

Dr. Dave Mathewson, New Testament Literature, Lecture 31, 1 Peter

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This is Dr. Dave Mathewson in New Testament History and Literature, lecture 31 on 1 Peter.

Is this a Pentucket row here? Yeah. Do we have a quiz? It wouldn't be a pop quiz if I told you now, would it? Have you ever labeled them pop quizzes? What? Have you ever actually labeled them pop quizzes? I guess I didn't, did I? Would I give you a quiz coming back on a Wednesday after Easter break? You wouldn't.

All right, let's open with prayer. All right, Father, thank you for the short break and rest and 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.

All right, now, there's no quiz, so just sit back, take a deep breath and relax.

All right, just an announcement as far as what's going on in the next couple of 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 that 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.

Probably, it'll probably be Monday, I think. Now, the other thing too is that, and this is going to really upset and disappoint you, is I'm going to miss the entire week before finals, so there'll be no class except for whatever day, which is probably Monday, that's the 9th, 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 will 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'm so sorry that you'll 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, listen up, next week sometime, there will be another, the fourth and final extra credit review session that will cover material for and prepare for exam number four, which again then will be Monday, looks like it's going to be Monday the 9th. So that's kind of a heads-up as far as where we're headed.

So today and Friday, then all of next week, and then the following week, no class except for Monday will be exam number four over Hebrews and Revelation. But then no class on Wednesday or Friday, but then obviously no class on Friday, but then the final exam will be the next thing, the next momentous event after that. Will there be a review session for the final? Will there be a review session for the final? Probably there, yeah, 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. Right, okay. How much are the extra credit review sessions worth? I haven't decided yet, but again, it'll be worth your while to attend them.

Like a quiz grade for the final? A quiz grade, yep. 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 is, but yeah, it'll be good.

All right, yep. Do we have access to the tests that we've taken? Access to the tests that you've taken before, yes, you can pick those up. And again, some of you have kept copies, that's fine.

If you want to get a copy of the exam, 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 who 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, if you want to pick those up to study for, or any time before, that is fine. And we'll talk a little bit more about the final before I leave.

And again, there will be a review session, hopefully, for the final as well. Good, if I can fit it in, I hope I can. All right, 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, give them a little bit more time because usually what happens, as 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 letters sometimes. You get bogged down in books like Romans and Galatians and Ephesians, et cetera, and 1 Corinthians, and you can see why, for very good reasons. And second, again, 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 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 James, Hebrews, James, 1 and 2 Peter, and especially 1 John, 2 and 3 John, we'll look at very, very briefly, but spend a little bit of time on those. Again, because they're tucked away in between Revelation and Paul's letters and 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 1 Peter. Now, what is interesting about this letter, just at first glance, is the letter is named, much like James, the letter is named according to, see you guys, the letter is named according to the person who wrote it, not according to the recipients of the letter.

We're used to that with Paul's letters. All the letters are named according to the persons that they are addressed to. But James, Peter, and 1 and 2 and 3 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 1 Peter is to understand something of the circumstances that produce the letter. 1 Peter, like James, seems to be written, in other words, there seemed to be a common pattern, at least with some of the letters, and that is for a prominent Christian leader, such as James, who was a leader in the Christian church in Jerusalem, such as James or Peter, to write a letter to Christians who are spread widely or who are dispersed over a wide geographical area. So, if Peter begins, 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 see in James. 1 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 was addressed to Jews who were dispersed, and now 1 Peter is addressed to Christians who are likewise dispersed over a large geographical area.

He calls them exiles. But unlike James, 1 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 that applies 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 the language used by Israel. He will refer to them as 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 now 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'll find that frequently. Old Testament language used to refer to Israel is now applied in a new setting to refer to the church that now consists of both Jews and Gentiles.

Now, two other things about the circumstances of 1 Peter. First of all, in chapter 5 in verse 9, 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 1 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 that 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 into 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 1st century very often and certainly was not true of 1 Peter. 1 Peter seems to be addressing a situation where the Christians are mainly suffering the kinds of things as the verse I just read, chapter 5 verse 9, suggests that were common for Christians in general.

So, Christians would have experienced more unofficial and local kinds of pressure and suffering that is most of the suffering they would have experienced was not from the Roman government or not from Roman soldiers marching around in the streets dragging them out and beating them or something like that. But most of the suffering would have been at a local level and local pressure to conform and the kind of ostracism, the kind of ridicule, and perhaps even physical pain that would have 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 have 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 13 of chapter 5 Peter ends the letter by saying, 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'll look at a section in the book of Revelation that clearly identifies Rome, the city of Rome as Babylon using again an Old Testament term. Now that term gets applied to the city of Rome in the first century and Peter seems to pick up on that. So, to put this all together Peter then seems to be one of Jesus' apostles who is living in Rome now seems to be writing a letter to Christians who are simply experiencing the same kind of ostracism and ridicule and suffering that Christians would have experienced routinely but sporadically throughout large sections of the Roman Empire of the day.

Also, notice how widely spread they are. In chapter 1 and verse 1 we just read to the exiles of the dispersion in Pontus, Galatia, Cappadocia, Asia, and Bithynia those five names were all provinces of Rome. 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 by dividing it up into provinces and these five names one of them you're already familiar with, Galatia we suggested that the book of Galatians was probably written to a cluster of churches in the southern part of the Roman province of Galatia.

So, these Christians then spread out throughout the Roman province of Galatia at various times sporadically suffering at just a local, non-official level, suffering various kinds of persecution and ridicule, and social and physical ostracism at the hands of their pagan neighbors. And so now to put this together Peter writes, 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 the 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 an environment. The purpose of the letter in a sense, the purpose of the letter 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, twelve of its forty-one occurrences, the verb form occurs forty-one times as a verb throughout the New Testament, twelve of those instances occur in 1 Peter. And again, that's significant, as

short and small a book as 1 Peter is compared to the entirety of the New Testament, that's a large number of occurrences. Furthermore, the noun form of that same word, that same root word for suffering that Peter uses, the noun form occurs a fourth of the times, a fourth of the time that occurs in the New Testament occurs, a fourth of those occurrences, that is four out of sixteen, occurs in 1 Peter.

So, this cluster of 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, that is, I think, one of the things he's trying to address is to encourage Christians and to instruct them 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, again, it is 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 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. In 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, but instead, it's intriguing that, not only in the first three chapters, but woven throughout the book, 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'll look at this text in a moment, but one of the things Peter does, in chapter two, this is where you find Peter describing the church as a holy temple.

What Peter is doing is 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 a community, a holy temple, and we'll 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 the suffering is by forming and creating a holy community, a temple, which Peter calls the church.

But second, in chapters four and five, this is where Peter goes 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, the suffering servant that we often quote at Easter.

Peter alludes to that, all to demonstrate that his readers, like Christ, should refrain from retaliating and taking revenge, even though they may suffer unjustly at the hands of, again, this local sporadic persecution and pressure and ostracism that they are facing and ridicule.

So, that's kind of how Peter is set up. It can, in some respect, be divided in 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 then warning sections or the imperative or commands.

Peter does something similar. He flip-flops back and forth between his exposition and then his exhortation, but largely then that can kind of be divided into these two sections. But again, it's interesting to see that the heart of Peter's instruction when he addresses the Christians to withstand suffering, is not just a kind of 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 and context, appropriate Christian conduct, maintaining holiness, creating a community, and refusing to retaliate. So, I find Peter's instructions regarding suffering rather intriguing, 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 and pursue purity even in the midst of what they are facing.

Now, one important part of 1 Peter's teaching is what he says about the church. We find the lengthiest description of that in 1 Peter chapter 2, 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 written in Scripture, See, I am laying in Zion a stone, a corner stone, chosen and precious, and whoever believes in Him will not be put to shame. To him who believes, 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, what I want to draw attention to is noticing 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 their slogan, let's withdraw.

The Essenes went off in the desert and formed their own, the Qumran community formed their own community. And part of that was they understood themselves because they were upset with it, and they had rejected the physical temple in Jerusalem. They understood their own community to, in a sense, be a spiritual temple in the interim period until God would come and restore and rebuild the physical temple.

So, it's interesting. In the Qumran literature, you read this language about them being, 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 in 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 this in the Old Testament temple, the Old Testament temple was emblematic of God's presence with his people.

The Old Testament temple symbolized God's very dwelling and his presence with his covenant people, Israel. When the temple was destroyed because Israel sinned and God brought in Assyria and Babylon to cart them off into exile, the temple was destroyed and the prophets, such as Isaiah, Ezekiel, etc., anticipate a day when God will 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, and the promises and predictions of a rebuilt temple, ultimately get fulfilled in Jesus and his church, his 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. Now the church is the place where God now dwells with his people, no longer through a physical structure, no longer through a physical building.

That's why, as kind of 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 has nothing to do with prophecy, because the New Testament is clear that the rebuilt temple is now, the rebuilt temple that the prophets predicted, now gets fulfilled in Jesus and the church, not 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, 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 in 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 second, I think there may be another issue too, and that is for those who are suffering dislocation, for those who are exiled, they're described as exiles, and suffering dislocation and suffering persecution and ridicule, is by calling them this temple and this house built 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, and each individual member is 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 1 Peter. And it's found in chapter 3, and starting at verse 18.

And let me read it to you. For Christ also suffered for sin, so that's not unusual, that's Peter's main theme, is he's demonstrating that just as Christ suffered, but without retaliating, so should his followers. So, he 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. And 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 preaching 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 in prison? When did Jesus go there and do this? And what does this have to do with Noah and Genesis 6, Noah 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 maybe may influence, a section of the Apostles' 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 on 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 and was buried, and obviously that he rose from the dead on the third day.

You find those all together in one section in 1 Corinthians 15. But this reference to Christ descending into hell, one of the places that we apparently get that is from 1 Peter 3, 18-20. 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 Apostles' Creed.

And likewise, knowing the Apostles' 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 was finished, between that time and the time he rose again, Jesus must have gone down to hell and preached something, maybe a second chance at salvation, something. 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 to 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. And again, 1 Peter 3 probably lies behind this italicized section of the Apostles' 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. Did you have your hand up? Isn't there this idea that he placed in between the judgment of hell and heaven? Sure, yeah. And you've got this Hades waiting place where people, up until the moment that Jesus died on the cross for everyone's sin, there was no salvation.

There was just waiting until that day. There are references to Hades. I think it might be in the Old Testament.

It's something new where it references how Abraham and Isaac all of them are alive, but it seems the way they reference it in the language that they are in heaven at this point in time, and that Jesus Christ has to actually take them from this waiting place up into heaven. And so that seems to be what's been referenced by being preaching the gospel of his salvation and those who believe in him, shall we say. Sure.

Yeah, you're exactly right. Someone suggests hell, the final place of judgment, is before that people are kind of in this holding tank in between and waiting for Christ's death and resurrection. And now 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, right? Another way it's often been understood is someone suggested that Jesus, that Christ was actually preaching through Noah, that when Noah preached to the people around him that now they are spirits, they have died and they are spirits, but when they were alive, someone suggested what Peter is saying is Christ was actually preaching through Noah to these people who are now spirits.

And 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 he was actually, Christ was actually preaching or speaking through him to these persons who are now dead and are indeed spirits, is 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 and 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 was where 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 is that it happened 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 is 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. Sometime in between that, Jesus went to these spirits.

I'm not convinced that's what it's talking about. I think this is something that happens at his resurrection. And again, I think that 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 his 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. So, 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 Moses, of course not Moses, Noah. Not when Noah was alive. He's not preaching through Noah.

He's not preaching sometime between his death and resurrection. Whatever he's doing, he's doing this after he was raised from the dead. Well, this isn't positive.

Yeah, that's a good question. I think he was probably in Colorado enjoying the mountains. No, he was, yeah, I mean, I don't know if I want to go into that.

Any of you has to deal with what happened between the death of Christ and the resurrection of Christ. I take it that he was in the presence of the Father and ascended to heaven, but again, his physical resurrection body had not yet, his physical resurrection as a sign of the inauguration of the new creation had not yet taken place. So, I take it that he was in the presence of the Father in heaven.

And I think there's good evidence throughout the New Testament for that. Yeah. But yeah, I think, again, I think some of that language is Old Testament-type language and clearly refers to resurrection.

But that's a very good question. 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 that he went up. It doesn't tell us where these spirits were in prison. The text simply doesn't say.

But 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, if you go back to the book of Ephesians, what did we say most likely? I'm

kind of jumping ahead a little bit. But in Ephesians, where were the spirits and the rulers and authorities found? Who we said were evil powers and evil spirits. Where were they found in Ephesians? Behind the kingdoms of the earth, Paul also locates them in the heavenlies.

So, what's to prevent us from seeing Jesus as proclaiming or confronting these spirits, whoever they are, and preaching whatever he does in the heavenlies, not necessarily in hell or in some other compartment somewhere, although that's a possibility, but perhaps this is similar to what Paul is saying in Ephesians. These spirits are in the heavenly realms, that control the heavenly realms. And even there we saw that Jesus was seated far above every ruler and authority in the heavenlies.

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, or it doesn't say where he went. Second, who were they? Who were these spirits? In my opinion, I think Peter is relying on a tradition that has 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 on to that. The spirits who were in prison awaiting judgment from Genesis chapter 6. I'm going to come back to that in just a moment. Finally, what did Jesus preach? Most likely, Jesus... Again, the word there that most of 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. That Jesus is poor... Or it could simply be a message of Jesus' victory.

Jesus, through his death and resurrection, has now won the victory over sin and 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 6, 1 through 6, the story... Again, 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 1 Enoch that I'm sure most of you have read recently. But you can even Google 1 Enoch and find an English translation of it.

But in chapter 6 of 1 Enoch, 1 Enoch is clearly describing Genesis 6, the flood. And 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, 1 Enoch 6, and there's other texts in 1 Enoch that understand these sons of God from Genesis 6 as angelic beings. Another one, chapter 21, in the same book, 1 Enoch. Again, 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, Enoch is still describing, he's describing the flood, the event of Genesis 6. These are among the stars of heaven that transgress 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 6. So, these angels who have transgressed are the sons of God from Genesis chapter 6. 2 Peter 2, the book we'll 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. Again, when you look at all of chapter 2 of 1 Peter, this fits very well into a description of Genesis chapter 6. So again, the idea of angels who sin, transgress 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, but I'm just looking at the ones that are most clear. Jude chapter 6, a little book before Revelation. And the angels who did not keep their positions of authority, but they abandoned their proper dwellings, these angels God has kept in darkness, bound in everlasting chains for judgment.

So, my point is, that you seem to have this tradition or story based on Genesis 6, that the sons of God from Genesis 6 were angelic beings who transgressed their boundaries and commands, and therefore sinned, and therefore were bound in chains, metaphorically or otherwise, in prison, awaiting the day of judgment. Now, I think Peter is using that story and saying this judgment has finally come in the person of Jesus Christ. These angels or these spirits from Genesis chapter 6 transgressed and were bound in chains for judgment, 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 have understood it because this idea is found in a number of different places and different kinds of literature. I wonder if this wouldn't have just been a popular story, and now Peter uses it, but basically, I think this is Peter's way of saying the same thing that Paul did in Ephesians 1, that Jesus, with his resurrection, has now been exalted far above the rulers and authorities in the heavenlies, and now they are his footstool, that is a sign that he is victorious and conquered them.

I think this is just Peter's way of saying the same thing. So, I don't think we need to ask where did Peter go, or where did Jesus go, where were these spirits in prison, are these the only spirits, what about other spirits? Peter's not interested in that, he's just using a common story that his readers were familiar with to reiterate that through his death and resurrection, Jesus has won the victory over the powers of evil, and now, through his death

and resurrection, proclaims a message of judgment and victory. All right, any questions about that?

That's kind of how I read the text, and I think, how understanding some of the background can help clear up a rather kind of sticky passage.

Again, when we understand what Peter's doing in this story, this background, the story he's referring to, then we don't have to worry about, well, where did Jesus go, and did he proclaim a 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, waiting for their day of judgment, and now Peter is 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? I mean, what is he trying to do? You'll notice that Peter goes on, he starts out with Jesus Christ being suffering, as we have, but Peter does two other things. Number one is Peter will demonstrate that in the same way, notice verse 20, he says, 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, his church, though they seem to be a minority in this hostile environment in the Roman Empire, is they can be assured that God will rescue them as well. So, this theme of the 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, through Jesus Christ, God has already defeated the powers of evil, so what have they to fear? What do the readers, though they may suffer persecution, what do the readers have to fear? Jesus Christ has already won the victory over the hostile powers of evil. What truly threatens them are not the rulers and authorities on the human level in Rome, but what the true threat comes behind that, that is, the rulers and authorities of 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 in witness and in appropriate conduct, just like Noah and his family did, although they too were a minority in a hostile environment.

All right, any other questions about this? All right. That's actually a good breaking-off point, I think. Next, on Friday, we'll look at two more books together, actually 2 Peter and Jude, which we'll see go closely together.

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