

BIBLE SERIES: "EXPLORING OUR AWESOME BIBLE"

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1 PETER 3-4 – ADVICE FOR WOMEN; NOAH'S FLOOD TYPOLOGY

We continue studying this wonderful Bible with Peter's God-guided words to *the women* in the Church in 1 Peter 3. As you will see, these spiritual principles still apply in the 21st century.

He reminds Christian women of what is truly important to God, "Do not let your adornment be merely outward—arranging the hair, wearing gold, or putting on fine apparel, rather let it be the hidden person of the heart, with the incorruptible beauty of a gentle and quiet spirit, which is very precious in the sight of God. For in this manner, in former times, the holy women trusted in God also adorned themselves, being submissive to their husbands, as Sarah obeyed Abraham, calling him lord [Gen. 18:12], whose daughters you are if you do good and are not afraid with any terror" (1 Peter 3:3-6).

As William Barclay explains, "In the ancient world, women had *no part* in public life whatsoever. They had nothing to pass their time and for that reason, it was sometimes argued that they must be allowed an interest in dress and adornment...[yet] undue interest in self-adornment was then, as it is still now, a sign the person had no greater things to occupy her mind.

"In the world of the Greeks and the Romans, it is interesting to collect the references to personal adornments. There were as many ways of dressing the hair as [it was imaginable]. The hair was waved and dyed, sometimes black, more often auburn [red]. Wigs were worn, especially blonde wigs...imported from Germany...There were hairbands, pins, and combs made of ivory, and boxwood, and tortoiseshell; and sometimes of gold, studded with gems...Christianity came into a world of luxury and decadence combined.

"In face of all this Peter pleads for the [Christian virtues] that adorn the [woman's] heart, which are precious in the sight of God. These were the 'jewels' [qualities], which adorned the holy women of old. Isaiah had called Sarah the mother of God's faithful people (Is. 51:2); and if Christian wives are adorned with the same [godly attributes] of modesty, humility and chastity, they too will be her daughters and will be within the family of the faithful people of God.

"A Christian wife of those times lived in a society where she would be tempted to senseless extravagance and [follow] in fear the caprices of her heathen husband. But she must live in selfless service, in goodness and in serene trust. That would be the best sermon she could preach to win over her husband for Christ. There are few passages [in Scripture] where the value of a [virtuous] Christian life is so vividly stressed."

The *BKC Commentary* adds: "While the world valued external beauty, costly clothes and jewelry, the woman with *a gentle and quiet spirit was the precious one in the sight of God*. Peter does not say that women should not wear jewelry or fine clothes, but that Christian women should *not focus* on outer clothing as a source of true beauty."

He also says men have a great duty to treat their wives with love and respect. "Husbands, likewise, dwell with them *with understanding*, giving *honor* to the wife, as to the weaker vessel, and as being heirs together of the grace of life, that your prayers may not be hindered" (1 Peter 3:7).

As of rule, a man is stronger than a woman, showing his masculinity, but that is not to dominate her, but to better protect her and help her with heavier tasks. This was a revolutionary concept for that time--that the woman would be *a co-heir* or equal partner with her husband of the kingdom of God. She will have the same rights and privileges as the man in the kingdom of God, and even more so, *if she does a better spiritual job*.

Peter thus encourages both men and women to practice these Christian virtues, saying: "Finally, all of you be of one mind, *having compassion for one another*; love as brothers, be tenderhearted, be courteous; not returning evil for evil or reviling for reviling, but on the contrary blessing, knowing that you were called to this, *that you may inherit a blessing*. For 'He who would love life and see good days, let him refrain his tongue from evil, and his lips from speaking deceit. Let him turn away from evil, and do good; let him to seek peace and pursue it. For the eyes of the Lord are on the righteous, and His ears are open to their prayers; for the face of the Lord is against those who do evil' (1 Pet. 3:8-12). In

other words, we must take the lead in our marriages and families with our examples.

Peter continues: "And who is he who will harm you if you become followers of what is good? But even if you should suffer for righteousness' sake, you are blessed. 'And do not be afraid of their threats, nor be troubled.' But sanctify the Lord God in your hearts, and always be ready to give a defense to everyone who asks you a reason for the hope that is in you, *with meekness and fear*; having a good conscience, that when they defame you as evildoers, those who revile your good conduct in Christ may be ashamed" (1 Pet. 3:13-16).

Here, the Gk. term for defense is *apologia* and it means the ability to respond with sound reasons to questions that are posed about our faith. Besides reading our Bibles, the best way to prepare is to be "trained" by attending Church, which is a kind of biblical university and a spiritual gymnasium where you can come to fortify the mind and the will. It is here where one learns how to defend one's faith and apply it correctly.

Peter goes back to the supreme example on earth of Christ as our Teacher and Master. He says: "For it is better, if it is the will of God, *to suffer for doing good than for doing evil*. For Christ also suffered once for sins, the just for the unjust, that He might bring us to God, being put to death in the flesh but made alive by the Spirit [by being resurrected], by whom also [from God who became the Father] He went and preached to the spirits in prison, who formerly were disobedient, *when once the Divine longsuffering waited in the days of Noah*, while the ark was being prepared, in which a few, that is, *eight souls*, were saved through water" (1 Peter 3:18-20).

Peter reminds them of Christ's preexistence, who is *the Word* [one of His Names] and existed before coming down to the earth as a man, and who is in charge of everything under God the Father (John 1:1-3). As an example of this, he reveals to us an incident that shows Christ's power as the preexistent Word in the past, when He not only judged and punished the generation that perished in the Flood but also proclaimed His future victory over the fallen angels, who had so thoroughly corrupted mankind during the time when the ark was being built.

As *God's Word Bible* puts it, "In it he also went to proclaim his victory to the spirits kept in prison" (1 Pet. 3:19). The term "preached" used here in Gk. is *kerusso* which means, "to proclaim after the manner of herald" (*Thayer's Greek Definitions*), referring to being sent by God the Father to announce their future overthrow. Notice what these wicked spirits did when confronting Jesus, "And they screamed out, 'What business do we have [in common] with each other, Son of God? Have You come to torment us before the appointed time [of judgment]?' " (Mt. 8:29, AMP).

In 2 P. 2:4, he says about this restricted place: "For if God *did not spare* that angels who sinned, but *cast them down to hell* [Gk. *tartaroo*, a place of confinement] and delivered them into chains of darkness, to be reserved for judgment" (2 Peter 2:4).

Then Peter compares the Flood (a type or an event) to Christian baptism (the antitype or fulfillment of it). He says, "A few, that is, eight souls, were saved through water [the just were saved by this act while the wicked perished]...There is also an *antitype* which now saves us—*baptism* (not the removal of the filth of the flesh, but the answer of a good conscience toward God), through the resurrection of Jesus Christ, who has gone into heaven and is at the right hand of God, angels and authorities and powers having been made subject to Him [meaning His victory over Satan and sin]" (1 Pet. 3:21-22).

Here we have a biblical example of a type (the OT event) and antitype (its NT fulfillment). He says *the Flood* was the *type* and *baptism* is the *antitype* (Gk. *antitupon*, a seal impression). Barclay notes: "Clearly between the seal and its impression there is a great similarity. Thus, there are persons, events [such as the Flood or the Passover] and rites in the Old Testament, which are *types*, and find their antitypes in the New Testament [baptism and Christ sacrifice]. We can say that the events in the Old Testament *prefigure* the events in the New Testament."

So, just as Noah and his family had to remain faithful to God and resist the way of sin in order to be "baptized" or "saved by water" (1 P. 3:20-21), the Christian also begins a new life after his baptism. He must never turn back to the old life of sin and go

against God's laws. That is why baptism divides a person's life into two stages--the one before baptism and the one after.

We see here Peter using sophisticated literary forms such as types and antitypes and the spiritual quality of this epistle should not surprise us. After all, he spent more than three years in the best "university" that ever existed--that of Jesus Christ as God in the flesh--being his only Teacher and Master with the Bible as the main text. In addition, Peter received a generous portion of the Holy Spirit in order to assimilate these teachings and develop his leadership gifts to the fullest.

As previously mentioned, the content and focus of this epistle is very similar to that of James, and indicates the same profound and intimate influence that both received from the same Teacher. The main motive of this epistle is to encourage and strengthen the brethren to successfully endure the hard trials they were facing to urge them to reach the great goal of entering the kingdom of God.

Peter admonishes them: "Therefore, since Christ suffered for us in the flesh, arm yourselves also with the same mind, for he who has suffered in the flesh has ceased from sin, that he no longer should live the rest of his time in the flesh for the lusts of men, but for the will of God. For we have spent enough of our past lifetime in doing the will of the Gentiles--when we walk in lewdness, lusts, drunkenness, revelries, drinking parties, and abominable idolatries" (1 Pet. 4:1-3).

The phrase "arm yourselves" denotes putting on body armor, just as the Roman soldiers did, but in this case, it is putting on the armor of faith and righteousness (Eph. 6:11, 13) to fight the good fight against the spiritual forces of this world.

Peter recalls when he had followed the wrong way of life by Greek and Roman society that surrounded them. It was common in that world, as it is today, to celebrate pagan holidays with excesses and drunkenness. In Rome, most of the emperors were dissolute men. Barclay mentions, "Vice did not stop with the crude and natural vices. Society from top to bottom was riddled with unnatural vice. Fourteen out of the first fifteen Roman emperors were homosexuals" (note on Rom. 1:27). Many pagan festivals were held throughout the year in honor of gods such as Bacchus, the god

of wine, Aphrodite, the goddess of erotic love, and Juno, the goddess of fertility. The "bacchanals" were festivals dedicated to Bacchus where drunkenness was considered as paying tribute to that god. The Saturnalias, dedicated to the god Saturn, were parties with great excesses that were eventually replaced by some current Christmas parties. The fact that a Christian did not participate in any of these pagan feasts marked him before his former friends as a *party pooper* and even an enemy of the State.

Peter says people close to a member will notice this dramatic change of lifestyle, yet, in most cases, they do not congratulate him nor understand. Rather, the member should prepare to be harassed. He says: "In regard to these, they think it strange that you do not run with them in the same flood of dissipation, speaking evil of you. They will give an account to Him who is ready to judge the living and the dead" (1 Peter 4:4-5).

Peter encourages the brethren to endure this harassment with faith and hope, for they know that, like the pagans, they will have to give an account before God for their works, but also recognize who was ultimately right. He says: "For this reason the gospel was preached also to those who are dead, that they might be judged according to men in the flesh, but live according to God in the spirit" (1 Peter 4:6).

Here is a clear reference to the doctrine of "the second resurrection" described in Rev. 20:5, 11-12 and Ezra 37:1-14. He explains that people who did not know the true way of God in this life will be judged "in the flesh" that is, resurrected in a physical body to give an account before God for their lives. At that time, they will be judged for their sins and declared guilty--but then they will be given an opportunity to know and accept the way of truth, for Christ also died for them. As they repent, are baptized and receive the Holy Spirit, their names are inscribed in "the book of life" (Rev. 20:12). There is a period of time to show by the fruits that this repentance is genuine and then, if they persevere in faith, they will receive eternal life and a spirit body. Then what Peter says here will be fulfilled, that they will be able to continue to live "in spirit according to God" forever!