

Study 22

THE BELIEVER'S BAPTISM

First Peter 3:19-22

Noah is an example of a godly person who remained faithful to God during times of opposition. While there is no record of him ever preaching to his fellow citizens, he is described as *a preacher of righteousness* (2 Pt. 2:5). Peter uses him as an example to the believers of a quiet godly man, whose life largely did the preaching for him. By the actions of Noah, God was both warning and announcing His judgment upon the world. Actions speak louder than words. By our quiet, godly lifestyle, we are both a warning and an announcement to the world. Peter parallels the time of Noah to the days in which Christians live.

1. In what ways are the days of Noah and the present days similar? (refer also to Lk. 17:26-27)

Noah took a long (but unreasonable) time to construct the ark. It probably took over fifty years. All this time, the world would have had opportunity to seek the LORD and repent. They didn't. Even though God was extremely patient in delaying His judgment, they refused to submit to Him. Later, in his second letter, Peter will point to the patience of God during the times of Noah to show that God is being very patient now waiting for people to repent.

SPIRITS IN PRISON

If Peter had been a Bible College student submitting his letter as an assignment, he may have very well failed. He has used a strange thought to illustrate his point. Just what he means by *He went and preached to the spirits in prison* is a mystery. We can only guess about its interpretation. One theory has it that Christ descended into Hell after He died on the cross, and "preached" to the spirits of the dead there. In particular, He preached to those who perished in Noah's Flood. This was not to offer them a second chance, but to confirm God's judgment upon them.

From this passage we note that there is a place where the wicked dead go. Here it is described as a *prison*. There are several references to Hell which describe it as a "remand centre" awaiting God's ultimate judgment (the lake of fire). It is described as having bars, gates and chains.

SAVED THROUGH WATER

In a way it was the ark that saved Noah. But the ark was just the product of Noah's faith and obedience. The saving factor for Noah was his faith in, and, obedience to, God. So as the ark went through the waters and Noah was saved, we go through another product of our faith in and obedience to God.

2. What is the "product" (or display) of our faith in and obedience to God? (vs. 21)

If a person is water baptised without having any faith in God, and no intention of being obedient to Him, there are merely getting wet. Water baptism is therefore not an external ceremony that has any power in itself. It is a display of what God has already done in the heart of the believer. It is also becomes both a test and display of the believer's obedience to God. If a person is too proud to be water baptised, then perhaps they are too proud to acknowledge their need for a Saviour.

3. What Old Testament example of this do we initially find in 2Ki. 5:10-11?

The issue isn't the water! It's *faith* and *obedience* that really count.

BAPTISM AND THE RESURRECTION

Baptism is a picture of death, burial, and resurrection (Rom. 6:3-4). It is the believer's way of identifying with Christ. When a believer comes up out of the waters of baptism, they quite often experience an inner cleansing. This is what Christ has purchased for us at Calvary: *peace with God and clear conscience* (Rom. 5:1; 1Pet. 3:21).

4. Should believers today be baptised? Explain.

5. What's the difference between infant christening and the type of baptism that the Bible talks about? (refer to Acts 2:38-39)

CHRIST EXALTED

Christ's resurrection was a momentous event. It literally changed the course of human history. His resurrection sealed His victory over death (1Cor. 15:22-27). The act of the resurrection ended any possible speculation that there was any force greater than God. The resurrection proved that not even death was greater than God. This event causes the universe to acknowledge that there is One who is worthy to judge the world.

6. Note the question that was asked in Revelation 5:2, and the response in Revelation 5:12 (see Rev. 1:18)

7. What did Christ's death and resurrection achieve according to Colossians 2:14-15?

Amen.