

Do Not Be Surprised at the Fiery Ordeal Among You

An Expository Journey Through **1Peter** **1Peter 4:7-10**

42 The “End of All Things” and the Glorifying of God Through Jesus Christ, Part 1

February 24, 2019

1 Peter 4:7-11

7 The end of all things is near; therefore, be of sound judgment and sober *spirit* for the purpose of prayer.

8 Above all, keep fervent in your love for one another, because love covers a multitude of sins.

9 Be hospitable to one another without complaint.

10 As each one has received a *special* gift, employ it in serving one another as good stewards of the manifold grace of God.

11 Whoever speaks, *is to do so* as one who is speaking the utterances of God; whoever serves *is to do so* as one who is serving by the strength which God supplies; so that in all things God may be glorified through Jesus Christ, to whom belongs the glory and dominion forever and ever. Amen.

To the Glory of God

Now, this morning, we are *re-joining* our verse by verse “journey” through the Epistle of **1 Peter**. Since the first Lord’s day in January, we took a short “vacation” to begin this new year by examining just what the Biblical Gospel is, and I pray that that Series was a blessing and help to you.

But before we dive back into **1 Peter 4**, I want to say something. Because I periodically sense the need to *restate* what we are all about here at the Covenant of Peace Church. As I hope all of you already know, I passionately believe that the 66 Books of the Holy Bible are the inspired, inerrant, and infallible Word of the living God. I am *not* in the

camp of those who doubt the trustworthiness of the Scriptures. By God's Help, I settled that Issue long ago in both my heart and mind. The Bible is true. And so, I'm not going to spend five seconds debating with anyone as to whether the Holy Scriptures were written down as God the Holy Spirit moved along 40 men over a 1500-year time-frame. He did. And that makes this Book the single most *unique* Book in all the world. Nothing else is like it. Nothing else even comes close.

So, all my striving, all my effort, all my struggle is to study and analyze and beg God to help me ask and answer three Questions in every Sermon, every Radio Broadcast, and every Bible Study that I am honored to prepare:

1. What does that Verse or Passage *say*?
2. What does it *mean* by what it says?
3. How may we, who trust in Christ in the 21st Century, become *obedient* to it?

... and there is but one reason *why* I do all this:

I earnestly desire to know Jesus rightly and fully, to love Him completely, to obey my dear Lord with Joy, and to make Jesus irresistible to as many people as I can.

So, I have no desire to be an "academic" or an "intellectual". I am not trying to make all of you "smart about the Bible" so you can win arguments with other people. I genuinely desire to not be deceived *myself*, and I am literally *terrified* at the prospect that I might lead any of you astray. I fear God, and He has said that special Destruction awaits those who lead His people into Error.

We must understand that, *ultimately*, Truth is our best friend. Without Truth, nothing else matters. Being *ignorant* about the Truth or being *deceived* about the Truth never helped anyone. It *always* hurts, and it is *always* destructive. Knowing and loving and believing the Truth will help me to "be" what I'm supposed to "be", which will empower me to "do" what I'm supposed to "do". And the 66 Books of the Holy Bible, *clearly and repeatedly*, make the claim that it is not simply true, but it is actually "Divine Truth".

But to actually accomplish those three Goals requires time; lots and lots of time. For example, it demands that I go back to the original languages in which the human writer used. It requires me to

understand the *context* of *why* they wrote what they wrote. And it requires me to do all of that within the *larger* context of "Historic Christian Orthodoxy".

But it also requires that God be very gracious and merciful to me, because I am an utterly un-important and fallen sinner, a clay pot, who is capable of the most horrendous sins, and yet who has been wondrously saved by Grace alone through Faith alone in the finished Work of Christ alone. And so, even after I have exhausted myself in the Greek, Hebrew, and Aramaic, after I have applied what was going on all around the man as he was used by God to pen down the words, after I have cried out to God to help me and to teach me and to show me, I still do one more thing.

Because, you see, I trust what God has done over the last 2,000 years. And *part* of what He has done, *part* of what He has graciously given to the Church, is the Ministry Gift of "Teachers". And so, because I do not trust *myself*, because I realize that my sincerity and my passion might be fine, but it simply isn't enough, because I know that I have the ability to be deceived about very serious subjects, I go back into Church History and I read and analyze what other great men have said about that same subject. And as long as I am at least in the ballpark, I then am satisfied that my Sermon or my Bible Study or my Radio Broadcast is "fit for human consumption".

But even then, even after all that I do to get it right, I still might be wrong. So, I can *never* rest. I can *never* stop searching. I can *never* stop asking and analyzing. I can *never* stop begging God to help me. I can *never* think that I have arrived at full Wisdom about anything. I must *always* leave room to be corrected and to change my position.

But I will receive correction and I will change my position *only* if I have become "convinced of Scripture". In other words, if something I say offends people, it may be only the *way* I said something and not the Issue itself. And that means that I still have room to grow into being more kind and more generous and more loving. And, God willing, that will be taken care of, over time, in my own progressive Sanctification.

But what I mean by the phrase, "*I must be 'convinced of Scripture'*", is that simply because an Issue I have taught might seem, to some, to be "wrong", doesn't, by itself, make it to be "wrong". Just because you may have never heard it before, or that what I have taught may go against what you learned as a child, does not, in and of itself,

mean *anything*. The only thing that matters is that what I teach is in accord with Scripture. And, if it is, then it is true, if *nobody* agrees with it. And if it isn't in accord with Scripture, then it is wrong, no matter if *everybody* agrees with it. The age or the popularity of a particular Teaching does not determine its truthfulness.

So, if you think I am wrong, love me enough to sit down and show me where I'm wrong. Don't just say, "*I don't agree with you*", and then walk off. That doesn't help anyone. There must be a reason *why* you think I'm wrong. And if you can use the Bible to point out an Error of mine, then I will love you and rejoice that somebody cared enough about me to take the time to help me get it right. But if you can't show me in Scripture, then maybe I'm not wrong after all. And maybe you're upset simply because you never heard this before, or maybe God is working on your heart.

But if I have become convince by Scripture that I have taught something that is not true, then I need to repent. I need to repent to God, and I need to repent to those who heard me. And then I need to publicly correct the record by changing what I teach to be right. I simply do not know how to be any more honest than that.

And so, by God's Grace and to God's Glory and for the Good of God's people, that is how I spend my week. And sometimes that process is relatively easy. After nearly 48 years, some aspects of this do get easier. But on some occasions, it is very hard, and it's like plowing through rocks.

And I think it is helpful for you to know that almost every single time I finish preaching or recording, I have a sense of utter failure. I think of myself as having royally messed it up and of being a complete embarrassment to God. And I really thought something was wrong with me until I read that Charles Spurgeon experienced the same sense of utter failure, every time he finished preaching. So, I guess that is just another way God uses to help the Preacher remain humble.

Now the reason I am telling all of you this is, because, firstly, I think it is important for you to know what your Pastor is doing all week long. I am dead earnest about what I'm doing, and I take all of this very seriously. But I am also *more* hungry and thirsty for God than I have *ever* been. I am *more* in love with Jesus than I have ever been. I am *more* curious about Truth than I have ever been. And I am *more*

devoted to you, as the sheep of God's Hand and the people of His Pasture, than I have ever been.

But I tell you all this, also, so that you would pray for me that I will honor God in what I am doing. But I am also telling you this to remind all of us just what all this is about. And the product that I produce, my Teachings, my Sermons, my Broadcasts, are my very *best* effort at what I honestly think a Verse or Passage means.

Now, in the Passage that Brother Vern just read to you, God the Holy Spirit "moved along" the Apostle Peter to give very *practical* and *down-to-earth* Instructions on how "Scattered Aliens" are supposed to live as they come to a particular time in human history called "The End of All Things".

- ✓ Be of Sound Judgment and a Sober Spirit, for the Purpose of Prayer.
- ✓ Keep Fervent in your Love for one another.
- ✓ Be hospitable to one another, without complaint.
- ✓ As each one has received a *special* gift, employ it in serving one another.
- ✓ Whoever speaks *is to do so* as one who is speaking the "Utterances of God".
- ✓ Whoever serves *is to do so* as one who is serving by the Strength which God supplies.

... and these "Scattered Aliens" are to do all of these things unto one single End or Goal:

... so that in all things God may be glorified through Jesus Christ, to whom belongs the glory and dominion forever and ever.

... and we are to do all of this because one over-all Issue is true:

The end of all things is near...

So, the six actions that Peter talks about here are what "**glorifying God through Jesus Christ**" looks like. In other words, people, who have experienced the Miracle of the New Birth and who *respond* to that Miracle, by *striving* "in the Power of the Spirit", to possess or to manifest these six Attributes or six Fruits, is what "glorifying God" *is*. In other words, this is what being an "Alien" is all about.

Now in order for us to try to fully grasp the *importance* of what Peter says here, we need to try to *re-construct* the correct *context* of

what was going on as Peter wrote these words. Because it is difficult for us to even imagine what the condition of the people, to whom Peter originally wrote these Instructions, was. We need to remember that Peter was *not* speaking to people like us in Church on Sunday morning. These are *not* people, who lived near-by, or who even spoke the language of the country they were in. No, in every sense of the word, these people were "refugees". They had been *forcefully* removed from their homes, they had had all their worldly goods confiscated, they had no money, no reliable source of food or water or medical supplies, or even shelter. Their clothes consisted of what was on their backs, and they had no prospect that their earthly condition would ever get better.

Now we see pictures of refugee camps on the evening news all the time. Sadly, there are many. And these are people who have been *forcefully* removed from their homes and their lands due to war or natural disasters. We see vast acres of land filled with tents, and long lines of people trying to get water and food. And we see the military vehicles going in and out trying to keep order. We get mail asking us to give money so that these refugees can have some hope. And our hearts break.

But try to imagine all of those same terrible conditions with no outside help. 2,000 years ago, there was no Red Cross offering medical help and food. There were no relief organizations. The Governments of the world were not sending aid and help and money to help the people to whom Peter was speaking. People were *not* getting mail asking for help. Back then, refugees just died. They starved to death; they died of disease and squalor and pestilence. Children went to bed starving and older people buried their children, while children were burying their parents. It was truly the worst of all possible situations.

But the people to whom Peter *originally* wrote this Epistle had entered into this situation *not* because of war or an earthquake or a flood, but because they loved God. These were saints, believers in Jesus Christ. As hard as it might be for us to believe, these people were those who were "favored" by God. These were the "blessed" of the whole earth, because they were people, who had been gifted by God to be granted the ability to see their need for a Savior, and who had been granted the power to repent, and given the Faith to believe. So, these were people on whom God had "set His Love".

So, the temptation was to ask, *“Okay, so, this is what happens when God favors you? This is how God shows His Mercy and Love, by allowing evil men to treat those who love and follow Jesus like this?”* Remember, these were *not* murderers or extortioners. These were *not* political enemies of Nero. No, these people had been *unjustly* made homeless by an evil Government and a demon-possessed Emperor for the crime of loving and worshiping Jesus. And Peter called them “Scattered Aliens”.

They were “Scattered” because this great, powerful, sovereign God had *allowed* evil men to unjustly persecute them. But they were “Aliens” because God had called them to Salvation, and they no longer “fit in” with the world. And much of what Peter wrote in this Epistle was given to explain “*Why*” and “*How*”.

And yet, in great contrast to the way that refugees are handled today, this Apostle is *not* walking among these suffering saints handing out food or water. No, Peter is handing them the Word of God. He lays his hands on their heads and prays and preaches and teaches and encourages them to remain faithful; to not allow evil to make them bitter. He gives them very strange words as he tells them to do odd things like: “submit themselves to the very Government that had unjustly taken everything away from them”. He reminds them that the absolutely Sovereign God, Who called them unto Salvation, has purposely *allowed* this Evil to come upon them, and that their terrible Suffering was working toward bringing God Glory. And then he told them that, as bad as their Suffering was, Jesus’ Suffering was infinitely *worse* and infinitely more *unjust*, and yet Jesus never complained.

We simply wouldn’t tolerate Peter’s preaching today. There isn’t a Church in Gulfport that would hire a man like Peter to be their Pastor knowing what his position was about Issues like “Governmental Abuse” and the “Suffering of God’s People”. The Pulpit Committees of every Church around here would *unanimously* reject this man who, *obviously*, cared more for the *souls* of the Suffering than he did about their natural condition. And what group in the 21st Century would even listen to the rantings of a man, who taught, boldly and unashamedly, that it was, at times, “God’s perfect Will” that genuinely saved people experience great injustice at the hands of evil men?

This is *why* people today take particular verses from **1 Peter**, completely out of context, to memorize and quote. And this explains

why so many use *part* of a particular text, and almost never the *full* text, when quoting from this Apostle. Peter's Theology about "Suffering" runs completely *counter-intuitive* to the normal and natural way that our minds think today. He *eviscerates* the Doctrine of the Health, Wealth, and Prosperity Preachers of our day that draw such huge crowds. He *slaughters* the language of self-absorbed and self-centered "pew sitters". And he utterly *destroys* the logic of those who hold fervently to a Man-centered theology.

The Issues that Peter teaches in this Epistle are *not* Issues that will make you feel good about yourself. And they will never make the headlines of the local paper. The line of people in our day, clamoring to hear outright fabrications about how important they are to God, are very long indeed. But Peter never had such lines. But you would have to ask yourself, "*Why*"? Why wouldn't a man, who walked on water with Jesus, not be a novelty and be able to draw a crowd? Why weren't more people curious to see a man who had denied Jesus, and yet who had been forgiven?

Peter was *not* popular, even in his day, because of what he taught. And, 2,000 years later we read some of the things that Peter wrote in this Epistle, and, even in our comfort and security, we still cringe. Peter told suffering saints that the Injustice that they were experiencing was not only "God's Will", but was actually working to the propagation of the Gospel of Jesus Christ around the world! But, even more importantly, he taught that their Suffering was providing an opportunity for them, people who we will never even know their names, to demonstrate to the entire world and to every generation that Jesus was, indeed, the Treasure of the Universe.

Now most people can go to Church their entire lives and never even think about these things. These are traits that will never be on the list of the top 500 things that we need to agree with or seek after. But Peter says *these* are the Issues that glorify God. *These* are the Fruits that magnify the Worth and Value of the Savior Who was dead and is alive forever. These are the Issues that prove that we believe that Jesus is the "Treasure of the Universe".

We need to write it on our hearts that Salvation is *not* about us getting whatever we desire from God. No, it is about being so radically transformed (by what God alone does for us) that we don't desire anything that doesn't magnify the Worth of Jesus. These pitiful, weak,

and hurting people display better than anyone else that Jesus is *better* than *anything* this world can give to us, and that He is *better* than anything this world can take away. More than any others, these people, who had been so horribly mistreated, testify loudly that a person's relationship with Jesus does not consist in the abundance of the things that he possesses. They stand, even today, 2,000 years later, as a Sign of what it looks like for Jesus to mean more than life itself. And Peter says *these* are the Gifts that prove that we have experienced the Miracle of the New Birth.

So, according to the Holy Bible, *this* is how "Scattered Aliens" live. *This* is how people, who are persecuted for believing and trusting in Jesus, act. And *this* is how we can bring honor and glory and praise to our Lord Jesus. In other words, the Issues that Peter talks about here are what "normal, every-day Christianity" looks like.

Now I suppose a good place to start to try to figure out just what Peter was talking about here would be in what the Apostle meant by using the phrase "**The End of All Things**". Peter begins verse 7 by saying:

The end of all things is near...

So, 2,000 years ago, the only Apostle, who walked on water with Jesus, infallibly said, the "**End of All Things**" was "**near**". So, what is Peter talking about here? What did he mean by the phrase "The End of All Things"?

Now the Greek word that Peter actually wrote down here that has been translated into English as "**near**" means: *close by; to join to another; to approach*. So, just what was "*close by*"? Exactly what has been "*joined to another*"? What has been "*approached*"? Peter said it was something called "**The End of All Things**".

Now most of the times that phrases like this are used, people use a very *faulty* "exegetical model" to try to understand them. Because we are so self-absorbed, we almost *always* think that God is talking to *us* or about *us*. But the Reality is that we almost never can read the Old or the New Testaments with a 21st Century, Western, American mind and come to the correct conclusion. In other words, what these phrases mean to *us* today has little or no bearing at all on what they meant to the men, whom God used, to write them down. So, our struggle is that

we have to try to get into the mind of the ancient writers that God used and learn *their* terminology and learn *their* customs and learn *their* expressions in the way *they* used them, many thousands of years ago, or we will take these phrases “out of context”.

The Reality is that most everybody teaches that this phrase by Peter is referring to the 2nd Coming of Jesus to this earth. And I think that is true. It is very important that we maintain a very important Biblical Doctrine at the forefront of our minds, the “*Doctrine of the Imminent Return of Jesus*”, which says that Jesus will come back “soon”. And so, we are told, *repeatedly* and *clearly* to live our lives with great *anticipation* that today may be our last day. And we are to do that, *not* merely in the sense that we may die today, but also that the Lord may come back today.

So, how would we live, what would be our thoughts and actions, if we *really* thought that Jesus could return at any moment? So, there are two things to keep in mind:

1. We are to live in great anticipation of the Lord’s Return.
2. We are to strive daily for “Biblical Holiness”.

We need to know that every single writer of the New Testament operated under this same premise. They all taught that the Return of Jesus to this earth was “Soon”. And there are many who have a real serious problem with this. How can something be classified as “Soon” when we are now going into our 3rd Millennium? How can we be still thinking “Soon” after all this time? And as a result of using their carnal minds, many people say one of two things about this:

1. The Apostles didn’t know and they were just wrong.
2. The Bible isn’t infallible or reliable.

But unlike them, the Biblical writers understood that the word “soon” is in context with a God, Who lives in Eternity. And to a God like that, the “Ancient of Days”, 10,000 years is nothing but an introduction. For example, if we are to take **2 Peter 3:8** *literally* and:

... with the Lord one day is like a thousand years, and a thousand years like one day.

... then the earth is now over ten days old to God, and I have existed but for a mere 1-1/2 hours. So, waiting 2,000 years for Jesus to come back is but a couple of days to God. So, it is very possible that Peter had all this in mind, and therefore, he was correct to say that the 2nd Coming of Jesus was "near".

Now most of what I have talked about was what was going on *externally* to these believers. They were scattered and had been forced into being refugees. But we also need to understand that massive changes were going on *internally* with them as well. Because, in addition to all the persecution that was going on, the final, full, and completed Revelation of the New Covenant was being received by the Apostles during this time as well. And that Revelation was receiving Divine Credibility through the signs, wonders, miracles, and gifts of the Holy Spirit, and that Revelation was being written down and being implemented into the daily lives of believers during this time.

And, even though the New Covenant was the logical *conclusion* to the Old Covenant, nevertheless, to many people it was a radical *departure* from what they had been taught their entire lives. So, in *addition* to the massive *external* changes and turmoil that was going on with these people, there were also massive *internal* changes going on as well. And so, it would be silly for us to think that Peter was not addressing those changes, too.

So, as we ponder this, we need to remember that, back in **The Acts 1**, when the resurrected Jesus was about to ascend into Heaven, He met with the Apostles on the mountain. And Dr. Luke wrote about this account in **The Acts 1:1-3**:

The first account¹ I composed, Theophilus, about all that Jesus began to do and teach, until the day when He was taken up *to heaven*, after He had by the Holy Spirit given orders to the apostles whom He had chosen. To these He also presented Himself alive after His suffering, by many convincing proofs, appearing to them over *a period of forty days* and speaking of the things concerning the kingdom of God.

... so, Luke tells us here that Jesus had risen from the dead, and had spent the last forty days *appearing and disappearing* and teaching them

¹ The "first account" to which Luke refers is the Gospel Record that bears his name.

about the Kingdom of God, which they later wrote down in their inspired "Letters" or "Memoirs" (Epistles). Then the good doctor wrote:

The Acts 1:4&5

Gathering them together, He commanded them not to leave Jerusalem, but to wait for what the Father had promised, "Which," He said, "you heard of from Me; for John baptized with water, but you will be baptized with the Holy Spirit not many days from now."

... so, Jesus gathered the remaining Apostles and commanded them to stay in Jerusalem and wait for the "Birth of the Christian Church", which the Old Testament Prophets like Isaiah, David, and Joel had foretold, which began when those who had trusted in Christ, *initially*, were endued with Power from on High. This *initial* "spiritual infilling" was a *non-repeatable* miracle that launched what we now call "The Church Age", which is now in its *third* millennium. But now look what Dr. Luke wrote next:

The Acts 1:6

So when they had come together, they were asking Him, saying, "Lord, is it at this time You are restoring the kingdom to Israel?"

Now why did they ask Jesus this Question? These men were so steeped in the *false* Eschatology that the Pharisees and Sadducees had taught the people over the years, that even now, even *after* Jesus had risen from the dead, and even now as Jesus is preparing to ascend into Heaven, and as the Church is about to be birthed, they *still* want to know if this is the time that God is going to restore the physical nation of Israel to its former Glory that it had enjoyed under King David!

This tells us that at this moment, even the Apostles were ignorant about the Church and about Gentiles being saved, and the End of the rule or reign of the inferior 1st Covenant that concentrated God's Grace on a single nation. We can tell, by them asking this Question, they still didn't grasp the *enormity* of what God was going to do, even with them, in the very near Future. Now look at how Jesus responded to them:

The Acts 1:7

He said to them, "It is not for you to know times or epochs which the Father has fixed by His own authority

... now this is just a polite way of saying, "*It's none of your business what God is going to do in the future.*" But then Jesus went on to say:

The Acts 1:8&9

but you will receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you; and you shall be My witnesses both in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and even to the remotest part of the earth." And after He had said these things, He was lifted up while they were looking on, and a cloud received Him out of their sight.

... which happened about ten days later when these very same men were endued with Power from on High in the Upper Room and the Christian Church was born.

So, in **The Acts 1:7**, Jesus tells the Apostles, of which Peter was the *unquestioned* leader, that it was "none of their business" about the "Times" or "**Epochs**" because those things were "fixed" by God the Father's Authority, *alone*. Now the English word "**epoch**" comes from a Greek word that has to do with "*cessation*" or a "*fixed point*". Epochs are "divisions of time" or a "way" that time is measured, and, according to some, Epochs are *longer* than "Ages" but *shorter* than "Periods". And, there is much speculation as to just how many "Epochs" Mankind has had since the Garden.

But the point I am making here is that Jesus told Peter and the other Apostles that it was *not* for them to know about either the "Times" or the "Epochs", but that they should be concerned with simply being Obedient to what God had called them to do. So, the concern that the Apostles had was that, in every situation, whether they were suffering or whether they were living in abundance, believers need to be three things:

- ✓ *Faithful* to what God has revealed in Scripture
- ✓ *Fruitful* in everything they do
- ✓ *Busy* in the Work of the Lord

So, Jesus' parting Words to His followers were for them *not* to pay much attention to the all the many things going on all around them in the rising and falling of nations, and which Time or Epoch they may or

may not be in. And yet, today, we see that the *most* Questions are asked, the *most* money is spent, and the *most* time is engaged in trying to do *exactly* what Jesus told us *not* to do, figure out the "Times" and the Epochs" rather than focusing on simply being Obedient till He comes.

But, even though we are always curious about the future, about when this or that may happen, God's Answer to *us* is the same as it was to Peter and the other Apostles:

"It is none of our business, stay Faithful"

"It is none of your business, be Fruitful"

"It is none of your business; get Busy in the Work of the Lord".

So, based on that, we need to first of all say that nobody knows about the Future, anyway. *More* people have been *more* wrong about predicting future events that the Bible speaks about than any other subject. If you didn't know any better, you would think that God is trying to tell us that the Future is left to God the Father. And even though this may come as a shock to many, even the ones who *think* they know don't know.

Even the ones who have completely *disregarded* what Jesus said here, and have done extensive research and written books and travel all over the country giving lectures about "Blood moons" and the "red heifers" and "numbering the blocks that will go into the next Temple", and that "the Anti-Christ is some Syrian living in New Jersey", even they don't know.

And so, we can say, with great certainty, nobody knows about the Future except God. I sure don't know. And Peter didn't know either. And neither did John. And neither did Paul. The Message of the Bible is that the saved of this earth don't know what tomorrow holds. But we know Who holds tomorrow. And we know Who holds our hand. And so, in **1 Peter 4:7**, when Peter says:

The end of all things is near ...

... he was *not* holding himself out as having received any specific Information from God about just when Jesus was coming back. He was acting, in his Authority as an Apostle, to teach believers how to live

every day in *faithfulness* and in *fruitfulness* and in *busyness* until the Lord finally does come.

But what Peter teaches here is also useful for other Issues *besides* the 2nd Coming. We must agree that we, as believers, are affected by Events and Circumstances that are not nearly as important as the 2nd Coming, but which are, nevertheless, very important to us. Case in point is the last Election of our Nation, where we had a choice between two immoral people to lead us. One immoral person was all for Abortion and other Issues that we feel strongly *against*, while the other immoral person was in *favor* of many of the Issues that we find attractive. So, what are Christians to do? Believers were shaken by this Election. And because we were shaken, we experienced turmoil.

And Christians have been faced with similar Issues all through Church History. Peter, and the believers to whom he originally wrote this Epistle, were faced with a *gigantic* Issue that those of us, who serve the Lord Christ, in the 21st Century, barely even think about.

For example, we must remember that every day that Peter was alive Christianity was an *illegal* and *persecuted* Religion. Peter never knew anything about tax deductions for Contributions, or “public Worship”, like we enjoy today, in a nation that has (so far) *avored* Christianity. So, how does Peter teach the saints of his day to live so they will not grow weary of the Fight? But then, how should *we* live so we will not get neck deep into distractions that dilute our effectiveness? I think what Peter teaches here will help both them and us.

As we read what Peter wrote here, we need to understand that Peter wrote this Epistle during the reign of the Roman Emperor, Nero. So, this Epistle was written sometime around 64 AD, which is some 1,955 years ago. But what is even *more* important is that this is also about six years *before* God used the pagan Roman army to come down “from the North” to utterly destroy Jerusalem and the Temple and the Jewish way of life, thus bringing an unarguable “End” to the Old Covenant. And that means that, at the time that Peter was preaching these Sermons, the Temple in Jerusalem was still standing.

And even though we don’t normally think about this in our day, this is *very* significant because, many genuinely saved people had a hard time making the *transition* between the Old and the New Covenants. Now they had already received the most fantastic Sign that God could have given, the *physical* and *bodily* Resurrection of Jesus

from the dead, and so, they fully embraced Jesus as the promised Messiah. But they weren't sure what they were supposed to do with all the many details of the *customs* and the *dietary* and *ceremonial* aspects of the Old Covenant. Were they supposed to continue those or not?

So, even though these are not very important Issues to us today, it simply was not clear to many 1st Century saints. And so, animal sacrifices and Temple worship, along with all the dietary laws, were still up and running for almost 40 years *after* the Resurrection of Jesus. And many Jews, who had believed in Jesus, who had been schooled their entire lives in the articles of the Old Covenant, were faithfully following them for several decades *after* Jesus had brought the New Covenant to us.

We also need to understand that, over time, the Jews had developed many religious myths and false Teachings that also had to be confronted and corrected. Spurious Teachings about angels and superstitions, about certain religious artifacts and trinkets, were common in the 1st Century. So, in His Mercy, God sovereignly did two things that exposed these false Teachings and brought a *decisive* and *final* End to the First or the Old Covenant:

1. The development of New Covenant Theology in the NT Epistles.
2. The destruction of Jerusalem and the Temple in 70 AD.

We need to remember that at the time that God "moved along" the Apostle Peter to pen down this Book, several New Testament Books had not yet been written:

- **2 Timothy** (A.D. 66-67)
- **2 Peter** (A.D. 67-68)
- **Hebrews** (A.D. 67-69)
- **Jude** (A.D. 68-70)
- **John** (A.D. 80-90)*²
- **1 John** (A.D. 90-95)*
- **2 John** (A.D. 90-95)*
- **3 John** (A.D. 90-95)*
- **The Revelation** (A.D. 94-96)*

² Most historians believe that John's writings were late in the 1st Century, which is why I used those dates. However, it is important to know that there is disagreement about this. Some, very godly and reliable Theologians, (among them RC Sproul) do not think John wrote his Books after the Temple was destroyed in 70 AD.

But God *especially* used the **Epistle to the Hebrews**, that was published and widely distributed some four years *after* Peter's 1st Epistle, to convince believing Jews that the Lord had *finalized* the time frame in which the First or the Old Covenant was in force. And the Passage in **Hebrews 6:1-3** was the "nail in the coffin" as to how believing Jews were to understand the Old Covenant, now that Jesus had died and risen from the dead, and brought to the earth the infinitely superior New Covenant:

Hebrews 6:1-3

Therefore leaving the elementary teaching about the Christ, let us press on to maturity, not laying again a foundation of repentance from dead works and of faith toward God, of instruction about washings and laying on of hands, and the resurrection of the dead and eternal judgment. And this we will do, if God permits.³

Now the phrase "**the elementary teaching about the Christ**" refers to the Mosaic Law, *specifically*, and the Old Covenant, *generally*. It was there that God gave "elementary Truth" about the Messiah. The literal Greek would have read:

The fundamental Teachings about the "Anointed One" (Messiah)⁴

... which are all the *signs* and *symbols* and *representations* about Jesus that the Old Testament Scriptures gave.

But notice that the writer of **Hebrews** then tells the Jewish readers that they were to "**leave**" those Teachings. And the Greek word that was translated here as "**leaving**" means: *to utterly abandon*. So, first, this man (whoever he was) instructs believing Jews to *utterly abandon* all of the "elementary and fundamental Teachings about the Messiah" (Anointed One/Christ), which was found under the Original or Old Covenant. But then he also tells them to:

... press on to maturity...

³ Those interested in a full and complete explanation of **Hebrews 6** might wish to read the Sermons from our "journey" through this Book, some twelve years ago, on the Church's website: www.covenantofpeace.net

⁴ The term "Christ" was an invention by the Apostle Paul to make sense to the Gentile world of the "Anointed One" (Messiah), that was only meaningful to people, who had been raised under the Old Covenant.

... which teaches them to fully embrace the *final, full, and completed* (perfection/maturity) Revelation of God, that has to do with an *infinitely* superior High Priest, Who offered an *infinitely* superior Sacrifice, that is based on *infinitely* superior Promises, which is what we call today "The New Covenant" or "Christianity".

I invite you to try to think about the implications of all this. From that moment until this day, there has been no Sanhedrin Court, no Temple, no Levitical priesthood, no animal sacrifices, and no way for the Jews to even govern themselves according to the Old Covenant.⁵ So, whether we think this was a big deal or not in our day, it was *absolutely* a big deal to the Jews of that day. It was *cataclysmic*. And, to this day, many Jews have never recovered.

So, as Peter looks out over the horizon, in the middle of the 1st Century, and he sees all of the persecution, and all of the turmoil, and all of the squalor of the "Scattered Aliens" before him, he realizes that his Mission is to speak Truth and encourage them to remember two things:

1. Their Suffering is all part of God's Plan to sanctify them individually, and to help spread the Gospel around the world.
2. The totally innocent Lord Jesus suffered unjustly more than they.

... so, they were not to simply "take it". They were not called to sit still and be annihilated. No, the Gospel must be preached to all the world. So, even with all these massive, earthshaking changes, even with all this radical new Revelation pouring forth, even with all the persecution and turmoil, the "*Church Militant*" must go forth! Jesus must be preached! The Glory of God in the Face of Jesus Christ must be seen by all of God's elect, so they can love what they see and be changed into what they see!

But Peter also realizes that many of them are still reeling with all of the changes that they have experienced and the relentless persecution. So, even though he despised the fact that they were "Scattered", Peter knew that he had to encourage them to remain as "Aliens".

⁵ All of the genealogical records of the Jews were destroyed at this time. So, no Jew has any empirical proof beyond 70AD of his own ethnicity.

And so, here at the beginning of verse 7, the Apostle says that, *because* Jesus' Return is "Immanent", AND *because* the "End" of the "reign" or the "rule" or the "dominance" of the Old Covenant is "Immanent", AND because there are *massive* changes going on all around you:

The end of all things is near...

... and then Peter said:

Therefore

... which is a legal term that says, *"Based on the fact that all I have just told you is true, now, "THEREFORE", do this and that"*. And then Peter goes into all the Apostolic Commands until the end of verse 11.

But now we need to ask some more Questions: *Why did the persecuted saints of Peter's day need to be concerned about not being frivolous about Prayer?* Of all the things they could be concerned about, why was *this* at the top of Peter's list? *Why must they not allow either Temptation or Persecution to dull their Love for each other?* How was that going to put a roof over their head or put food in their mouths? *Why did they need to refuse to complain about people being in their home?* And who among them even *had* a home? I mean, at the time that Peter wrote this, these believing people had been driven *away* from their homes. I understand why *I* need to be concerned about this, but at the time that Peter wrote this down, the best these people had was a tent or some other makeshift lean-to. So, how was being "hospitable" even relevant? *Why did they need to remember that all their Gifts are Gifts from God, and not inherent Attributes that they possessed?* I mean that's a true statement, but what does that have to do with the immediate plight of these "Scattered Aliens"? *Why did they need to realize that what God says is infinitely more important than anything they said?* And why was Peter adamant that they remember that their *Service is a Work of the Spirit, and not something they could boast about?* I think Peter gave us the Answer at the end of verse 11:

... so that in all things God may be glorified through Jesus Christ...

Dear friends, this is really where the rubber meets the road. Because, while we are to strive with all our might to *eliminate* believers or anyone else from being "Scattered", we must also strive to MAINTAIN our "Alien" identity. Being "Scattered" is the work of evil men. But being an "Alien" is the result of being called and chosen by God. So, whereas being "Scattered" is something we should work *against* and pray *against* and speak out *against*, being an Alien is something to be *desired* and something to *strive for* and something to *pray for*. Because being an "Alien" means we are doing all that we do, and saying all that we say, and thinking and praying all that we think and pray:

... so that in all things God may be glorified through Jesus Christ...

Our *first* and *primary* Citizenship is in Heaven, *not* the United States. Our *first* and *primary* Constitution is the Bible, *not* the U.S. Constitution. Our *first* and *primary* King and Commander in Chief is Jesus Christ, and *not* the President. And the *dominant* cravings of our heart are *not* for the treasures and tributes of the world, but for the Kingdom of God.

So, we are "Aliens". And that means that the language and the values and the customs and the expectations and the joys of this world feel foreign to us. Something really radical has happened to us. The Apostle said in **1 Peter 1:3**:

Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who according to His great mercy has caused us to be born again to a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead,

Jesus has called us to live like "Aliens", to fix our minds on radically different priorities than the nations. Our Savior said:

Matthew 6:31-34

Do not worry then, saying, 'What will we eat?' or 'What will we drink?' or 'What will we wear for clothing?' For the Gentiles eagerly seek all these things; for your heavenly Father knows that you need all these things. But seek first His kingdom and His righteousness, and all these things will be added to you. So do not worry about tomorrow; for tomorrow will care for itself. Each day has enough trouble of its own.

God has promised to supply all our needs in the foreign land of the world, if we orient our life on the Kingdom of God and *His* Values and Purposes and Righteousness.

So, the Call to Salvation is a Call to be an Alien. And so, living like Aliens is utterly *necessary*. O, what a tragedy when an Alien falls in love with the world! In **Colossians** and **Philemon** Paul called Demas "his fellow worker", along with Luke and Mark. But in his very last letter, **2 Timothy**, the Apostle wrote these terrible words:

2 Timothy 4:10a

for Demas, having loved this present world, has deserted me and gone to Thessalonica...

It is a great tragedy when a professing believer throws away his Faith and Hope in the future world, renounces his citizenship there, and lives for "this present world." When professing Christian Aliens are absorbed into the world and give up walking by the Constitution of the Kingdom, and give up loving the King, and give up pursuing the cravings of the Kingdom, then they have no warrant for thinking that they will inherit the Kingdom.

1 John 2:19

They went out from us, but they were not *really* of us; for if they had been of us, they would have remained with us; but *they went out*, so that it would be shown that they all are not of us.

Living as Aliens in the world is the only Pathway to Heaven. If you choose to be at home in the world and love the things of the world, you will perish with the world. The Apostle John said:

1 John 2:17

The world is passing away, and *also* its lusts; but the one who does the will of God lives forever.

So, now Peter is going to get into just the things that will help preserve and maintain and make strong that Alien Identity that these people have had, and must have, until the Lord comes back. And, Lord willing, next week, we will get deeply into these Issues.

Amen. Let's pray.

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The Grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with your spirit. Amen. Be watchful and quicken your pace. Soli Deo Gloria. For the Glory of God alone.