through 20. This reference to Christ going to the spirits in prison and preaching to them seems to be one of the justifications for the inclusion of this statement in the Apostle’s Creed. And likewise, knowing the Apostle’s Creed we often go back to 1 Peter 3 and read it as a description of Christ going to the spirits in prison, going to hell. That is, sometime between the time when Jesus died on the cross and said, “it is finished,” between that time and the time he rose again, Jesus must've gone down to hell and preached something, maybe a second chance of salvation? Is Jesus offering the spirits in prison another chance, now that he's finally died for the sins of humanity, is he now saying I’ve done it and here's another chance? Or do we need understand this in some other way?

Part of the problem is that this is over the span of only two or three verses, the language is very ambiguous, in a sense. But that’s typically how we've understood these verses, I Peter 3 probably lies behind this italicized section of the Apostle’s Creed, that
“Jesus descended into hell.” Now, there are a couple other places in the New Testament that have been used to support that as well, but this is one of the possibilities.

Some would suggest hell is the final place of judgment, and before that, people are in a holding tank in between, and waiting for Christ’s death and resurrection. And now that that's happened, now Christ can go and preach to those persons and they can either reject him or accept him. That’s another way it’s been understood.

Another way it's often been understood is, some have suggested that Jesus Christ was actually preaching through Noah, that when Noah preached to the people around him that now are spirits, they had died and they are now spirits, but when they were alive, some have suggested what Peter is saying is, Christ was actually preaching through Noah to these people who are now spirits. So it's not offering a second chance of salvation, but it's simply recording that historically when Noah was building the Ark and was being ridiculed as Christ was actually preaching or, speaking through him, to these persons who are now dead and are indeed spirits. That’s another possibility.

I want to suggest something very different by asking a series of questions that you see outlined in your syllabus about this text. First of all, when did this happen, when did Christ do this? Notice verse 18 says, “for Christ also suffered for sins once for all, the righteous for the unrighteous, in order to bring us to God. He was put to death in the flesh, but made alive in the spirit,” which is a reference to Jesus’ resurrection. Then verse 19 says, “in which,” which refers back, I think, to his resurrection. So you could say Jesus was put to death in the flesh but made alive in the spirit, that is, he was raised at which time or in which state, that is, when he was raised, at that time, he went to the spirits in prison. So I take it that whatever's going on in this text, it happens at the time of Jesus’ resurrection. When Jesus is raised, as a result of his resurrection, at the time he is raised from the dead, that's when he proclaims this.

So in my opinion, this does not refer to Jesus sometime between his death on Good Friday and his resurrection on Sunday, that sometime in between that Jesus went to the spirits. I'm not convinced that's what it's talking about. I think this is something that happens at his resurrection. If you read English translations they’ll do different things with
verses 18 and 19, but the one I just read I like. It said, “he was put to death by the flesh, but made alive in the spirit,” that is the resurrection, “in which,” that is referring back to being made alive in the spirit, “in which,” that is, in which state, at which time, when he is resurrected, that’s when he went and made this proclamation to the spirits in prison. I think that solves at least part of our problem.

Whatever this is, wherever Christ goes, whatever he preaches, whoever these spirits are, Christ does this; not when Noah was alive, he's not preaching through Noah, he's not preaching some time between his death and resurrection. Whatever he's doing, he's doing this after he was raised from the dead. Any view has to deal with what happened between the death of Christ and the resurrection Christ, I take it that he was in the presence of the Father, and ascended to heaven, but again, his physical resurrection as a sign of the inauguration of the new creation had not yet taken place. So I take it he was in the presence of the Father, in heaven. I think there's good evidence throughout the New Testament for that.

But then, what does this phrase, “made alive in the spirit” refer to, if not when his spirit was alive with the Father in heaven, or however you interpret that, ‘but his body was dead.’ Because that seems like his spirit is alive,” I think some that language is Old Testament type language and clearly referring to the resurrection. So where did Christ go? So if he did this when he was raised, where does Christ go? Again, the text doesn't really tell us, it doesn't tell us that Christ went down anywhere, although it could be. It doesn’t tell us if he went up. It doesn't tell us where these spirits were imprisoned; the text simply doesn't say. Maybe we should then ask the question, is this necessarily a specific location? Is Peter thinking of some specific geographical location, down or up?

One interesting thing, if you go back to Ephesians—I'm kind of jumping ahead a little bit-- but in Ephesians where were the spirits and the rulers and authorities found. We said the evil powers and evil spirits, where were they found in Ephesians? Behind the kingdoms of the earth, but Paul but also locates them in the heavenly. So what's to prevent us seeing Jesus as proclaiming, or confronting these spirits, whoever they are, and preaching whatever he does in the heavenly? Not necessarily in hell or in some other
compartment somewhere, although that's a possibility, but perhaps this is similar to what Paul’s saying in Ephesians, these spirits that control the heavenly realms. And even there we saw that Jesus was seated far above every ruler and authority in the heavenlys. But other than that, again, the text doesn’t tell us. It doesn't specifically say Jesus went down somewhere, or on the way up, it doesn't say where he went.

Second, who where they? Who were these spirits? In my opinion, I think Peter is relying on a tradition that had come down to him, interpreting this—now you have to go back to your Old Testament again-- if you remember in Genesis chapter 6, part of what precipitated the flood was this story of the sons of God coming down and having relationships with the daughters of men. Interestingly, in Jewish literature, those sons of God are almost unanimously portrayed as spiritual or angelic beings, who subsequently are thrown into prison and await judgment. I’ll come back to that one in a moment, but hang onto that-- the spirits who were in prison awaiting judgment from Genesis chapter 6.

Finally, what did Jesus preach? The word there that most your English translations translate, “preached” does not necessarily mean he preached the gospel. Although it could entail that, but it's a very general word for simply proclaiming some message. So it could be a message of salvation, or it could be a message of judgment as well. Or it could simply be a message of Jesus’ victory. That Jesus, through his death and resurrection, has now won the victory over sin, over death and all the powers of evil.

Now let me go back and let me show you one more text. I said Genesis chapter six, one through six, the story, right before the story of Noah and the flood, you have this interesting story of these “sons of God” who come down and they intermingle with and have relationships with the daughters of men. Again, Jewish literature outside of the Old Testament, and even some Christian literature, frequently translated “the sons of God” as spiritual angelic beings or demonic beings. This is from a book called I Enoch, that I'm sure most of you have read recently, but you could even Google I Enoch and find an English translation of it; but in chapter six of I Enoch, I Enoch is clearly describing Genesis 6, the flood. Here's what he says, “In those days, when the children of men had multiplied, it happened that there were born beautiful daughters and the angels’ children from heaven
saw them and desired them.” So I Enoch 6, and there are other texts in I Enoch that understand the sons of God from Genesis 6 as angelic beings. Another one, chapter 21, in the same book, I Enoch it’s not in your Old or New Testament, it was a book that did not get into the Old or New Testament canon. Again, he’s describing the flood, the event in Genesis chapter 6. “These are among the stars of heaven which transgressed the commandments of the Lord and are bound in this place until the completion of 10 million years, according to the number of their sins.” This place is the prison house of the angels. So, you have this conception of these angels who disobey God, and now they are confined to prison, awaiting the final judgment, based on Genesis chapter six. So these angels who have transgressed, are the sons of God from Genesis chapter six.

2 Peter 2, the book we will talk about next, “for if God did not spare angels when they sinned, but he sent them to hell, putting them in chains of darkness to be held for the day of judgment.” Which again, when you look at all of chapter two of I Peter, this fits very well into a description of Genesis chapter six. Again, the idea of angels who sinned, they transgressed God's commands and now they are put in chains, awaiting the time of judgment.

One other text in the New Testament-- and there are others we could mention, I'm just looking at the ones that are the most clear. Jude verse six, the book before Revelation, “and the angels who did not keep their own positions, but they left their proper dwellings, [these angels], God has kept in darkness, bound in everlasting chains for judgment.” So my point is, you seem to have this tradition, or story, based on Genesis 6. The sons of God from Genesis 6 were angelic beings who transgressed their boundaries and commands and therefore sinned and were bound in chains, metaphorically or otherwise, in prison, awaiting the Day of Judgment.

Now I think Peter is using that story and now saying this judgment has finally come in the person of Jesus Christ. These angels, or these spirits from Genesis chapter six, that transgressed and were bound in chains, now that judgment has taken place. Now Jesus has gone to those angelic beings, those demonic beings, and has proclaimed a message of judgment and victory over them. Now whether, Peter thinks this is all literal, or maybe in
my mind, I think Peter may just be borrowing a common story. Because this was popular, and his readers would've understood it, because this idea is found in a number of different places in different kinds of literature. I wonder if this wouldn’t have just been a popular story, and now Peter uses it.

Basically I think this is Peter's way of saying the same thing that Paul did in Ephesians one, that Jesus, with his resurrection, has now been exalted far above the rulers and authorities in the heavens and now they are his footstool. That is a sign that he is victorious and he conquered. I think this is just Peter’s way of saying the same thing. So I don't think we need to ask where did Jesus go, or where were these spirits imprisoned, or are these the only spirits, what about other spirits? Peters not interested in that, he’s just using a common story that his readers are familiar with, to reiterate that through his death and resurrection, Jesus has won the victory over the powers of evil, and now has, through his death and resurrection, proclaimed the message of judgment and victory.

Any questions about that? That’s how I read the text, I think understanding some of the background can help clear up a rather sticky passage. Again, when we understand what Peter's doing in this story, and this background the story is referring to, then we don't have to worry about “where did Jesus go, and did he proclaim the second chance of salvation, who were these spirits, where were they?” Again, I think this story is kind of paradigmatic for evil angelic beings who are now imprisoned awaiting their day of judgment and now Peters convinced that that judgment has now arrived through the person of Jesus Christ.

Now there’s one other question in your notes, and that is, “why does Peter tell this story, what is he trying to do?” You'll notice that Peter goes on. He starts out with Jesus Christ suffering but Peter does two other things. Number one is, Peter will demonstrate that, in the same way, notice verse 20, “Who in former times did not obey when God waited patiently in the days of Noah, during the building of the ark in which a few, that is eight persons, were saved through water.” In other words, what he's doing is, Peter’s setting up a comparison. In the same way that Noah and his family were a minority in a hostile society, yet God rescued them and saved them, in the same way, this church though they seem to be a minority in this hostile environment in the Roman Empire, they can be
assured that God will rescue them as well. So this similarity between Noah and his family being a small minority in the midst of a hostile environment, now carries over into Peter's readers. They too seem to be a minority in this hostile context and hostile environment, yet God, through Jesus Christ, God has already defeated the powers of evil.

So what have they to fear? Though they may suffer persecution what did the readers have to fear? Jesus Christ is already won the victory over the hostile powers of evil. What threatened them are not the rulers and authorities at the human level in Rome, but the true threat comes behind that. That is the rulers and authorities in the heavenly realms. As Paul says, that’s the true threat, and Christ has already defeated them through his death and resurrection. So what have his readers to fear?

Instead they should wholeheartedly embrace Christ, in faith and in their witness for Jesus Christ, even in the midst of suffering, because now they have absolutely nothing to fear. Christ has already suffered on their behalf, and in doing so, not only has he provided a model, but he has actually defeated the powers of evil so they have nothing to fear. So they should embrace Christ wholeheartedly and respond with appropriate conduct, just like Noah and his family did, although they too were a minority in a hostile environment.

Alright, any other questions about this? That’s actually a good breaking off point I think. On Friday we’ll look at two more books together 2 Peter and Jude, which you will see go closely together.

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