

1 PETER CERTAINTY IN UNCERTAIN TIMES

Study 7 - 1 Peter 3:13-4:6

'Attack is the best form of defence.' What do you think? Where have you seen that in action?

Read 1 Peter 3:13-17

What's the difference between making a defence and being defensive?

What happens when you are challenged about your faith? (see table below)

	Heart	Mind (including aims)	Speech
What happens when you are challenged about your faith?			
What does Peter ask of followers under fire?			

How does having some thoughts about what you are going to say help? How would you prepare?

What kind of persecution can you envisage?

What things would be important to include in an answer?

What are some current topics that might prompt questions (how would you answer questions about current news items)? How would you wind hope and reasons for it in your answers?

Do you agree with 1 Peter 3:17? What's good and what's hard about that verse?

Read 1 Peter 3:18-4:6

How does Peter weave key belief statements (doctrinal statements) into this section? How do they help us in our day to day lives?

How is Peter using the relationship between Jesus and Noah? Using the table below compare and contrast Jesus and Noah with regard to righteousness, judgement, salvation and our experience now? (Look also at Genesis 6-7:13; 1 Peter 1:10-12; 2 Peter 2:4-10 Hebrews 11:7 Luke 17:26-27)

	Righteousness	Judgement	Salvation	Experience	Response and responsibility to the message of God
People in Noah's time					
Noah					
Christ					
Christians					
Those not Christian yet					

What does standing firm for Jesus in the midst of suffering look like? What pressures, what joys and what assurance are part of that experience? How do we help each other in that?

This passage has an awesome gospel summary confession which would be worth memorizing. This week would be a good time to help people think about how they share their faith. Often expressing our faith in personal terms makes it easier for others to listen to what we have to say rather than speaking simply in objective truths so 'giving a reason for the hope that you have' is a personal moment to let someone in on your heart.

This section of Peter also has a very puzzling section about Noah. Below you will see the flow of the passage and some options for thinking through what's happening with Noah and some application.

Flow of the passage:

18 For Christ also suffered once for sins, the righteous for the unrighteous, that he might bring us to God, being put to death in the flesh but made alive in the **spirit**,

19 in which he went and proclaimed to the spirits in prison, **20** because they formerly did not obey, when God's patience waited in the days of Noah, while the ark was being prepared, in which **a few, that is, eight persons, were brought safely through water.**

21 Baptism, which corresponds to this, now saves you, not as a removal of dirt from the body but as an appeal to God for a good conscience, through the resurrection of Jesus Christ, **22** who has gone into heaven and is at the right hand of God, with angels, authorities, and powers having been subjected to him.

Options: There are roughly three options in understanding how the Noah bit fits in with each having some variations within that framework.

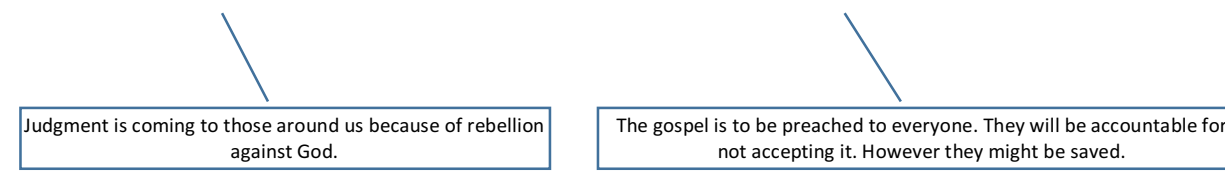
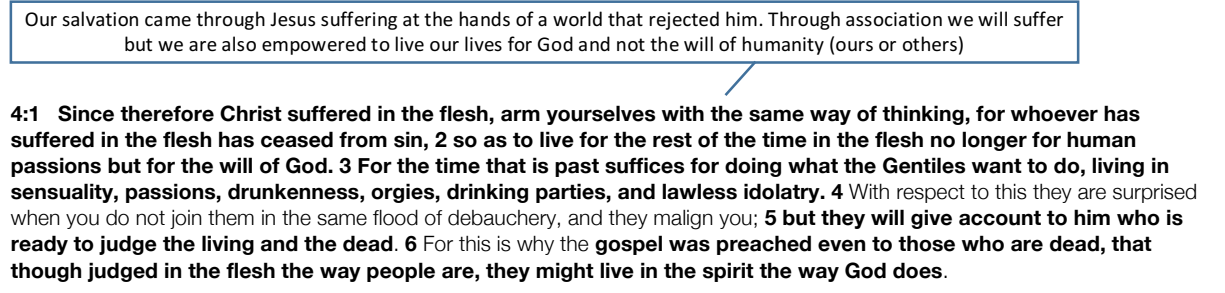
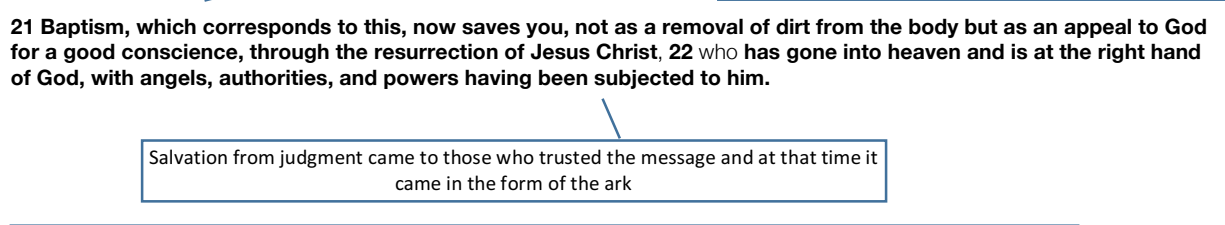
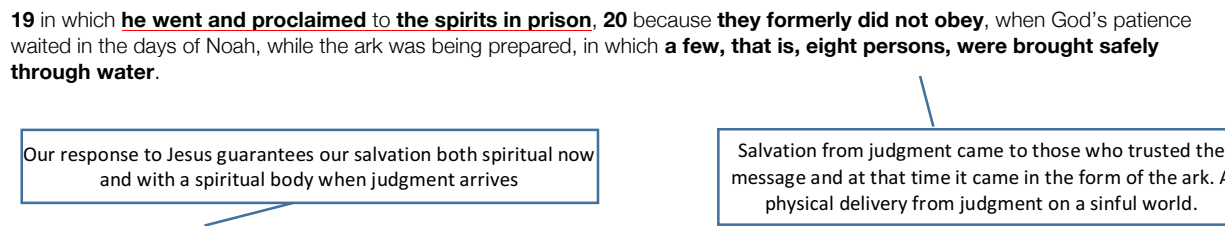
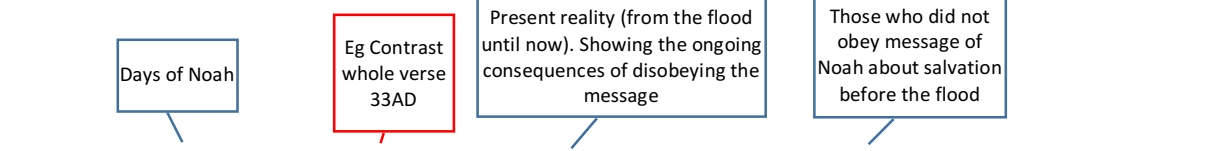
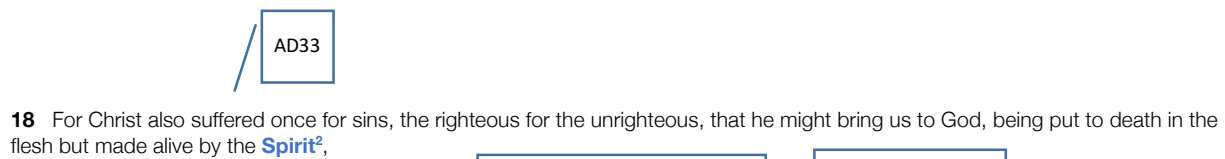
		Description	Issues
1	AD33 Between death and resurrection	That Jesus went to hell to tell those who had died in Noah's time the gospel so that everyone has a chance to hear what Jesus came to do.	a second chance after death
2	AD 33 after resurrection	Jesus has proclaimed himself in the heavenly realms as the victor over sin and death by completely imprisoning the spiritual realm (backed up with 2 Peter 2:4-5, Jude, the Nephelim in Gen 6, the book of 1 Enoch which is quoted in Jude Angels trying to understand Jesus power in 1 Peter 1:12) Disobedient angels and their offspring seen as instigators of lawlessness in pre flood world. Christ has now achieved a way ahead for the righteous guaranteed through his death for sins and his ascended rule. We get a foretaste of victory even though evil happens around us. We can be assured of Jesus eternal victory. 3:22 Describes Jesus ascendancy and victory over every power.	It is to recall the generation that perished in the flood rather than angels. It is a picture of Noah's faithfulness and God's patience in bringing judgment on those around him. It makes less sense. While the ark was being built the possibility for the escape from judgement was available for humans not for fallen angels.
3	In the time of Noah	The Spirit of Christ that raised him from the dead is the same spirit the saved Noah through perseverance among disobedient people. In the current age God guarantees our salvation through the clean conscience that come through faith in Christ. This can be backed up with how the spirit of Christ – 1 Peter 1:10-12 - pointed to his suffering for us and how we suffer for him in a world that rejected him but our glory is certain) The disobedience occurred during the preaching of the warnings of judgment and a means to avoid the judgement – namely through the ark. This matches the context of Peter. Noah's righteousness directly saves his family through the ark. Yet after the judgement event of the flood Noah and his sons sinned and they died. Jesus' righteousness saves us fully from sin and brings us to God (1 Peter 3:18 which then links to verses 21-22 showing our response to God through Jesus and Jesus awesome power to fully deliver that salvation eternally by defeating those adversaries that drag us into sin to face God's judgment)	

Or could be 'made alive by the Spirit' referring to the Holy Spirit

I've gone with option 3 however in the discussion below. In your discussion with your group you will probably be listing a variety of options (example in red below) and weighing the up with the evidence of the text. People may find aspects of the other versions more convincing.

Exercise:

One thing you could do when talking about this passage is to print it out and break down possible timeframes around the text and then see what it means and how it relates to the content either side of it.



Peter choses to highlight Noah because that episode in Genesis 6-7 shows a shadow of a complete salvation episode (with the Ark taking people through judgment safely). In the time before Jesus returns we need to be reminded of the full salvation to come but that we can own it now through trust in the good news. The power of the future salvation from judgement that Jesus has secured is much more powerful than the salvation that occurred in Noah's time – it is an eternally lasting and powerful salvation. We need to hear that news in tough times. We also need to be encouraged and warned of suffering and persecution before it happens so that we can see where we are in salvation history.

Peter writes this to assure us of Christ's eternal actions for the good and salvation of his people both in the past through Noah and from his death through into eternity. The world keeps behaving in a way that does not recognize the danger of judgement nor the means of salvation offered to it. Yet, with the Spirit of Christ there is hope for us and also hope that more will accept the salvation offered through Jesus. His righteousness saves us and we present that righteousness to the world through our words and behavior and trust that God has secured our eternity through the risen Christ.

² Or could be 'made alive by the Spirit' referring to the Holy Spirit