

Where we left off, we were commanded to sanctify Christ as Lord in our hearts; to set Him apart in His rightful position as Lord of our lives. Now, He is the Lord, there is no way around it, it is a statement of fact; but we are commanded to choose to give Him that precious place in our hearts fully convinced that all things in our lives—even the teeny tiny details—are from Him. Everything in the life of a believer is appointed and determined by our Lord. As we consider this command, we need to keep in mind that if He is not set apart as Lord then that usually means some version of the “Me” is set apart as lord and is desperately trying to control the outcomes of our lives. And we all know by experience that the “Me” is a terrible lord.

It is so foolish that we, the **beloved**, still try and live this way. In reality, we are ripping ourselves off from the life that Jesus wants us to experience on this earth; the freedom from all the fear, worry, anxiety, stress, and terror that comes from trying to control what we in fact have no power to control. It is only when Jesus occupies His rightful place in our lives that we can experience His life and peace through any circumstances in which we find ourselves (even unjust suffering) because as our Lord His plans for our lives are always good, pleasing, and perfect. And as our God, He sees all things, knows all things, understands all things, and always has perfect information when it comes to our lives, whether it deals with the past, the present, or the future. And as the Almighty, He has the power to do what He has determined for our lives—the power to fulfill every single promise He has ever made.

We are given this command to sanctify Christ as Lord in our hearts so we can learn to rest in the fact that everything He has appointed for our lives is in fact

good, pleasing, and perfect, for all of it will, if we let it, bring us closer to Him. What God appoints for our lives is for the purpose of transforming us into the image of the Son so we can indeed live in this world as He lived and truly be the aliens and strangers that He says we are. Sanctifying Christ as Lord in our hearts is about owning our identity as the **beloved** and betting our lives on everything that the Lord has said about his **beloved**.

With that said, tonight we come upon a very weird passage that has caused a lot of confusion in the ranks of Christianity. It is weird because the images used to communicate the message seem out of place and seem to break the flow of what we have been studying about suffering. But it only seems that way. Actually, in context of suffering, it strangely makes complete sense since it has to do with the first part of the design point: I have been crucified with Christ. But we have to remember that this message is given to us in images; so we must understand what these images communicate and not get too tied up in knots about the pictures themselves.

Sadly, too many people have pulled these verses out of the overall context of **1 Peter** and then wrestle with issues surrounding “salvation” and whether or not one is saved through the physical act of baptism. But “salvation” in terms of coming to Jesus is not even at issue in the context of **1 Peter**; in fact, **1 Peter 1:3-5** assumes that the reader already has obtained eternal life: an inheritance which is imperishable, undefiled, and will not fade away, reserved in heaven. So this passage is not giving instruction on how to get to heaven. Rather, in context, **1 Peter** deals with “salvation” in terms of being saved from ourselves, from our *Old Sinful Nature*, and learning how to live in the Spirit as an alien and stranger on this

earth in the midst of certain suffering and persecution. But if you don't stick with the context this can, without a doubt, be a very confusing passage.

### ***1 Peter 3:18-22***

For Christ also died for sins once for all, the just for the unjust, so that He might bring us to God, having been put to death in the flesh, but made alive in the spirit; in which also He went and made proclamation to the spirits now in prison, who once were disobedient, when the patience of God kept waiting in the days of Noah, during the construction of the ark, in which a few, that is, eight persons, were brought safely through the water. Corresponding to that, baptism now saves you — not the removal of dirt from the flesh, but an appeal to God for a good conscience — through the resurrection of Jesus Christ, who is at the right hand of God, having gone into heaven, after angels and authorities and powers had been subjected to Him.

This passage is part of the same thought process in **3:17**, “For it is better, if God should will it so, that you suffer for doing what is right rather than for doing what is wrong.” One of our motivations for dealing with unjust suffering is the fact that Christ also suffered for sins, the just for the unjust. As He was unjustly treated, so are we; and it is ok. We can get our minds around that; He set an example for us to follow and it was an extreme example. He gave up His life and relinquished His physical body to those who would unjustly accuse, mock, convict, hurt, and kill Him. And with His death, He died for sins once and for all. That means not just

your sins, but even the sins of the person who is treating you poorly and unjustly. Yes, Jesus died for those sins as well. In fact, we know He died for the sins of the whole world (**John 12:47; 1 Timothy 4:10; 1 John 4:14**) which would include the very sins of those who hurt Him and those who hurt you.

The fact that it says He died, or in some translations “suffered,” for sins once (technically it does not say “for all” but that is implied) means that there never needs to be another sacrifice for sins. The verb is in the *indicative*, which means it is a statement of fact. What Jesus did on the cross was entirely sufficient for you and for me and for everyone. This is the very reason why we don’t have to live in shame or guilt over what we have done; He took care of it all on the cross and we can now let it go once and for all. Furthermore, we don’t have to do any penance to pay for our sins nor does anyone, no matter how bad they have been. This is another example He set for us. That means when someone unjustly deals with us we should not expect them to pay us some sort of penance before we will deal kindly with them. Rather, we can keep a good conscience and do what is “*agathos*” or inherently good because He has dealt with their sin. Besides, as we were told in **3:16**, Christ will put them to shame for the unjust things they do to us. It is not your job to retaliate; that is the Lord’s job. **Romans 12** says it this way:

***Romans 12:17-19***

Respect what is right in the sight of all men. If possible, so far as it depends on you, be at peace with all men. Never take your own revenge, beloved, but leave room for the wrath of God, for it is written, "VENGEANCE IS MINE, I WILL

REPAY," says the Lord.

We need to rest in this and set our minds on the fact that things in this world just simply may not go the best for us; but that is not to be our concern. We are to trust that all things are in the hands of the Lord and He will deal with those by whom the troubles come; and they will be shamed. This issue of the Lord shaming His enemies (and our enemies) is actually one of the central points of this passage.

We are also told that Jesus died for a very specific purpose: to bring us to God. Dealing with sin was a necessary step to accomplish this purpose. With sin being nailed to the cross, sin has been removed as a permanent barrier between God and all of mankind. Sin no longer causes a permanent division in the relationship between God and man; the gap caused by sin has been bridged by the cross. Now, man can come to God through Jesus' death on the cross, and there is nothing but his own stupid pride that can intervene. But the way to God is very specific and it is through, as it says in **3:21**, the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ. There is no other way. Sin now is something that impacts our fellowship with God, but it no longer is a fixed separation between God and man.

But this notion of our "coming to God" is the center piece of this passage and it goes beyond our heavenly destiny; it goes to the very issue of our salvation. I say that because of the way this passage mentions baptism, Noah, the Ark, and an appeal for a good conscience. All these images deal with the design point: I have been crucified with Christ and it is no longer I who live but Christ lives in me. This bizarre passage is a creative way of using history to address this issue of our true

salvation: being saved from ourselves—from our *Old Sinful Nature*—and living life new in Jesus Christ.

The idea of being brought to God is pictured for us in Jesus' death and resurrection. He was put to death in the flesh but quickened or made alive in the Spirit. In the same way, Jesus brings us to God by putting us to death in the flesh and causing us to be made alive or revitalized in the Spirit. This is not just a statement of what happened to Jesus but it is a commentary on our lives. Both "death" or literally to "kill" and "alive" are in the *arist passive participle*—being put to death in the flesh and being made alive in the Spirit. This is a statement on His life in us (the "design point"). It is something He is doing with us all the time and continually. It was not just a past event, the *participle* captures the ongoing nature of these two events. Further, the *passive* makes it clear that God is one doing it. He is the one who is continually causing us to be put to death in the flesh and make alive in the Spirit.

If we go back and consider that we are to sanctify Jesus as Lord of our hearts trusting that all He allows in our lives is for the purpose of conforming us into His image, then we can be confident that when things like unjust suffering occurs, or any other thing that bring disruption into our lives, it is for the purpose of killing our flesh, our *Old Sinful Nature*, and teaching us how to be alive in the Spirit. This truth gives us more reason why we can rest and have peace in the events of our lives; it is all for His glorious purposes. Well, I guess that is if you have the same goal that Jesus has: to be like Him. If that is not your goal, then you will have trouble and will likely live in turmoil, stress, and worry because there is no escaping this truth: all whom He has called He has predestined (or arranged and

ordered the affairs of their life) to be conformed into the image of His Son (**Romans 8:29**). You should really wrap your minds and your emotions around this truth. If you do, if you get on the same agenda as your Lord, things will be so much easier to understand and to deal with.

This death of the flesh is what is captured in this image of Noah and the Ark. But before we get there let's consider the first part of this picture: "In which also He went and made proclamation to the spirits now in prison, who once were disobedient, when the patience of God kept waiting in the days of Noah, during the construction of the ark, in which a few, that is, eight persons, were brought safely through the water."

So there were spirits in prison to which Jesus went and preached. Let me first say what I think this is talking about and then I will give you the reasons why. I am prone to think that these "spirits" are the angels that rebelled against the Lord during the days of Noah and were punished for their sin, as described in the book of Enoch. I don't think this is a reference to the evil and rebellious men that died while Noah built the ark. I think this is talking about fallen angels.

The book of Enoch (an ancient manuscript that is quoted by both Peter and Jude) says that there were a group of very bad angels who made a pact to come to the earth and do the unthinkable. Their plan was to procreate with women in an attempt to pollute the human gene pool. I believe their thought process was that if the DNA of man could somehow be corrupted, and the corrupted seed was passed on through the generations, then perhaps they could surreptitiously make it impossible for the Messiah to be born a man (as prophesied), for all man would carry this corrupt angelic DNA. If so, their plan was to either a) defeat Jesus'

purposes before He was ever born by making salvation for “man” impossible; or b) make it possible for the Messiah to die not just for man but also for fallen angles, since his human body would contain the DNA of both creatures. The fallen angles know they are doomed and know they have no chance of redemption. Perhaps they were thinking that if man can be redeemed so can they, and this was their attempt to make that possible. Who knows, that is just speculation on what the angles might have been thinking; but it is fascinating.

Now we don't need to get into whether or not this really happened, or whether angelic DNA could in fact be infused with humans much like the way a mule is formed by the breeding of donkeys and horses. That is not the point (even though we are told that giants on the earth, or the Nephilim, were the result of something strange and unnatural that happened prior to the flood). But whether or not the book of Enoch gives us the true story, we have 2 Biblical proofs of the fact that a group of angels were disobedient during the time that God was patiently waiting for Noah to build the Ark (approximately 100-years) and they did something very, very bad and are being punished in prisons of darkness.

Both **Jude** and **2 Peter** mentions these angels. **Jude 6** speaks of angels who did not keep their own domain, but abandoned their proper abode. It says that God has kept them in eternal bonds under darkness for the judgment of the great day. In other words, these angles are locked in a prison of sorts that holds them until the appointed day of their release (which you can read about in **Revelation 9**, with the blowing of the fifth trumpet). **2 Peter 2:4** also mentions these angels that sinned. It says that God cast them into hell and committed them to pits of darkness where they are reserved for judgment. So the point is that there are two



other Biblical references to this prison (along with the references in the book of Enoch) that specifically refer to angels and not men.

As another point of differentiation, the word “spirits” comes from the Greek word “*pneuma*,” which literally means “breath.” It is usually translated as “spirit” or “Ghost” and is the word that is used for both the Holy Spirit and the spirit within a man. Dead men, however, are never referred to as “spirit” but as “souls” or “*psucha*” (**Revelation 6:9; 20:4**). Whereas, angels are referred to as spirits (“*pneuma*”) and not souls (“*psucha*”) in **Hebrews 1:7; 14**. Therefore, I believe Jesus went and preached to angels in the prisons of hell and not to bad men.

But why, what was His purpose? He was bound to go by direct order of the Father. Do you remember what Jesus said when He was living? He said He was bound to do the will of the Father for He did nothing on His own initiative, only that which He saw His Father doing (**John 5:19; 30**). It is the same reason He had to go to Samaria, because His Father had bound Him or required it of Him. Well, the same thing applies in this instance. “He went” is in the *aorist passive participle*. Being in the *passive*, we know that God the Father moved Him to go and Jesus being obedient to His Father’s will went. I am sure going to the deepest darkest pits in hell would not have been on His own agenda during the 3-days and 3-nights that He was dead in the flesh, but the Father wanted Him to preach.

But what is really strange is that “He went” is a *participle*, it means that not only did He go (as in sometime in the past) but he was going. It is the difference between saying someone ran and someone was running. Perhaps, this is simply telling us that there are many pits of darkness to which these spirits are interned and Jesus had to go to each and every one of them; so He was going.

And He had a purpose in going. He was going to these prisons and preaching. We are not told what He made known to them, but presumably it was the fact that He was the victor. Their plan failed and they were now shamed. **3:22** says, all angels and authorities and powers (which are all different levels of spiritual beings) have been made completely subjected to Him—to Jesus the man who is God. The Father sent Jesus to these pits of darkness to show off Jesus' power and authority and in so doing completely shame these enemies who were disobedient.

### ***Colossians 2:9-15***

For in Him all the fullness of Deity dwells in bodily form, and in Him you have been made complete, and He is the head over all rule and authority; and in Him you were also circumcised with a circumcision made without hands, in the removal of the body of the flesh by the circumcision of Christ; having been buried with Him in baptism, in which you were also raised up with Him through faith in the working of God, who raised Him from the dead. When you were dead in your transgressions and the uncircumcision of your flesh, He made you alive together with Him, having forgiven us all our transgressions, having canceled out the certificate of debt consisting of decrees against us, which was hostile to us; and He has taken it out of the way, having nailed it to the cross. *When He had disarmed the rulers and authorities, He made a public display of them, having triumphed over them through Him.*

The greatest point of shame is found in the fact that Jesus, the man who is God, conquered death. And, in so doing, He provided a way for man to live for all eternity. He was put to death in the flesh and made alive in the Spirit and so shall men now have the opportunity to be put to death in the flesh and made alive in the Spirit. Man can now—through the Spirit—truly be “good” like God. And that is not something that is afforded to any angel, but only to the **beloved**. Besides, those angelic beings were not only disobedient in the past, but they are still in disobedience as disobedient is in the *aorist active participle*. Disobedience is something in which they continually abide.

Why is the Spirit telling us this? 1) The Spirit wants us to embrace our identity as the **beloved** and understand what an amazing thing Jesus has done for us and how special we truly are. He wants us to embrace the death of our flesh and be quickened in the Spirit such that we live—always—a Spirit directed life. Imagine, out of all of creation, we are His chosen ones; chosen to become one with the Godhead. And the Father wanted Jesus to go and brag about His bride to those who disobeyed and tried to thwart the Father’s plan. And what is even more amazing is that because of this life in the Spirit, mere man, would now be exalted above even the mighty angels, the powers, and all authorities. All of creation will be in subjection to the **beloved**, for we will sit with Jesus on His throne as He sits with His Father on His throne (***Revelation 3:21***).

And 2) The Spirit wants us to know that He will always shame not just His enemies but ours as well—the Father will see to it. As it says in **3:16**, “those who revile your good behavior in Christ will be put to shame.” Our Lord has things under control; and every person who has taken advantage of us and dealt with us

unjustly will be put to shame. We must understand that if someone comes against us, our Lord is simply allowing them to prove their nature and in so doing use it to give us opportunities to put to death our flesh and choose to walk in the Spirit.

Now let's talk about Noah and the Ark. The background to this comes from **Genesis 6**. Now I want you to think of this as a picture of our very being—the heart and soul of man.

### ***Genesis 6:5-13***

Then the Lord saw that the wickedness of man was great on the earth, and that every intent of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually. The Lord was sorry that He had made man on the earth, and He was grieved in His heart. The Lord said, "I will blot out man whom I have created from the face of the land, from man to animals to creeping things and to birds of the sky; for I am sorry that I have made them." *But Noah found favor in the eyes of the Lord...* Now the earth was corrupt in the sight of God, and the earth was filled with violence. God looked on the earth, and behold, it was corrupt; for all flesh had corrupted their way upon the earth. Then God said to Noah, "The end of all flesh has come before Me; for the earth is filled with violence because of them; and behold, I am about to destroy them with the earth.

In the days of Noah, every part of mankind had been corrupted, nothing was good and no one was holy. That is the true condition of the human soul; this is a statement not just of behavior but of our spiritual condition. ***Romans 3:10-12***

says, “There is none righteous, not even one; there is none who understands, there is none who seeks for God; all have turned aside, together they have become useless; there is none who does good, there is not even one.” *Isaiah 64:6* says, “We are all infected and impure with sin. When we display our righteous deeds, they are nothing but filthy rags.” Our flesh is thoroughly corrupted by sin and evil and despite our arrogance which believes that mankind is basically good, man is essentially useless. Imagine, no one does good; not even one. There is no exception to this truth. Hence, the need for all of our flesh, just like all of humanity in the days of Noah, needs to be wiped off the face of the earth and put to death. Complete annihilation is the only remedy to the infection of sin and evil. Being buried in the water (water being a symbol for the Spirit of God), is the only way to eradicate this infection of sin and evil.

God was also patient as He waited during the time that the Ark was prepared; and He has been more than patient with us. We all deserve to be judged and wiped out for our sin. But God wanted to save us and we, like Noah, have found favor in His eyes. So He has patiently waited. But it is now time to get on the Ark and allow our evil to be buried under the flood. This picture of Noah and the flood is a picture of our turning from evil (**3:11**) and giving ourselves to the Spirit of God. However, what God desires is a complete turning from evil; He wants a complete eradication, from our lives, of all that does not originate from Him.

Then we are told that eight people were saved through the water. Eight people were saved from the judgment of the water. The Ark preserved them and carried them to safety and to a new life. Clearly, the number eight stands out here like a loud marker. As we know, eight is the Biblical number of new beginnings or new

life. Our new life comes when we agree to get on the Ark that will carry us to safety (the Ark being a type of Jesus) knowing full well that our life in the flesh will be completely buried under the water in judgment. Salvation is in the Ark. There is no other way to be saved from the flood. Every living creature was blotted off the face of the earth by the flood. None survived except for those in the Ark.

### ***Genesis 7:21-23***

All flesh that moved on the earth perished, birds and cattle and beasts and every swarming thing that swarms upon the earth, and all mankind; of all that was on the dry land, all in whose nostrils was the breath of the spirit of life, died. Thus He blotted out every living thing that was upon the face of the land, from man to animals to creeping things and to birds of the sky, and they were blotted out from the earth; and only Noah was left, together with those that were with him in the ark.

Jesus is our complete salvation and He will carry us through the obliteration of our flesh brought about by the judgment of the Spirit of God. But those who do not get in the Ark will find themselves overcome by the death of their flesh and they will simply not make it; there will be no freedom for them but they will be consumed and drowned by the waves of judgment. ***Romans 8:6*** says, the mind set on the flesh is death but the mind set on the Spirit is life and peace. These two ways of living are completely contrasted. ***Galatians 6:8-9***, “Those who live only to satisfy their own sinful nature will harvest decay and death from that sinful

nature. But those who live to please the Spirit will harvest everlasting life from the Spirit. So let's not get tired of doing what is good. At just the right time we will reap a harvest of blessing if we don't give up." You simply must put the *Old Sinful Nature* to death under the flood that kills. It is the only way to truly live in God and do what is good (do what comes from the only one who is good).

I want you to know that this is foreshadowing a very critical truth which the Spirit speaks in **1 Peter 4:17-19**. God judges His own and He judges us before He ever judges those who do not obey the gospel of God. He says, "For it is time for judgment to begin with the household of God; and if it is with difficulty that the righteous is saved, what will become of the godless man and the sinner? Therefore, those also who suffer according to the will of God shall entrust their souls to a faithful Creator in doing what is right."

The flood is about judgment of our flesh. It is about the eradication of evil. And we know how painful and difficult it is; God has literally been causing us to have our flesh peeled back from our bodies. So few people ever truly want to undergo this type of judgment (which is also pictured in the fact that so few were saved—8 out of the millions if not billions that were alive on the earth). The statistics are not too dissimilar to the number of faithful who got to enter the promise land compared to the number who were unfaithful and died in the wilderness (2 out of over six million). God wants you to be one of the few who are truly saved from the death brought about by the flesh. He wants you to be one of the few who have new life.

Now what do we know about the Ark?

- The Ark will carry us to salvation. It will protect us during the time that

our flesh is being eradicated from existence.

- You have to be chosen to be in the Ark; not just anyone was allowed to enter. You have to be set apart for the purpose of being saved.
- The Ark is completely safe regardless of the intensity of the raging storm.

All of this is true of Jesus. He carries us to salvation; He protects us during the time that our flesh is being judged and killed; He has chosen us for the purpose of being saved; we are the few, but we will know new life; and Jesus is completely safe regardless of how painful it is to have our identity, our coping mechanisms, our victim mentality, and our own goodness stripped from our lives. The storm is brutal but it always leads to new life.

And this exact same picture is captured in the picture of Baptism. Baptism itself is just an act, just a symbol, just a ritual that we are to follow. But what is important, what saves us, is what baptism symbolizes. The putting down of our flesh into the water, under the flood, and the resurrection of our bodies to new life. When it says baptism now saves you, it is in the *present active indicative*; so this is not talking about salvation the way “Christianity” tends to do which is to equate it with the moment in time we became born-again: hence the phrase, “I have been saved.” No, this present salvation is talking about the death of your flesh so you can—in your now—live in the Spirit of God. This can be your now and being in the *indicative*, that is a statement of fact; life can be yours.

Baptism is an appeal to God for a good (“*agathos*”) conscience. And since only God is good, it is an appeal to live the new life according to the design point: I have been crucified with Christ and it is no longer I who live but Christ lives in me. It is an appeal for His life in ours. It is a request that the Spirit of God would bring



judgment into our lives so we can turn away from evil and do good (**3:11**). I doubt that many of you knew that was what you were seeking when you got baptized. But that is what true Biblical baptism is about. It is about burying what is dead and dying and rising to new life through the resurrection of Jesus Christ. His new life is our new life (the design point) and it is available to all who are willing to get on the Ark and let their flesh be completely annihilated (I have been crucified with Christ) while their new life in Christ (on the Ark) is saved from destruction (Christ lives in me).

We are saved by our Ark, by Jesus Christ who is the ultimate in power and authority. He sits at the Father's right hand. All power has been given to Him. And everything else, including the enemy that we far too often cower before, is subjected to Him. Now, He wants us to understand that with His life in ours we can live free in power and authority through what He has done for us, His chosen **beloved**. He chose us for salvation, the eradication of our flesh so we might be the few who know new life and peace (don't forget the olive branch and the rainbow).

Let's Pray