

1 Peter 3:20

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

Which sometime were disobedient, when once the longsuffering of God waited in the days of Noah, while the ark was a preparing, wherein few, that is, eight souls were saved by water.

Analysis

Peter specifies which spirits: those "which sometime were disobedient, when once the longsuffering of God waited in the days of Noah, while the ark was a preparing" (apeithēsasin pote, hote apexedecheto hē tou theou makrothymia en hēmerais Nōe kataskeuazomenēs kibōtou). These were antediluvian people who rejected Noah's preaching during ark's 120-year construction (Genesis 6-7). God's "longsuffering" (makrothymia) showed patience, delaying judgment while Noah warned. Few responded: "wherein few, that is, eight souls were saved by water" (eis hēn oligai, tout' estin oktō psychai, diesōthēsan di' hydatos). Only Noah's family (eight total) survived flood's judgment. This illustrates God's patience and judgment—He waits, warns, but eventually judges unrepentance.

Historical Context

Genesis flood narrative demonstrated God's justice and mercy—judgment on wickedness, salvation for righteousness. Peter uses this as type of Christian salvation through baptism (v.21). Noah's 120-year ark-building accompanied preaching (2 Peter 2:5, "Noah, a preacher of righteousness"). Despite long warning, only eight believed. This sobering ratio shows human hardness—divine patience doesn't guarantee repentance. Early church saw flood as judgment prototype, warning of final judgment. The 'eight saved' minority theme encourages

persecuted believers—few find narrow way (Matthew 7:14), but God preserves remnant.

Related Passages

Matthew 25:31 — Final judgment

Revelation 20:12 — Judgment according to deeds

Study Questions

1. What does God's 'longsuffering' during Noah's time teach about His current patience with sinful world?
2. How should the sobering reality that only eight believed despite 120-year warning affect evangelistic urgency?

Interlinear Text

ἀπειθήσασίν	ποτε	ὅτε	ἄπαξ	ἐξεδέχετο	ή	τοῦ	
were disobedient	Which sometime	when	once	waited	G3588	G3588	
G544	G4218	G3753	G530	G1551			
θεοῦ	μακροθυμία	ἐν	ἡμέραις	Νῶε	κατασκευαζομένης		
of God	the longsuffering	in	the days	of Noah	was a preparing		
G2316	G3115	G1722	G2250	G3575	G2680		
κιβωτοῦ	εἰς	ἢν	όλιγαι,	τοῦτ'	ἔστιν	όκτὼ	ψυχαί
while the ark	wherein	G3739	few	G5124	G2076	eight	souls
G2787	G1519		G3641			G3638	G5590
διεσώθησαν	δι'	ὑδατος					
were saved	by	water					
G1295	G1223	G5204					

Additional Cross-References

Hebrews 11:7 (References God): By faith Noah, being warned of God of things not seen as yet, moved with fear, prepared an ark to the saving of his house; by the which he condemned the world, and became heir of the righteousness which is by faith.

2 Peter 2:5 (Salvation): And spared not the old world, but saved Noah the eighth person, a preacher of righteousness, bringing in the flood upon the world of the ungodly;

Genesis 6:3 (Parallel theme): And the LORD said, My spirit shall not always strive with man, for that he also is flesh: yet his days shall be an hundred and twenty years.

Genesis 6:5 (References God): And GOD saw that the wickedness of man was great in the earth, and that every imagination of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually.

Genesis 8:18 (Parallel theme): And Noah went forth, and his sons, and his wife, and his sons' wives with him:

Matthew 7:14 (Parallel theme): Because strait is the gate, and narrow is the way, which leadeth unto life, and few there be that find it.

Genesis 7:13 (Parallel theme): In the selfsame day entered Noah, and Shem, and Ham, and Japheth, the sons of Noah, and Noah's wife, and the three wives of his sons with them, into the ark;
