

In the Days of Noah: *Urzeit/Endzeit* Correspondence and the Flood Tradition in 1 Peter 3–4

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Much Petrine scholarship has focused on unravelling the Enochic traditions in 1 Pet 3.18–20. However, these investigations have largely overlooked the role of Noah and the flood in 1 Peter. This article seeks to rectify this deficiency by examining how Second Temple Jewish and early Christian texts used the primeval flood as a paradigm for the eschaton, a clear example of *Urzeit/Endzeit* correspondence. Once the Petrine use of the flood traditions is interpreted in this light, new solutions emerge not only for this difficult text, but also for the larger section of 1 Peter 3–4. Four specific points of correspondence are investigated: first, the righteousness of Noah as the righteousness of Christ (and also, believers); second, the wickedness of the flood generation as the wickedness of contemporary Gentile society; third, Noah's preaching to the flood generation as believers' witness to their countrymen; and finally, the opportunity of repentance during Noah's lifetime as a similar opportunity for mission in contemporary Asia Minor. A robust understanding of the Noah traditions paves the way for a clearer understanding of the apocalyptic character of 1 Peter and its contemporary application to the Christians of Asia Minor.

Keywords: 1 Peter 3–4, Noah, Enoch, apocalyptic, typology, eschatology

1. Introduction: A Strange and Obscure Text

1 Pet 3.18–20, along with 4.6, is one of the most mysterious and obscure passages in the New Testament. Writing in 1523, Martin Luther conceded: "This is a strange text and certainly a more obscure passage than any other passage in the New Testament. I still do not know for sure what the apostle means."¹ Despite profuse scholarly attention, the situation has only moderately improved

1 J. Pelikan, *Luther's Works: The Catholic Epistles* (Saint Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1967) 113.

since 1523.² The meaning of nearly every word in 1 Pet 3.19 has been, and in some cases continues to be, heavily debated. The manifold problems of 3.19 have largely overshadowed the references to Noah and the flood in 3.20. To date, little attention has been given to the role of the Noah language in 3.20 except in its conjunction with Enochic or theological questions.³ One of the unfortunate effects of this oversight is that the influence of the Noah tradition on the larger context of 1 Peter 3–4 has gone unnoticed.

Many of the interpretive problems surrounding 3.12–22 and its role in chapters 3–4 stem from the isolation of 3.19 from its immediate context of the flood narrative in 3.20. The underappreciated *typological correspondence* between Noah's situation and that of believers has great explanatory power for illuminating the larger unit of 3.8–4.11. This has important implications for the complicated relationship of 3.19 to 4.6, another scholarly quagmire. Recognising how contemporary flood traditions influenced the author's depiction of believers' current situation, self-understanding and future hope holds the key to appreciating the author's exhortation in these chapters. With evidence gathered from Second Temple Jewish (STJ) literature, the New Testament and early rabbinic literature, this article examines how the flood traditions were understood by Jewish and early Christian interpreters.⁴ In *1 Enoch*, *Jubilees* and other texts, the descent

2 The most notable scholarly monographs on 1 Pet 3.19 are B. Reicke, *The Disobedient Spirits and Christian Baptism: A Study of 1 Peter III.19 and its Context* (Copenhagen: Ejnar Munksgaard, 1946); W. J. Dalton, *Christ's Proclamation to the Spirits: A Study of 1 Peter 3:18–4:6* (Rome: Pontifical Biblical Institute, 1965); C. T. Pierce, *Spirits and the Proclamation of Christ: 1 Peter 3:18–22 in Light of Sin and Punishment Traditions in Early Jewish and Christian Literature* (WUNT 11/305; Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2011). Important shorter studies include J. Frings, 'Zu 1 Petr 3,19 und 4,6', *BZ* 17 (1925) 75–88; E. Schweizer, '1. Petrus 4,6', *TZ* 8 (1952) 152–4; J. S. Feinberg, '1 Peter 3:18–20, Ancient Mythology, and the Intermediate State', *WTJ* 48 (1986) 303–6; D. N. Campbell and F. J. van Rensburg, 'A history of the interpretation of 1 Peter 3:18–22', *Acta Patristica et Byzantina* 19 (2008) 73–96.

3 Wayne Grudem is one notable exception. Though containing many excellent insights, his analysis is impaired by his scepticism of the relevance of the Enochic literature for 1 Peter and by his desire to revive Augustine's interpretation of the text. See W. Grudem, 'Christ Preaching through Noah: 1 Peter 3:19–20', *TJ* 7 (1986) 3–31.

4 Over the last several decades, there has been a steady stream of work on the reception and use of Noah traditions in Second Temple Judaism and early Christianity. J. P. Lewis, *A Study of the Interpretation of Noah and the Flood in Jewish and Christian Literature* (Leiden: Brill, 1978); J. C. VanderKam, 'The Righteousness of Noah', *Ideal Figures in Ancient Judaism: Profiles and Paradigms* (ed. J. J. Collins and G. W. Nickelsburg; SBLSCS 12; Chico, CA: Scholars, 1980) 13–32; L. H. Feldman, 'Josephus' Portrait of Noah and its Parallels in Philo, Pseudo-Philo's "Biblical Antiquities", and Rabbinic Midrashim', *PAAJR* 55 (1988) 31–57; D. M. Peters, *Noah Traditions in the Dead Sea Scrolls: Conversations and Controversies of Antiquity* (BZ; Atlanta: Society of Biblical Literature, 2008); L. Lieber, 'Portraits of Righteousness: Noah in Early Christian and Jewish Hymnography', *ZRGG* (2009) 332–55; J. J. Collins, 'Noah, Deucalion, and the New Testament', *Biblica* 93 (2012) 403–26; M. Wilson, 'Noah, the Ark, and the Flood in Early Christian Literature', *Scriptura* 113 (2014) 1–12. The rabbinic literature,

and judgement of the Watchers cannot be understood apart from its place in the narrative of Noah and the flood. When 1 Peter is read in this light, new coherence is found in this seemingly ‘strange and obscure text’.

2. Structure, Style and Hermeneutics: 1 Pet 3.18–20 in the Context of 1 Peter

In 1996, Paul Achtemeier wrote of 3.18–22: ‘There is little question that these verses constitute the most difficult passage in the entire letter.’⁵ He elaborates:

The language in which the passage is cast is uncharacteristically rambling and its paratactic style is unusual in this letter; its internal coherence and thematic unity are not self-evident, suggesting a possible combination of earlier traditional materials; and the relationship of its content to its immediate context is not readily apparent. As a result, the intention of the passage as a whole is difficult to discern.⁶

Similarly, William Dalton lamented that these verses are ‘nothing short of labyrinthine’.⁷ Speaking of 3.13–4.6, Josef Frings writes that this passage ‘does not contain a strict logical sequence of thoughts, it does not even deal with a clearly defined topic’.⁸

The problematic passages of 3.19 and 4.6 are located in the larger unit of 2.11–4.11.⁹ Between 3.8 and 4.11, the letter is very difficult to outline. The relationship between 3.18–20 and 4.6 only complicates these problems.¹⁰ Are these verses speaking about the same events? How do we explain the similarity of terminology

though later than 1 Peter, may give us a window onto early Noah traditions. In several places, Philo’s interpretation of Noah and the flood is similar to rabbinic interpretations, see Lewis, *Noah and the Flood*, 58. Early Christian texts may contain older, traditional interpretations, or interpretations shaped by Christian teaching such as 1 Peter. As such, they are important witnesses for the early reception history of 1 Peter and can provide important clues to its meaning.

5 P. J. Achtemeier, *1 Peter: A Commentary on First Peter* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1996) 240.

6 Achtemeier, *1 Peter*, 240.

7 Dalton, *Christ’s Proclamation*, 4, 14. See also Reicke, *The Disobedient Spirits*, 2–3.

8 ‘[K]eine streng logische Aufeinanderfolge der Gedanken einhält, ja kaum ein bestimmtes, fest umrissenes Thema behandelt’, Frings, ‘Zu 1 Petr 3,19 und 4,6’, 76 (English translation mine).

9 Both 2.11 and 4.12 begin with a vocative, Ἀγαπητοί, which provides clear dividing points in the letter. Achtemeier, *1 Peter*, 73–4.

10 For example, see Frings, ‘Zu 1 Petr 3,19 und 4,6’, 75–88; Reicke, *The Disobedient Spirits*, 202–10; D. G. Horrell, ‘“Already Dead” or “Since Died”? Who Are “the Dead” and When Was the Gospel Preached to Them (1 Pet. 4.6)?’, *Becoming Christian: Essays on 1 Peter and the Making of Christian Identity* (LNTS 394; London: Bloomsbury, 2013) 73–99.

while accounting for the intervening verses of 4.1–5? However, it is precisely the recognition of the letter's interconnectedness here that paves the way for a more comprehensive understanding of how the author has woven these sections together. This study will therefore examine how the author's style and hermeneutical lens can illuminate this text, drawing intentionally from the larger unit of 3.8–4.11.

The Petrine author wrote an elegant, sophisticated letter, making abundant use of literary techniques such as link words, repetition, anticipation, alliteration and puns, to name a few.¹¹ Any analysis of 3.8–4.11 must be attentive to these literary techniques, especially in the absence of a clearly articulated organising structure. Part of the difficulty of outlining this section is the abundance of keywords that stretch across proposed sense divisions. Attention to these keywords will pay dividends.

This study will also be attentive to the author's ecclesiocentric hermeneutic.¹² As Egan has shown, while many of the author's uses of scripture are about Christ, this christological focus is very often intertwined with, and directed towards, the church. 'The same terminology flows back and forth between Christology and ecclesiology.'¹³ This ecclesiocentric focus will become important, as this article will argue, because the author of 1 Peter chose to use the *Urzeit/Endzeit* correlation between the flood and the eschatological judgement in order to affirm and encourage believers in the midst of their suffering. The flood narrative foreshadows and patterns the narrative of both Christ and believers.

3. The Flood and Eschatological Judgement: *Urzeit/Endzeit* Correlation in Jewish and Early Christian Literature

At a very early point, Jewish interpreters began using the flood narrative as a model for future, eschatological judgement: just as God saved the righteous and punished the wicked in Noah's day, so would he do again at the final judgement. The *Urzeit* served as a model or pattern for the *Endzeit*.¹⁴ This trajectory has

11 J. H. Elliott, *1 Peter: A New Translation with Introduction and Commentary* 37B (AYB; New Haven: Yale University Press, 2000) 64–80. On link words, see Dalton, *Christ's Proclamation*, 74–5. Egan is especially sensitive to the author's anticipatory use of key terms in the letter, see P. T. Egan, *Ecclesiology and the Scriptural Narrative of 1 Peter* (Eugene, OR: Pickwick, 2016) 125–7, 132.

12 Egan, *Ecclesiology and the Scriptural Narrative of 1 Peter*, 16–17, 54–6.

13 Egan, *Ecclesiology and the Scriptural Narrative of 1 Peter*, 55.

14 For more on the use of *Urzeit/Endzeit* terminology, see L. Doering, 'Urzeit-Endzeit Correlation in the Dead Sea Scrolls and Pseudepigrapha', *Eschatologie – Eschatology: The Sixth Durham-Tübingen Research Symposium: Eschatology in Old Testament, Ancient Judaism and Early Christianity* (ed. H.-J. Eckstein et al.; WUNT 272; Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2011) 19–58, at 19–20.

already begun in the Hebrew scriptures.¹⁵ In Ezekiel 7 and 14, references and allusions to Noah traditions draw parallels between the flood generation and the author's own day.¹⁶ Dorothy Peters writes that Ezekiel 7

describes a land full (מלא) of crimes of blood and a city full of violence (חמס) (Ezek 7:23), implying a parallel between the judgment for violent crimes in the days of Noah and a judgment that would be coming. These examples from Ezek 7 and 14 point to the beginnings of concepts of *Urzeit/Endzeit* and 'periods of judgment' later developed in the Enochic books, wisdom literature, and right into the *Yahad* sectarian scrolls. Later interpreters living in virtual exile surely were drawn to Ezekiel with its appeal to Noah as a righteous figure living in the midst of land-defiling sin.¹⁷

This trend continues in the Second Temple period.¹⁸ Enochic texts, such as the *Book of Watchers* and the *Apocalypse of Weeks*, deploy Noahic themes to describe eschatological expectations (for example, *1 En.* 10.16–11.2; 93.3–10).¹⁹ In *Jub.* 5, the author weaves a discussion of the eschaton into the flood narrative.²⁰ The binding of the wicked angels for judgement provides the author with an opportunity to digress on the eschaton (*Jub.* 5.1–16).²¹ Speaking of *Jubilees* and *1 Enoch*, James VanderKam writes:

In the final analysis the theologians who composed these books employed and edited the stories about Noah and his times because of their intense concern with the eschatological judgment and the righteousness that would guarantee salvation on that day. That is to say, Noah's flood was for them a type of the last judgment, and his righteousness (much the same could be said for Enoch) serves as a model of that obedience to the divine will which will enable one to endure the Lord's universal assize.²²

15 D. R. Streett, 'As It Was in the Days of Noah: The Prophet's Typological Interpretation of Noah's Flood', *CTR* 5 (2007) 33–51.

16 According to Ezek 14.13–23, Noah, Daniel and Job, if alive in Ezekiel's day, would have been able only to save themselves. It is noteworthy that all three lived at times of great destruction and also lived as exiles. Ezek 7.2–6 describes an 'end' (קץ) comparable only to the flood. Peters, *Noah Traditions*, 23–4. Cf. B. Z. Wacholder, 'Ezekiel and Ezekielianism as Progenitors of Essenianism', *The Dead Sea Scrolls: Forty Years of Research* (ed. D. Dimant and U. Rappaport; STDJ 10; Leiden: Brill, 1988) 186–96, at 188.

17 Peters, *Noah Traditions*, 24.

18 Lutz Doering and James VanderKam have studied how Noah's flood came to be understood as a model of future judgement. Doering, 'Urzeit-Endzeit Correlation', 23–31. J. C. VanderKam, 'Studies in the Apocalypse of Weeks (*1 Enoch* 93:1–10; 91:11–17)', *CBQ* 46 (1984) 511–23, at 519.

19 Doering, 'Urzeit-Endzeit Correlation', 23–31. Doering also notes that the use of the flood to prefigure judgement can be found elsewhere in *1 Enoch*, see p. 31 n. 68.

20 VanderKam, 'The Righteousness of Noah', 17.

21 VanderKam, 'The Righteousness of Noah', 17. See *Jub.* 5.1–16. J. C. VanderKam, *The Book of Jubilees* (2 vols.; CSCO 510–11; Scriptorum Aethiopicorum 87–8; Leuven: Peeters, 1989) 33.

22 VanderKam, 'The Righteousness of Noah', 25.

VanderKam concludes: 'In short, for these writers Noah has become, not simply a moral paradigm, but an eschatological model.'²³

In a similar vein, Pseudo-Philo follows the biblical narrative by stating that God will never judge the earth again by a flood (*LAB* 3.9). However, the author takes this opportunity to say that God will enact a future judgement when 'the appointed times are fulfilled' (*LAB* 3.9).²⁴ At this time, the dead will be brought back to life so God can judge each person according to his works. Then, 'there will be another earth and another heaven, an everlasting dwelling place' (*LAB* 3.10). In *LAB*, the author moves smoothly from the judgement of the flood to the eschatological judgement.²⁵

The NT writings clearly state that there is a typological correspondence between the Flood and the future judgement: 'as were the days of Noah, so will be the coming of the Son of Man' (Matt 24.37-9; par. Luke 17.26-7; cf. 2 Pet 2.5, 9; 3.5-7; Heb 11.7).²⁶ However, this was no mere repetition of events: the flood was a model of something greater still to come. The next piece of the puzzle is the important observation that the author of 1 Peter was operating with a realised eschatology: the beginning of the end had already arrived – believers were living in the last days.

Many Petrine scholars have recognised the strong apocalyptic texture of 1 Peter.²⁷ One central aspect of this is the letter's inaugurated eschatology.²⁸ Horrell and Wan write:

Although the author of 1 Peter gives no explicit indication as to how near or distant he considers the final day to be, there are at least hints that it is close at hand: the appearance of Christ already shows that these are the last days (1.20); the final judgment is already beginning (4.17; cf. 4.5 [ἐπιμωσ]); and the joyous salvation of the future seems already to be seeping into the present (1.6-9).²⁹

23 VanderKam, 'The Righteousness of Noah', 27.

24 Lewis, *Noah and the Flood*, 76.

25 Reicke, *The Disobedient Spirits*, 72-3.

26 Wilson, 'Noah, the Ark, and the Flood', 2-7; E. G. Selwyn, *The First Epistle of St. Peter: The Greek Text with Introduction, Notes and Essays* (London: Macmillan, 1946) 331; Dalton, *Christ's Proclamation*, 112-13. English translations of both the Old and New Testament are taken from the RSV.

27 M. Dubis, *Messianic Woes in First Peter: Suffering and Eschatology in 1 Peter 4:12-19* (SBL SBL 33; New York: Peter Lang, 2002) 37-45; R. L. Webb, 'Intertexture and Rhetorical Strategy in First Peter's Apocalyptic Discourse: A Study in Sociorhetorical Interpretation', *Reading First Peter with New Eyes: Methodological Reassessments of the Letter of First Peter* (ed. R. L. Webb and B. Bauman-Martin; LNTS 364; London: T&T Clark, 2007); Pierce, *Spirits and the Proclamation of Christ*, 203.

28 Elliott, *I Peter*, 111-12, 674-5; Dubis, *Messianic Woes*, 39-41.

29 D. G. Horrell and W. H. Wan, 'Christology, Eschatology and the Politics of Time in 1 Peter', *JSNT* 38 (2016) 263-76, at 267.

The author repeatedly returns to the theme of the last time (ἐν καιρῷ ἐσχάτῳ, 1.5; ἐπ' ἐσχάτου τῶν χρόνων, 1.20; Πάντων δὲ τὸ τέλος ἤγγικεν, 4.7), God's future judgement (1.17; 2.12; 4.5, 17), and the eschatological inheritance of believers (1.4; 3.7; 5.4). The imminence of the end was a message of comfort: the manifold suffering of believers would not last long.

To encourage the letter's recipients, the author correlates the salvation of Noah and his family to baptism. The author explicitly says that baptism is an anti-type (ἀντίτυπον) of the waters of the flood (3.21).³⁰ In baptism, the narratives of the flood, the death and resurrection of Christ and the initiation of the believer into a new reality are superimposed onto one another. This polyvalency allows for a wealth of allusion, intertextuality and pastoral encouragement. Through baptism, the believer re-enacts the death of Christ through her immersion in the water, which was foreshadowed by the flood, and is raised up to new life with Christ, just as Noah and his family were carried through the floodwaters into a new world.³¹ In baptism, the complex sequences of several events are condensed into a single rite of death and regeneration. This layering affords the Petrine author the opportunity to deploy echoes of this correspondence elsewhere in his letter.

4. In the Days of Noah: *Urzeit/Endzeit* Correspondence and the Realised Eschatology of 1 Peter

As shown, many Jewish texts used the primeval flood as a model for the eschatological judgement of the world. The author of 1 Peter made similar use of the flood traditions as a model for believers' current suffering in Asia Minor. Four specific points of correspondence between the *Urzeit* and the *Endzeit* will be examined: (1) the righteousness of Noah as the righteousness of Christ (and also, believers); (2) the wickedness of the flood generation as the wickedness of contemporary Gentile society; (3) Noah's preaching to the flood generation as believers' gentle witness to their countrymen; and, finally, (4) the opportunity of repentance during Noah's lifetime as similar to the opportunity for mission in contemporary Asia Minor.

One of the central themes of 1 Pet 3.3–4.19 is maintaining good behaviour in the midst of suffering and opposition.³² If believers are to suffer, it is better to suffer for doing good than for doing evil (3.17). They are called to maintain good behaviour even at the cost of suffering for it. When believers suffer, they should also be able to give a humble account of their hope (3.15–16). Likewise, they should live a qualitatively different life from those around them. Though

30 Achtemeier, *1 Peter*, 266–7.

31 Elliott, *1 Peter*, 674.

32 1 Pet 3.9, 13–14, 16, 17, 18; 4.4.

their faith may bring them into conflict with their neighbours, they are nevertheless encouraged to persevere and follow the example of Christ. It is into this context that the author appeals to the narrative of Noah, the flood and the building of the ark.

4.1 *The Righteousness of Noah and the Righteousness of Christ and Believers*

In ancient literature, Noah was ubiquitously described as righteous. Despite the exceeding wickedness of his generation, 'Noah found favour in the sight of God' (Gen 6.8).³³ Noah 'was a righteous man (ἄνθρωπος δίκαιος), blameless in his generation', and 'walked with God' (Gen 6.9; 7.1). He is the first person in Genesis to be called righteous.³⁴ Indeed, righteousness is ascribed to him before any of his deeds are recorded.³⁵ He is also the only other person besides Enoch who 'walked with God' (Gen 5.22).³⁶

Later literature makes frequent reference to the righteousness of Noah.³⁷ According to Sir 44.17, 'Noah was found perfect and righteous (τέλειος δίκαιος)'. In Wis 10.4, wisdom saves the 'righteous man (τόν δίκαιον) by a paltry piece of wood'. *Jubilees* describes Noah as 'righteous in all of his ways just as it was commanded concerning him' (5.19).³⁸ In *1 Enoch*, Noah's lot is 'without blame, a lot of love and uprightness' (67.1; cf. 1.2). Philo uses δίκαιος as if it were an etymology for Noah.³⁹ Josephus twice remarks that God loved Noah for his righteousness (ὁ δὲ θεὸς τοῦτον μὲν τῆς δικαιοσύνης ἠγάπησε,

33 See also *Jub.* 5.5 and *Sib. Or.* 3.824.

34 So also Philo, *Congr.* 90.

35 Philo is aware that some believed Noah to be only righteous in comparison with his generation, see *Abr.* 36, 47. Lewis, *Noah and the Flood*, 46. This view is also found in the rabbinic literature (Gen 6.9; *Gen. Rab.* 30.9; 32.6; *Sanhedrin* 108a). By contrast, some argue that Noah deserves greater praise for being righteous in a wicked generation (*Gen. Rab.* 30.9; *Sanhedrin* 108a). Cf. Feldman, 'Portrait of Noah', 43–4. Though the rabbinic literature was written later than *1 Peter*, it may contain earlier traditions. Used in conjunction with other evidence, it is a useful body of comparative and corroborative evidence.

36 At Noah's death, *Jub.* 10.17 states: 'And in his life on earth he excelled the children of men save Enoch because of the righteousness wherein he was perfect.' VanderKam, 'The Righteousness of Noah', 13, 23.

37 Ezek 14.14 (cf. 14.12–20); Sir 44.17; *Jub.* 5.19; Wis 10.4; *1 En.* 1.2, 10.3; 11.16–17; 12.4; 15.1; 67.1; Heb 11.7; Josephus, *Ant.* 1.3.2 §75; 2 *Esd.* 3.11; 2 *En.* 35.1 [B]; *Sib. Or.* 1.280. See also *1 En.* 65.11–12, *Jub.* 10.6, 17; *LAB* 3.4, Tob 4.12. VanderKam, 'The Righteousness of Noah', 13–14; Lewis, *Noah and the Flood*, 7–8, 21–2.

38 Translation by VanderKam, *The Book of Jubilees*, 35.

39 Philo, *QG* 1.87; 2.45; *Abr.* 27; *Leg.* 3.77; *Det.* 121. Lewis, *Noah and the Flood*, 46. Philo frequently uses 'righteous' and related cognates as epithets for Noah, *Det.* 170; *Post.* 48, 173, 174; *Migr.* 125; *Conf.* 105; *Gig.* 3, 5; *Mut.* 139; *QG* 2.33, 34; *Her.* 260. See also *Deus* 25.117; *Abr.* 5.27; 6.34; 7.36. Feldman, 'Portrait of Noah', 43.

Ant. 1.75, 99).⁴⁰ Righteousness is also attributed to Noah in early Christian literature (Heb 11.7; 2 Pet 2.5).⁴¹ However, despite this evidence, the righteousness of 1 Pet 3.18 has not been understood in light of the Noah narrative.⁴²

According to 1 Pet 3.18, 'Christ also died for sins once for all, the righteous for the unrighteous (δικαιος ὑπὲρ ἀδίκων).' This verse immediately precedes the discussion of Noah and the flood. Like Noah, Christ the righteous one is God's agent of deliverance for those who respond to his message. 1 Pet 3.18 shows that Christ's righteousness is demonstrated through his salvific death and triumphant resurrection. The verse states that Christ was put to death in the flesh (θανατωθεὶς μὲν σαρκί), a reference to the crucifixion.⁴³ He was then 'made alive in spirit' (ζωοποιηθεὶς δὲ πνεύματι), a probable reference to resurrection.⁴⁴ It is through Christ's righteousness that believers are made righteous (cf. 1 Pet 3.12, 18; 4.18).⁴⁵ Christ's actions therefore follow the pattern of Noah's; a typological correspondence is being drawn, even as Christ's righteousness exceeds Noah's and is superior to his.

The ubiquity of Noah's righteousness, on its own, would not be enough to justify a correspondence with the Noah narrative. However, when this is taken together with the other allusions, the likelihood that Noah's righteousness is here informing the accounts of Christ's (and believers') righteousness is greatly strengthened. Indeed, the use of the flood narratives immediately precedes, and is grammatically dependent upon, v. 19.⁴⁶

4.2 *The Wickedness of the Flood Generation and the Sinfulness of Believers' Contemporaries*

The antediluvian generation was exceptionally wicked; 'every inclination of the thoughts of their hearts was only evil continually' (Gen 6.5).⁴⁷ The terse Genesis narrative provided a tantalising opportunity for later interpreters to expand on what, precisely, made this particular generation so exceedingly wicked.⁴⁸ Jewish traditions from a wide variety of sources attribute the corruption

40 Feldman, 'Portrait of Noah', 44.

41 For Noah's faithfulness, see 1 *Clem.* 9.4.

42 One exception is Grudem, who notes this correspondence. See Grudem, 'Preaching through Noah', 24.

43 Achtemeier, 1 *Peter*, 249.

44 Dalton, *Christ's Proclamation*, 124–34; Achtemeier, 1 *Peter*, 249.

45 Egan may be correct in hearing an echo of Isa 53, notably v. 11. Egan also notes, intriguingly, several other connections between 1 Pet 3.18–22 and Isa 53–4, such as the reference to Noah in Isa 54.9–11, Egan, *Ecclesiology and the Scriptural Narrative of 1 Peter*, 181–2.

46 Debates concerning the antecedent of ἔν ᾧ hinge on interpretations of vs. 18. See for example, Achtemeier, 1 *Peter*, 252–253.

47 Cf. 1 *En.* 9.1; *QG* 1.100. Feldman, 'Portrait of Noah', 37.

48 D. Dimant, 'Noah in Early Jewish Literature', *Biblical Figures outside the Bible* (ed. M. E. Stone and T. A. Bergren; Harrisburg: Trinity Press, 1998) 123–50, at 126–9.

of the earth to some combination of human and/or supernatural agency.⁴⁹ This study will focus on Jewish traditions that indict human agents in the flood in order to show the correspondence between these traditions and similar expressions in 1 Peter that pronounce judgement on the sinfulness of non-believers living in contemporary Asia Minor.

In Gen 6.1–4, the ‘sons of God’ (OG, οἱ υἱοὶ τοῦ θεοῦ) transgress the heavenly boundaries to take human wives and produce mythic offspring. The Genesis narrative implicitly connects these illicit unions with the corruption of the earth. Later Jewish literature made this connection explicit and emphatic.⁵⁰ The specifics of these infringements are expressed in a number of ways which focus on the transgression of heavenly/earthly divides, the lust and sexual misconduct of the angels,⁵¹ the violent, hybrid offspring of these illicit unions,⁵² the revelation of forbidden knowledge⁵³ and bloodshed,⁵⁴ to name a few.⁵⁵ Depending on the specific text, human beings are the participants, recipients and/or victims of these malevolent actions.

In amplified terms, Philo writes that all people of the flood generation were ‘filled with evil practices’ and competed with one another for ‘the first places in sinfulness’, putting ‘all possible zeal into the contention, each one pressing on to exceed his neighbour in magnitude of vice and leaving nothing undone which could lead to a guilty and accursed life’.⁵⁶ *Jub.* 7.20–5 states directly that the flood occurred because of fornication, uncleanness and injustice.⁵⁷ Josephus explains that the men of Noah’s generation lived lives of depravity, abandoned the ways of their ancestors, dishonoured God, committed injustice and ‘displayed zeal for vice twofold greater than they had formerly shown for virtue’.⁵⁸ Josephus also identifies one of the central vices of the time as ὕβρις.⁵⁹ Rabbinic literature similarly emphasised the immorality, idolatry, violence and rapacity of the flood generation.⁶⁰ As Grudem notes, “‘the generation of the

49 Pierce, *Spirits and the Proclamation of Christ*, 31–6, 54–7, 112–19. For evidence specifically on human sin in the flood traditions, see Grudem, ‘Preaching through Noah’, 12–14.

50 Philo, *Gig.* 19–20; *QG* 1.98; *CD* 2.18–20; *Jub.* 5.1–4; *Test. of Naph.* 3.5. Cf. Dalton, *Christ’s Proclamation*, 169–70.

51 1 *En.* 6.2; 7.1; 9.8; 10.11; 12.4; 15.4–5; 19.1; 39.1; 67.8, 10; 69.4–5. See also *Jub.* 5.1–2.

52 1 *En.* 7.2–5; 9.9; 10.11–15; 15.8–11.

53 1 *En.* 8.1–3; 9.6, 8; 10.7; 16.3; 64.1; 65.6–7, 10–11; 69.8–11.

54 1 *En.* 7.4–5; 9.9–10. See also *Jub.* 5.2; 7.23–5.

55 The specific expressions of these sins are complex, as older traditions are reworked by later interpreters. Different texts within what is now known as 1 Enoch emphasise different themes, chronologies and ideologies. For more details, see Pierce, *Spirits and the Proclamation of Christ*, 25–123.

56 Philo, *Abr.* 40.

57 VanderKam, ‘The Righteousness of Noah’, 21. Cf. *Jub.* 5.1–5; 6.7–10, 12–14, 38.

58 Josephus, *Ant.* 1.72–3.

59 ὕβρις τῶν παίδων, *Ant.* 1.73. Feldman, ‘Portrait of Noah’, 37–8.

60 Feldman, ‘Portrait of Noah’, 37. Lewis, *Noah and the Flood*, 127–30.

flood” is used frequently in rabbinic writings as a paradigm of extreme human wickedness’.⁶¹ Further corroborating evidence is found in Luke 17.26–7 (cf. Matt 24.38).⁶²

It is against this backdrop then, that the sins in 1 Pet 4.3 take on new dimensions. 1 Pet 4.3–5 states:

Let the time that is past suffice for doing the will of the Gentiles (τό βούλημα τῶν ἐθνῶν), living in licentiousness (ἀσελγείαις), passions (ἐπιθυμίαις), drunkenness (οἰνοφλυγίαις), revels (κώμοις), carousing (πότοις), and lawless idolatry (ἀθεμίτοις εἰδωλολατρίαις). They are surprised that you do not now join them in the flood of debauchery⁶³ (εἰς τὴν αὐτὴν τῆς ἀσωτίας ἀνάχυσιν), and they abuse you; but they will give account to him who is ready to judge the living and the dead.

Many of the sins listed in 1 Peter are dominant themes in the indictments of the flood generation, especially sins related to sexuality, pleasure and idolatry. Philo uses the flood language as an allegory for the destruction of vice, specifically noting ‘drunkenness (οἰνοφλυγία) and fine cooking and chasing after women (θηλομαγία)’ as particular perils.⁶⁴ Angels and humans were judged for illicit sexual unions, for pursuing pleasure and for idolatry. Like the flood generation, believers are living on the edge of the cosmic, cataclysmic realignment of the universe: ‘the end of all things is at hand’ (4.7). This precipitous time before the end is therefore characterised by rampant sin and moral depravity.⁶⁵

This reading is strengthened by a possible wordplay in v. 4, literally the ‘flood of debauchery’ (ἀσωτίας ἀνάχυσιν). The term ἀνάχυσις is a rare word meaning ‘pouring, effusion’.⁶⁶ The term stems from the verb ἀναχέω, which has the primary meaning ‘to overflow or flood’.⁶⁷ On several occasions, Philo uses this

61 Grudem cites *M. Sanh.* 10.3; *Eccl. Rab.* on 2.23, sec. 1; *Song Rab.* on 1.4; *Num. Rab.* 9.18 (on 5.21); 14.6 (on 7.54); and 20.2, Grudem, ‘Preaching through Noah’, 14.

62 In contrast with other texts, the activities depicted in Matthew and Luke are not in themselves sinful. However, it is interesting that both Matthew and Luke draw attention to the themes of feasting (eating and drinking) and sexuality (marrying and being given in marriage).

63 ‘In the flood of debauchery’ is my literal translation of the phrase here (see below); the RSV has ‘in the same wild profligacy’.

64 Philo, *QG* 2.12; trans. LCL.

65 For more on the messianic woes, see Dubis, *Messianic Woes*, 5–36. After surveying themes related to the messianic woes in rabbinic literature, the Dead Sea Scrolls and Second Temple texts, Dubis concludes that ‘an increased wickedness and apostasy mark the period of the woes’, *Messianic Woes*, 35. This is consistent with the theme of messianic woes elsewhere as well as in 1 Peter, which exhibits a realised eschatology in which the end has begun. The use of flood traditions in 1 Peter fits very well in this context.

66 F. Montanari, *The Brill Dictionary of Ancient Greek* (Leiden: Brill, 2015) 161.

67 Montanari, *The Brill Dictionary of Ancient Greek*, 161.

term to describe the deluge.⁶⁸ Here, it is modified by ἄσωτία, which means ‘prodigality’ ‘wastefulness’ and ‘debauchery.’ There is a sense, then, in which poetic justice is being served: *those who live a life of debauchery will be inundated by it*. Commentators have noted the term’s meaning in passing, but have not recognised the possible intertextuality here with the flood narrative a few verses earlier. However, once the vice list in 4.3 is read in continuity with the flood typology in chapter 3, a strong possibility arises that the author is again comparing believers’ current experience with that of Noah and his family, while at the same time gesturing towards the futility of that lifestyle.

With a bit of wry irony, the author says that the time past is sufficient for living according to the will of the Gentiles, an identity to which most of the letter’s recipients had formerly subscribed.⁶⁹ However, due to their new life as Christians, the letter’s recipients had become socially displaced, which makes them now ‘strangers and aliens’ (1.1; 2.11). Their new Christian identity caused them to be ostracised and marginalised by the dominant groups that they formally belonged to.⁷⁰ The Petrine author is aware of the social problems faced by believers. Their contemporaries are surprised that they no longer join them in their excessive lifestyles (4.4). Instead, believers are now called, as obedient children, not to be conformed to the passions (ἐπιθυμίας) of their former ignorance (1.14) but to a new, holy life (1.15–16). They are ‘no longer to live by human passions (ἀνθρώπων ἐπιθυμίας) but by the will of God’ (4.2; cf. 2.11). In this passage, the author explicitly contrasts the ‘will of God’ with the ‘will of the Gentiles’. These two world-views are fundamentally opposed.⁷¹

Like Noah and his family, believers were living in an age of great wickedness. Indeed, some believers once participated in the sins indicted in 1 Peter. Now, as Christians, they have renounced this lifestyle, even if it means social marginalisation. Despite this, believers are reminded that through their baptism, they have become participants in the death and resurrection of Christ, which, like the ark in Noah’s day, will save them from the final judgement – a point that will be discussed further below. In the meantime, they are to live holy lives, avoiding the moral excesses of the surrounding, dominant culture.

4.3 *Preaching to the Flood Generation*

In the age of moral corruption, a righteous remnant remains. In some STJ literature, Noah is depicted as a herald of righteousness, warning his generation of the tribulation to come. This section will argue that this tradition sheds light on the apologetic theme in 1 Pet 3.13–22.

68 Philo, *Abr.* 42; *Mos.* 2.63; *Contempl.* 86. Cf. *Act.* 147.

69 Achtemeier, *1 Peter*, 50–1.

70 L. Goppelt, *A Commentary on 1 Peter* (trans. J. E. Alsup; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1978) 285–6.

71 Goppelt, *1 Peter*, 248–5.

4.3.1 *Noah as Preacher in Second Temple Jewish Literature*

Josephus recounts that when Noah saw that his contemporaries were ‘completely enslaved to the pleasure of sin’, he urged them to repent and change their ways (*Ant.* 1.74). Noah’s exhortations place him and his family in such deadly peril that he feared being murdered by his contemporaries and fled with his family to another country.⁷² Book 1 of the *Sibylline Oracles* provides transcriptions of Noah’s two appeals to his contemporaries.⁷³ On both occasions, Noah is derided and his message ignored.

Rabbinic literature also contains evidence of Noah as witness to his generation. *Genesis Rabbah* 30.7 (on Gen 6.9) recounts that Noah’s warnings were met with ridicule by his contemporaries, who call him ‘a dirty old man’. Noah’s desire for his countrymen’s repentance is also found in *Sanhedrin* 108a–b; *Tanhuma Noah* 5; *Pirke de Rabbi Eliezer* 22–3; and *Ecclesiastes Rabbah* 9.14.⁷⁴

References to Noah’s preaching are also found in Christian literature. 2 Pet 2.5 identifies Noah as a ‘herald of righteousness’ (Νῶε δικαιοσύνης κήρυκας; cf. Heb 11.7).⁷⁵ 1 *Clem.* 7.6 says that ‘Noah proclaimed repentance, and those who heeded were saved from danger’ (cf. 1 *Clem.* 9.4).⁷⁶ In both Jewish and Christian traditions, Noah is remembered for preaching to his generation and for warning them of imminent judgement. Noah’s witness sometimes places him in danger, but is more often a source of shame and ridicule.

4.3.2 *Giving an Account in 1 Peter*

One of the key problems with 1 Pet 3.8–4.11 is the question of structure and continuity: what holds this passage together? When seen within the flood traditions, the text’s two themes of *Suffering for the sake of Righteousness* (*SfR*) and *Giving an Account* (*GA*) enlighten one another. They are actually woven together (*SfR*, 3.13–14; *GA* to other people, 3.15; *SfR*, 3.16–18; Christ’s preaching, 3.19; *GA* to God, 3.21; *SfR*, 4.1; *GA* to God, 4.5). One of the interesting shifts throughout the passage is the way that the theme of *GA* is redefined: believers are to be able to ‘give an account’ of themselves to their human judges (3.15), but it is ultimately God who will sit in judgement (3.21; 4.5).

1 Pet 3.13 asks programmatically: ‘Now who is there to harm you if you are zealous for what is right?’ If believers must suffer, they should suffer for doing right and not for doing wrong (3.17). Between these two verses, the author

72 Feldman notes that this exonerates Noah from the charge of abandoning his countrymen. See Feldman, ‘Portrait of Noah’, 42.

73 *Sib. Or.* 1.149–99.

74 Feldman, ‘Portrait of Noah’, 41; Grudem, ‘Preaching through Noah’, 13–14.

75 Additionally, Philo explains the time immediately before the flood as an opportunity for people to heed ‘the announcing (τῷ κηρύγματι) of the flood’ (*QG* 2.13). Cf. Grudem, ‘Preaching through Noah’, 15.

76 For more sources in early Christian literature, see Lewis, *Noah and the Flood*, 34–5, 37 n. 36.

encourages believers not to fear their contemporaries and to ‘always be prepared to make a defence (πρὸς ἀπολογία)ν) to anyone who calls you to account (λόγον) for the hope that is in you’ (3.15). Like Noah, believers are called to make a public statement, even if they must face public ridicule, or worse, for it. One day in the not-too-distant future, those who now judge believers ‘will have to give an account (οἱ ἀποδώσουσιν λόγον) to him who is ready to judge the living and the dead’ (4.5).

Despite their suffering, believers are always to maintain a clear conscience (συνείδησις, 3.16, 21). The letter connects this to baptism. Baptism functions as an ‘appeal’ (ἐπερώτημα) to God to maintain ‘a clear conscience’ (συνειδήσεως ἀγαθῆς, 3.21).⁷⁷ The difficult term ἐπερώτημα may imply a contractual context.⁷⁸ In early Christianity, baptism was often accompanied by a pledge.⁷⁹ The rite symbolised the perseverance of believers in the midst of suffering, but it also symbolised their ultimate (present and future) triumph through Christ.

Like Noah, believers may suffer because they obey God’s will. There is good reason to think that Christians were even brought to court for ‘the name of Christ’ (ἐν ὀνόματι Χριστοῦ, 4.14).⁸⁰ In these circumstances, the application of an *Urzeit/Endzeit* correspondence serves multiple pastoral roles: it vindicates the experience of believers by explaining their present difficulty in light of cosmic, theological realities; it also provides a narrative structure in which believers can participate, and anticipate, the ultimate triumph of Christ. Their current experience mirrors the days of the flood, as the author emphasises with three distinct chronological markers: ‘when God’s patience waited’ (ὅτε ἀπεξεδέχετο ἡ τοῦ θεοῦ μακροθυμία), ‘in the days of Noah’ (ἐν ἡμέραις Νῶε), and ‘during the building of the ark’ (κατασκευαζομένης κιβωτοῦ) (3.20). Just as it did then, God’s patience now waits while the early believers bear witness to the gospel, the revealed message of salvation.

4.4 *When God’s Patient Waited: Warning and Opportunity for Repentance*

The great deluge did not come unexpectedly. As VanderKam notes, ‘[m]any ancient scholars understood the 120 years of Gen 6.3 as a period of

77 Though debated, the present scholarly consensus favours seeing συνειδήσεως ἀγαθῆς as an objective genitive. The ‘good conscience’ is the content of the pledge. However, as Crawford notes, there may be reason to question this consensus, or at least see the grammatical construction as ambiguous. See M. R. Crawford, ‘“Confessing God from a Good Conscience”: 1 Peter 3:21 and Early Christian Baptismal Theology’, *JTS* (forthcoming).

78 Crawford, ‘Confessing God’; Achtemeier, *1 Peter*, 269–72.

79 Crawford, ‘Confessing God’.

80 D. G. Horrell, ‘The Label Χριστιανός (1 Pet. 4.16): Suffering, Conflict, and the Making of Christian Identity’, *Becoming Christian: Essays on 1 Peter and the Making of Christian Identity* (LNTS 394; London: Bloomsbury, 2013) 164–210.

grace which a patient deity provided so that sinners could repent'.⁸¹ For example, Philo concludes, after a lengthy arithmological discussion of the number 120:

But perhaps a hundred and twenty years are not the universal limit of human life, but only of the men living at that time, who were later to perish in the flood after so great a number of years, which a benevolent benefactor prolonged, allowing for repentance of sins.⁸²

This tradition is also well attested in the Targumim⁸³ and rabbinic literature.⁸⁴ *Genesis Rabbah* 30.7 states that Noah heralded the coming of the flood for 120 years (*Gen. Rab.* 30.7).

The theme of God's patience and the opportunity for repentance is also found in Jewish interpretations of Gen 7.4, where God said to Noah: 'For in seven days I will send rain upon the earth forty days and forty nights.' Philo explains that these seven days were given as an opportunity for repentance.⁸⁵ He writes:

The benevolent Saviour grants repentance of sins in order that when they see the ark over against them ... they may have faith in the announcing (τῶ κηρύγματι) of the flood; and that fearing destruction, they may first of all turn back (from sin), breaking down and destroying all impiety and evil.⁸⁶

Philo then goes on to extol God's kindness, patience and virtue for extending such an opportunity to humanity. Other NT literature connects God's patience with his desire for humans' repentance.⁸⁷

To return to the text in hand, 1 Pet 3.18–22 says:

For Christ also died for sins once for all, 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; when he went and preached to the spirits in prison, who formerly did not obey, when God's patience waited in the days of Noah, during the building of the ark, in which a few, that is, eight persons, were saved through water.

81 VanderKam, 'The Righteousness of Noah', 18. Also see Reicke, *The Disobedient Spirits*, 138; Dalton, *Christ's Proclamation*, 204.

82 Philo, *QG* 1.91; trans. LCL. Cf. Wis 12.20. Lewis, *Noah and the Flood*, 45.

83 So Grudem: 'Tg. Neof. on Gen 6:3 reports God saying to Noah, "Behold, I have given you 120 years, hoping that they might repent." The same idea is repeated in Tg. Onq., Tg. Ps-J., and the Frg. Tg. on Gen 6:3.' Grudem, 'Preaching through Noah', 14.

84 *Mek. Shirata* 5.38–9 (on Exod 15.5–6). Cf. Grudem, 'Preaching through Noah', 14. Some rabbinic texts also state that the generations from Adam to Noah continued to provoke God on account of his long-suffering nature. *Aboth* 5.2. Cf. Grudem, 'Preaching through Noah', 14.

85 Philo, *QG* 2.13. Cf. Lewis, *Noah and the Flood*, 48.

86 Philo, *QG* 2.13.

87 Rom 2.4; 3.25; Acts 17.30–1; 2 Pet 3.8–9. Achtemeier, *1 Peter*, 263.

These verses recall contemporary Jewish interpretations of the flood that were well known at the time. In *1 Enoch*, Enoch is taken on a supernatural tour of heavenly places. At one point, Enoch is given a message of judgement to declare to imprisoned beings.⁸⁸ This refers to the Enochic traditions in which disobedient angels were imprisoned because of their rebellion at the time of Noah.⁸⁹ *1 Pet* 3.18–22 depicts Christ making a proclamation ‘to spirits in prison, who formerly did not obey’. Like Enoch, Christ travels to the place where supernatural beings are kept in prison and declares a message to them.⁹⁰ However, the content of this message, as well as the location of this supernatural prison, are matters of some debate within the history of scholarship.⁹¹ The important point for this study is that certain elements of that narrative correlate to believers’ current experience, while others do not. There is no indication that believers are to have any interaction with ‘the spirits in prison’, whatever, and wherever, they are. To clarify how he wants his readers to participate in this *Urzeit/Endzeit* correspondence, the author continues (3.21–2):

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

Baptism is the touchstone at which the narratives of Noah, Christ and the Christian are superimposed on one another. If believers are now living in the *Endzeit*, then God’s patience, which waited in the days of Noah, now also waits, implicitly extending the opportunity for repentance to believers’ unbelieving contemporaries. According to *1 Pet* 2.12, believers are exhorted to ‘maintain good conduct among the Gentiles, so that in case they speak against you as wrongdoers, they may see your good deeds and glorify God on the day of visitation’. Elsewhere, wives are to behave well towards their unbelieving husbands so that they might be won over (*1 Pet* 3.1–2). A strong theme of good behaviour as witness and testimony runs through *1 Peter*: even in the midst of marginalisation, believers are to maintain good conduct as a witness to those around them, so that those who do not now believe may come to do so in the future. Traditions about Noah depicted him as a preacher to his generation, even though he was ridiculed and abused because of it. Believers are called to follow the example of Noah.

88 *1 En.* 12–13.

89 Reicke, *The Disobedient Spirits*, 68, 90; Dalton, *Christ’s Proclamation*, 170–6; Pierce, *Spirits and the Proclamation of Christ*, 184–92.

90 Reicke, *The Disobedient Spirits*, 100–1; Dalton, *Christ’s Proclamation*, 170–1.

91 Cf. Reicke, *The Disobedient Spirits*, 115–25; Dalton, *Christ’s Proclamation*, 177–87; Pierce, *Spirits and the Proclamation of Christ*, 204–7; Campbell and van Rensburg, ‘*1 Peter* 3:18–22’, 73–96; Feinberg, ‘*1 Peter* 3:18–20’, 303–36.

Noah suffered because he bore witness to his generation; believers in Asia Minor are called to do likewise, firm in the knowledge that they would also be vindicated, just as Noah had been. In the midst of their affliction, baptism acts a tangible symbol to remind them of this reality.

5. Conclusion

In conclusion, the narratives of Noah and the flood are more integral to the context of 1 Peter 3–4 than has been realised. Once the underlying framework of an *Urzeit/Endzeit* correspondence is recognised, new interpretive solutions begin to unfold. This typological correspondence provides the Petrine author with intertextual, theological and pastoral tools to encourage the beleaguered Christians of Asia Minor. This article has specifically focused on the themes of righteousness, sinfulness, witness and divine patience. The recipients of 1 Peter were to understand themselves as occupying a similar position in cosmic history as that occupied by Noah and his family in the days before the flood. These complex polyvalencies are brought into the present lives of believers through the rite of baptism, which condenses the narratives of the flood and Christ's death and resurrection into a single ritual action. While a plethora of debates and questions still remain, it is hoped that this interpretation has shed some light on a most 'strange and obscure text'.