

## ***PILGRIMS ON A JOURNEY, 1PETER 1:1-2***

A New Hope #1

◆**Intro:** When the first Pilgrims landed at Plymouth Rock in MA, they had spent ten weeks at sea, just over two months. But their “journey” of survival had really just begun. They were willing to endure great suffering of the following winter, in the elements of an unknown land, for the prospect of what was before them; a new home, and a new hope, with freedom of religion, and freedom from oppression. Many years later in America when settlers wanted to travel the Oregon Trail to the west coast, they were committing themselves to a journey that would take about two years of their lives. They were pilgrims too, on a journey to an unseen land that promised a new hope of provision and freedom they didn’t have in the place they left. They would live through snow storms, Indian attacks, desert crossings, mountain passes, foraging/hunting for their food while traveling farther on a trail they’d never been on before *because of what was coming*. In the same way people who begin to follow God through Jesus Christ are also pilgrims, people on a journey. People on the way to somewhere/something better. If you are considering committing your heart to God, you need to know that what you are about to do is start a journey. If you are already a believer in Jesus Christ as the one true God of heaven and earth, you are on a journey whether you realize it or not. If you don’t realize it, you may not have progress very far outside of the town on that pilgrim road yet. But like it or not, there is a great deal of traveling to be done. Call it growing. Call it developing. Or

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preparation. But either way, anyone seriously in pursuit of God is on a journey. Peter is trying to remind us that difficult pilgrimage is ok, because because of what's been done for us, and what will be done for us.

◆The Apostle Peter writes to such folk to encourage them as people on the way to somewhere else. He knows, like any good trail guide, that the way will be exciting, beautiful, but also treacherous, dangerous, difficult. So his letter is his pep-talk so to speak, about remembering who you are, and where you're destined to end up as you assume the trek. His letter is to a set of brand new Jesus followers in what is today modern Turkey, from the Mediterranean Sea north all the way to the Black Sea. But it is also to every God follower down through the ages, including us.

◆**1. Every Christian is a pilgrim, an alien and a person out of place that doesn't quite fit. It's important to remember this otherwise you will lose sight of your destination.** And when you loose sight of your destination, you easily get side-tracked, and you easily wear out, and give up.

◆Once your heart recognizes that Jesus is in fact Lord, you also start to realize that there are a great many things out of place, including in yourself. Cultures develop strange beliefs.

Governments pass some astoundingly foolish laws all the while thinking they are on the cutting edge of progress. Many things that God calls sin, and urges his people to reject are most

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celebrated, and applauded by the rest of society. If you have desired to know God for any significant length of time in your life, you have probably lived through plenty of frustration, and longing for a better world because you want something better than what you find on earth.

♦**A.** Peter knows this. That's why he says the Christians in Asia Minor are "**aliens**" (strangers in v1, NIV). An alien is someone out of their natural element or culture. He calls them the "**Diaspora**" (scattered, v1). The Diaspora is a technical term for the Jewish people deported out of their home land, first by Assyria in 722 BC. On that date the northern 10 tribes of Israel ceased to exist. Then in 586 BC, Babylon deported the remaining two tribes. Judaism continued to exist but scattered everywhere but in the Promised Land. When Peter calls the Gentile Christians of Turkey the Diaspora, he is lumping them in with God's historic people, the Jewish nation who were invariably pilgrims!

♦Abraham, the father of Israel was a pilgrim in Canaan, traveling through it his whole life. Owing none of it. Israel as a nation was a pilgrim on the way to the Promised Land for 40 years traveling in the desert of Arabia. And again in Babylon.

♦He's writing probably about 63AD, shortly before July 19, 64AD when Rome caught fire and the Roman Emperor Nero blamed the followers of Christ, declaring open season on them as retribution.

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Peter probably saw the hand-writing on the wall, living there in Rome at the time.

◆ Christians were arrested, dressed in animal skins and thrown into the arena to be eaten by dogs and tigers (- basically the First Century version of horror movie entertainment). Christians were tarred and tied to crosses and lit on fire as lamps along the Apian Way.

◆ B. It's the same kind of different today, is it not? In Nigeria whole villages of Christians are have been slaughtered in 2021 just for believing in Jesus as Lord. Meanwhile our Secretary of State, Anthony Blinken officially removed Nigeria from Countries of Particular Concern (CPC), a list of countries that have engaged in or tolerated "systematic, ongoing, and egregious violations of religious freedom." The Burmese military has been caught shelling churches, detaining pastors, and brutally attacking Christian communities. The North Korean regime detains Christians in political prison camps where they are often subjected to torture. Farah, a 12-year-old Christian girl, says she was taken from her home in Pakistan last summer, shackled, forced to convert to Islam and made to marry her kidnapper. It's a fate estimated to befall hundreds of young Christian, Hindu and Sikh women and children in the country each year.

◆ On 25 June, Farah was at home in Faisalabad, Pakistan's third most populous city, with her grandfather, three brothers and two sisters when they heard knocking on their

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front door. She remembers her grandfather going to open it. Then three men burst in, grabbed Farah and forced her into a van outside. They warned the family that if they tried to get her back "they'd make us regret it", says Farah's father, Asif. Asif went to the nearest police station to report the crime - even providing the name of one of the abductors, whom Farah's grandfather had recognized - but he says the officers showed little interest in helping. "They were very uncooperative and refused to register the crime."

◆C. Being Christian is a dangerous journey in a sinful world that believes that evil things are good, and good things are evil. But outright religious persecution is only one part of it. There is also the perpetual difficulty of trying to agree with God's laws in your own life, trying to do what is right and holy. Have you ever found it hard to admit you did wrong? Is there anything in your life you wouldn't stand up and tell this whole room about? It is a sign. Peter is telling us it's a sign that we don't really belong here, in this kind of world. Guilt is a sign that God intended us for something better and we're not there. We're here, and as long as we're here we are a fish-outta-the-water. We are non-indigenous. We are outlanders. Do not be surprised. Your feeling of "I don't belong here." is evidence of a broken world. Pilgrims are people looking for something better. Are you one of those type? Does this world fail to satisfy you? Why not consider the benefit of being one of God's pilgrims?

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◆2. As Peter begins his travel guide he also take great concern to remind his readers of who they are in Christ. He reminds them they are elect, foreknown, sanctified, and sprinkled. And do you know why this is significant? **When you know where you belong and what God has made you for, you can endure all manner of difficult trails and trials.** Let's look at Peter's labels for the scattered alien Christians. [Note, v2: did you see that the whole of the Holy Trinity is involved here in who a person is as a believer in Jesus?]

◆A. Elect. Many people think that God has no decisive plan for people. Their destiny is in their hands. And on a human level it plays out this way. But what a fearful theology! What if I can't handle the pressure life throws at me? What if I stumble? What if I break under it all and choose, say, against God? If my destiny is up to me I have no eternal security. But if my destiny is up to a loving, choosing God, I am certainly secure. Guess what? It is! Everyone who choses to love Christ back also comes to know that in the spiritual scheme of things they were first a choice of God himself. Jesus said "Nobody comes to me unless the Father draws him." (Jn6:44, 65). Paul told the Ephesian believers that even their faith was "a gift of God, so no one can boast." (2:9). Just do a search on the term elect, or chosen in the Bible. You will be astounded. Christian hind-sight always reveals that God loved us first. If you are a believer you should be baffled when you whisper to God, "You chose me?"

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◆**B. Foreknown:** This is a similar characteristic. Check out what Paul writes to the Roman Christians.

◆*Romans 8:29-31 For those God foreknew he also predestined to be conformed to the likeness of his Son, that he might be the firstborn among many brothers. And those he predestined, he also called; those he called, he also justified; those he justified, he also glorified. What, then, shall we say in response to this? If God is for us, who can be against us?*

◆Listen friend, you are not an independent reality. Your existence was neither an accident, nor your choice. You are alive through no merit or plan of your own. But note it well; you were planned. You were known before your parents got frisky. You were known before the USA was a nation. You were known before the solar system was formed. And if your heart is dedicated to Jesus, you also know that this was set in place when Jesus and the Father, and the Holy Spirit discussed things before the Big Bang. Check out the parallel of verse 2 and 20.

◆*v2 who have been chosen according to the foreknowledge of God the Father*

◆*v20 1 Peter 1:20 (NASB) For He was foreknown (greek) before the foundation of the world, but has appeared in these last times for the sake of you*

◆Did you get that? In the very real spiritual realm, that existed before the physical universe, Jesus and known about. And so

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were his kids. As a disciple of Jesus, your name was known already then!

◆**C. Sanctified:** This means to be made holy in the eyes of God. The Holy Spirit is the one who enters the human heart and transforms it to recognize Christ as savior.

◆**D. Sprinkled:** means to be purified through blood. In the OT the priest took a branch of hyssop (also used to make soap) and dipped it in blood the atonement sacrifice, and actually sprinkled it on the church people! Why? Sin payment is death/blood. Like in the film National Treasure at the end when Nicholas Cage has found the treasures of the founding fathers, wants to turn it over to the nation, but has broken several laws in the process. He really doesn't want to go to jail, but the detective says "somebody always has to go to jail." Same thing with God and sin.

Somebody always has to die when there's sin. They go together because God is just. Well, Jesus is our sacrifice. His blood sprinkles the believer so he/she needn't die! This is Gospel!

◆**Conclusion:** Perhaps you know the plot of the Star Wars episode 4: also called a New Hope. Princess Leia steals the plans of the Empire's Death Star, smuggles them to Obi-wan Kenobi so the Rebellion can look for a weak spot, blow it up, and hope to not be overrun by the persecuting Empire. A lot of risks get taken, lives get taken, battles get fought, space gets travelled – all because there is a hope of success.



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◆In the Book of Hebrews there is a chapter that summarized biblical history with a list suffering figure after suffering biblical figure. Some sawn in two, some stabbed with swords, etc. And it concludes like this.

*◆All these people were still living by faith when they died. They did not receive the things promised; they only saw them and welcomed them from a distance. And they admitted that they were aliens and strangers on earth. (Hebrews 11:13, NIV).*

◆Here's Peter's point. If you know the value and the privilege that God has gifted you in Christ, you can face it all. You know how the story ends because you know how it began, and you know the climax of the plot too. Peter knows that fearful, suffering, frustrated people can continue to live out God's glory through obedience (v2) even when it doesn't "work" because of who they know themselves to be, and therefore know the hope they have.