

Sermon Notes, 1 Peter 3:19-22, Sunday 31st Oct 2021

Introduction

England at sport. How it feels to be a Christian.

How do you know that you are on the winning side. Two aspects to that question: How do you know that Jesus Christ will win? How do you know that you will be part of his plan when he does?

Jesus is already victorious

All very well to say Jesus our example – if we're called to suffer, he suffered for us. But what came next? Verse 18: Made alive. What happened next after Jesus rose? 2 things – in verse 19 and 22.

Verse 19: Announced his victory.

Verses 19-20a. Tricky verse.

Because of that people have tried to make it say all kinds of things. Example: Some people want to say Jesus went and preached the gospel to people who had previously died, giving them a chance to repent and be saved. Bible's very clear that we die once and after that face judgement. Can't build wishful thinking on one obscure verse when many verses say something else very clearly.

Without getting bogged down. Didn't speak to people. He spoke to spirits – angelic beings. Who are they? Rebelled in years before flood. Gen 6:1-4. They're now in prison, on remand, awaiting trial and sentence for their rebellion. What did he say? Not told – simply that he made proclamation. Not word Peter uses for preaching the gospel. So much safer to say J proclaiming he's done it. He's paid for sin, defeated evil and death, risen from the dead, and the one appointed to judge the world. Declaring them beaten.

Verse 22: Rules heaven and earth. Book of Acts tells J ascended back into heaven. Many passages in NT say same thing here: Sat down on God the F's right hand side, ruler over heaven and earth.

Back to sport. More like Euros if England had won, last penalty taker done jig in front of both stands, and taken place on the newly assembled podium for awards. Trophy not yet lifted.

Which means: Right to say not everyone recognises his rule now. But that's not the same as saying he's not ruling now. So how do you know Jesus will be victorious? Answer: Because he already is.

You are already saved

How do we know we'll be part of his plan. Answer: You are already saved. Comes verses 20-21.

1 Peter – all about fact we're on our way home, but not there yet. But v. 21 – "now saves you". If trust J, are saved now (not will be).

But way he says it is really surprising. Waters of Noah's flood, verse 20, symbolise baptism, verse 21, which now saves you. Normally, when talk about baptism, we

stress baptism is a symbol. Baptism doesn't save you. Jesus Christ saves you. Baptism just a symbol. Here, Noah's flood is the symbol, but baptism is the reality. Baptism saves you.

How does baptism save you? Not the water itself. Not removal of dirt. Does it by the resurrection of Jesus Christ. Jesus rose from the dead. It's attaching to him that gets you saved. 1:3. So what's baptism got to do with anything. It is "pledge of a clear conscience". You need to attach yourself to, him. Repenting and trusting him. That's not something you do *only* privately. But do that! It's also something do publicly. Baptism is the public declaration that from now on you want to follow Jesus Christ, have him clean your conscience and change you from within.

Really healthy view. Some people treat baptism as magical. Saves people, without any need for them to know and trust Jesus. Others react to that, and say that there's no need to be baptised. Also no. Peter on the day of Pentecost: "Repent and be baptised".

Only become a Christian once, so you only get baptised once. Some within the church share view of Lee and I, baptise children of Christian parents, so may be you've been baptised already when too young to remember. But if you've never been baptised, and you are clear you want to follow J, talk to one of us.

What's all this got to do with the flood? Remind the story. Number of parallels.

Delayed because of God's patience.

Only a few saved. One day great multitude no-one can number. But that's not how it feels now. 140 here out of 60,000. Feel dwarfed. Like Noah and his family.

Same water that brought judgement to the world brought rescue to Noah and his family. Baptism symbolises d + r of J. J died to bring us to God. J rose to bring us new life. But also appointed judge by his resurrection.

If you're a baptised Christian who has the trust and relationship with Jesus symbolised by that baptism. Then you are now saved as surely as Noah and his family were saved on that ark.

Conclusion

Sometimes, being a Christian can leave you feeling a little downbeat. Hardships of life getting on top of you. Even being opposed and disrespected for being a Christian.

If you've not yet begun, it's good to know that this is what it can feel like. If you're expecting a magic pill, you'll throw in the towel the moment things get difficult.

But if you're on the road to heaven with us, then take heart: Jesus rules now. Already victorious. Not just that he will one day conquer. He has conquered, and one day the world will see it.

You are saved now. One day you'll enjoy the full benefits of that, but you're safe now, as surely as Noah was on his boat. So as frail as you may feel, you can have complete confidence that God's got this.