

HOW TO READ A LETTER

1 Peter 1:1-2 (p. 1886)

June 3, 2018

*From: Peter, an apostle of Jesus Christ,
To: God's elect, strangers in the world, scattered
1 Peter 1:1*

Fisherman, Rock, Shepherd

*"Come, follow me," Jesus said, "and I will make you fishers of men."
At once they left their nets and followed him.
Matthew 4:19-20 (see John 21:17)*

How is God preparing me to listen to Peter? _____

We are the scattered

*To God's elect, strangers in the world, scattered throughout
Pontus, Galatia, Cappadocia, Asia and Bithynia
1 Peter 1:2 (see Acts 2:5-11; 8:1-3; 11:19; 13:1-13; James 1:1)*

Where is God scattering me? _____

Peter's global perspective

*"Brothers, you know that some time ago God made a choice among you
that the Gentiles might hear . . . and believe."
Acts 15:6-11*

- 1) Scattering has always been GOD'S PLAN (John 1:14)
- 2) Scattering isn't always GEOGRAPHIC
- 3) We all need regular RE-SCATTERING (Galatians 2:11-21)

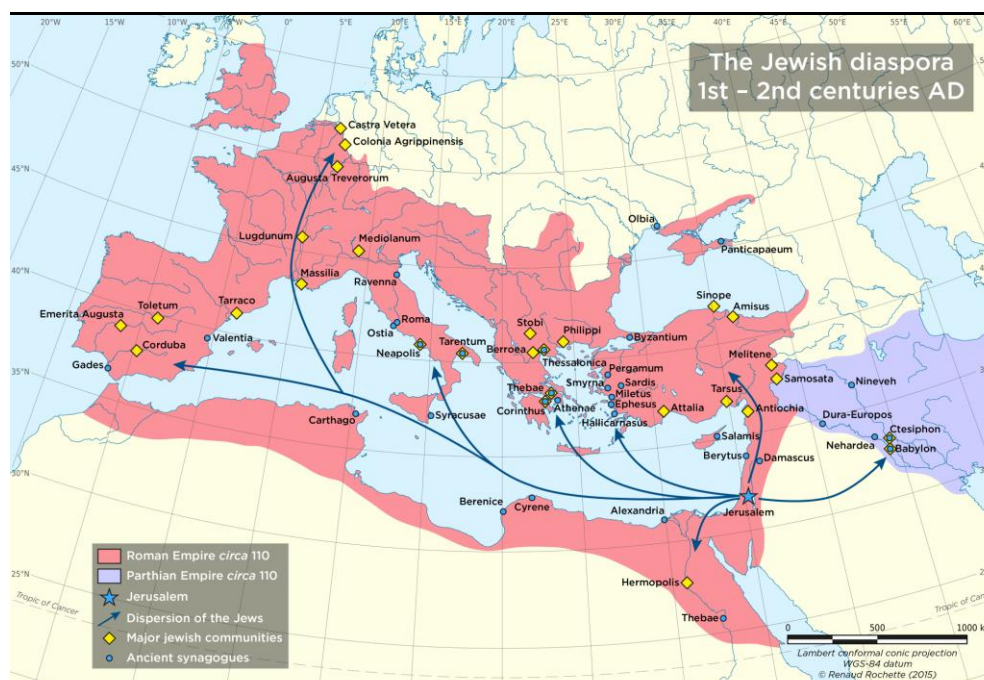
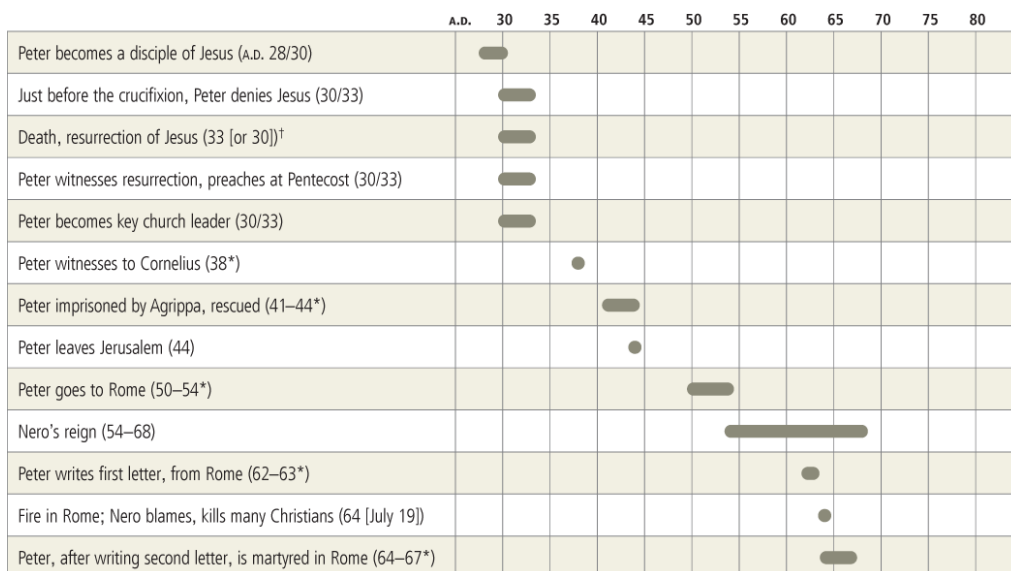
Further study of Peter's letters

Bob Deffinbaugh on Peter at <https://bible.org/seriespage/1-preparation-peter>

Spurgeon's "Pricked in Their Hearts" at <http://www.biblebb.com/files/spurgeon/2102.htm>

"Two Heroes" sermon notes from University Presbyterian Church, Seattle, April 18-June 13, 2004.
See www.upc.org

Alexander Maclaren's introduction to 1 Peter at <https://www.studylight.org/commentaries/mac/1-peter-1.html>



Lectio Divina

*For you have been born again . . .
through the living and enduring word of God. 1 Peter 1:23*

Monday: 1 Peter 1:1-12, The living hope

How does Peter connect hope and resurrection? What is the “refining” work of God in your life?

Tuesday: 1 Peter 1:13-2:12, Living stones and chosen people

This passage contains one of the great atonement pictures in 2:18-21. How does Peter connect the atonement to loving each other? How are you living today as a royal priest?

Wednesday: 1 Peter 2:13-3:7, Because Christ suffered for you

How has the Christ example of suffering helped you “live free” (see 2:16)? How are slave/master and wife/husband submission both similar and different? How has your family been blessed by “in the same way” living?

Thursday: 1 Peter 3:8-22, Suffering for each other

What blessing you have inherited from being a blessing? To whom has it been easiest and most difficult to be a blessing?

Friday: 1 Peter 4, Suffering and sin

Suffering is assumed in this passage. What is the connection between suffering and using our spiritual gifts?

Saturday: 1 Peter 5, Instructions for elders and all of us

We all sometimes live as the “elder” and sometimes as the “younger.” Which is more difficult for you? What gifts do you bring to each of these roles in your life?

1 Peter

SOJOURNERS OF THE DISPERSION

The words rendered ‘strangers scattered’ are literally ‘sojourners of the Dispersion,’ and are so rendered in the Revised Version. The Dispersion was the recognised name for the Jews dwelling in Gentile countries; as, for instance, it is employed in John’s Gospel, when the people in Jerusalem say, ‘Whither will this man go that we shall not find Him? Will he go to the Dispersion amongst the Greeks?’ Obviously, therefore the word here may refer to the scattered Jewish people, but the question arises whether the letter corresponds to its apparent address, or whether the language which is employed in it does not almost oblige us to see here a reference, not to the Jew, but to the whole body of Christian people, who, whatever may be their outward circumstances, are, in the deepest sense, in the foundations of their life, if they be Christ’s, ‘strangers of the Dispersion.’

Now if we look at the letter we find such words as these--‘The times of your ignorance’--‘your vain manner of life handed down from your fathers’--‘in time past were not a people’--‘the time past may suffice to have wrought the will of the Gentiles’--all of which, as you see, can only be accommodated to Jewish believers by a little gentle violence, but all of which find a proper significance if we suppose them addressed to Gentiles, to whom they are only applicable in the higher sense of the words to which I have referred. If we understand them so, we have here an instance of what runs all through the letter; the taking hold of Jewish ideas for the purpose of lifting them into a loftier region, and transfiguring them into the expression of Christian truth. For example, we read in it: ‘Ye are an elect race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation’; and again: ‘Ye are built up a spiritual house, to be a holy priesthood, to offer up spiritual sacrifices.’ These and other similar passages are instances of precisely the same transference of Jewish ideas as I find, in accordance with many good commentators, in the words of my text.

So, then, here is Peter’s notion of--

I. What the Christian Life is.

All those who really have faith in Jesus Christ are 'strangers of the Dispersion'; scattered throughout the world, and dwelling dispersedly in an order of things to which they do not belong, 'seeking a city which hath foundations.' The word 'strangers' means, originally, persons for a time living in an alien city. And that is the idea that the Apostle would impress upon us as true for each of us, in the measure in which our Christianity is real. For, remember, although all men may be truly spoken of as being 'pilgrims and sojourners upon the earth' by reason of both the shortness of the duration of their earthly course and the disproportion between their immortal part and the material things amongst which they dwell, Peter is thinking of something very different from either the brevity of earthly life or the infinite necessities of an immortal spirit when he calls his Christian brethren strangers. Not because we are men, not because we are to die soon, and the world is to outlast us; not because other people will one day live in our houses and read our books and sit upon our chairs, and we shall be forgotten, but because we are Christ's people are we here sojourners, and must regard this as not our rest. Not because our immortal soul cannot satisfy itself, however it tries, upon the trivialities of earth any more than a human appetite can on the husks that the swine do eat, but because new desires, tastes, aspirations, affinities, have been kindled in us by the new life that has flowed into us; therefore the connection that other men have with the world, which makes some of them altogether 'men of the world, whose portion is in this life,' is for us broken, and we are strangers, scattered abroad, solitary, not by reason of the inevitable loneliness in which, after all love and companionship, every soul lives; not by reason of losses or deaths, but by reason of the contrariety between the foundation of our lives, and the foundation of the lives of the men round us; therefore we stand lonely in the midst of crowds; strangers in the ordered communities of the world.

Ah, there is no solitude so utter as the solitude of being the only man in a crowd that has a faith in his heart, and there is no isolating power like the power of rending all ties that true attachment with Jesus Christ has. 'Think not that I am come to bring peace on earth, but a sword'--to set a man against his own household, if they be not of the household of faith. These things are the inevitable issues of religion--to make us strangers, isolated in the midst of this world.

And now let us think of--

II. Some of the plain consequent duties that arise from this characteristic of the Christian Life.

Let me put them in the shape of one or two practical counsels. First let us try to keep up, vivid and sharp, a sense of separation. I do not mean that we should withdraw ourselves from sympathies, nor from services, nor from the large area of common ground which we have with our fellows, whether they be Christians or no--with our fellow-citizens; with those who are related to us by various bonds, by community of purpose, of aim, of opinion, or of affection. But just as Abraham was willing to go down into the plain and fight for Lot, though he would not go down and live in Sodom, and just as he would enter into relations of amity with the men of the land, and yet would not abandon his black camels'-hair tent, pitched beneath the terebinth tree, in order to go into their city and abide with them, so one great part of the wisdom of a Christian man is to draw the line of separation decisively, and yet to keep true to the bond of union. Unless Christian people do make a distinct effort to keep themselves apart from the world and its ways, they will get confounded with these, and when the end comes they will be destroyed with them.

Sometimes voyagers find upon some lonely island an English castaway, who has forgotten home, and duty, and everything else, to luxuriate in an easy life beneath tropical skies, and has degraded himself to the level of the savage islanders round him. There are professing Christians--perhaps in my audience--who, like that poor castaway, have 'forgotten the imperial palace whence they came,' and have gone down and down and down, to live the fat, contented, low lives of the men who find their good upon earth and not in heaven. Do you, dear brethren, try to keep vivid the sense that you belong to another community. As Paul puts it, with a metaphor drawn from Gentile instead of from Jewish life, as in our text, 'Our citizenship is in heaven.' Philippi, to the Christian Church of which that was said, was a Roman colony; and the characteristics of a Roman colony were

that the inhabitants were enrolled as members of the Roman tribes, and had their names on the register of Rome, and were governed by its laws. So we, living here in an outlying province, have our names written in the 'Golden Book' of the citizens of the new Jerusalem. Do not forget, if I might use a very homely illustration, what parish your settlement is in; remember what kingdom you belong to.

Again, if we are strangers of the Dispersion, let us live by our own country's laws, and not by the codes that are current in this foreign land where we are settled for a time. You remember what was the complaint of the people in Persia to Esther's king? 'There is a people whose laws are different from all the peoples that be upon the earth.' That was an offence that could not be tolerated in a despotism that ground everything down to the one level of a slavish uniformity. It will be well for us Christian people if men look at us, and say, 'Ah, that man has another rule of conduct from the one that prevails generally. I wonder what is the underlying principle of his life; it evidently is not the same as mine.'

Live by our King's law. People in our colonies, at least the officials, set wonderful store by the approbation of the Colonial Office at home. It does not matter what the colonial newspapers say, it is 'what will they say in Downing Street?' And if a despatch goes out approving of their conduct, neighbours may censure and sneer as they list. So we Christians have to report to Home, and have so to live 'that whether present or absent'--in a colony or in the mother country--'we may be well pleasing unto Him.'

Keep up the honour and advance the interests of your own country. You are here, among other reasons, to represent your King, and people take their notions of Him very considerably from their experience of you. So see to it that you live like the Master whom you say you serve.

The Russian Government sends out what are called military colonies, studded along the frontier, with the one mission of extending the empire. We are set along the frontier with the same mission. The strangers are scattered. Congested, they would be less useful; dispersed, they may push forward the frontiers. Seed in a seed-basket is not in its right place; but sown broadcast over the field, it will be waving wheat in a month or two. 'Ye are the salt of the earth'--salt is sprinkled over what it is intended to preserve. You are the strangers of the Dispersion, that you may be the messengers of the Evangelisation.

Lastly, let us be glad when we think, and let us often think, of--

III. The Home in Glory.

That is a beautiful phrase which pairs off with the one in my text, in which another Apostle speaks of the ultimate end as 'our gathering together in Christ.' All the scattered ones, like chips of wood in a whirlpool, drift gradually closer and closer, until they unite in a solid mass in the centre. So at the last the 'strangers' are to be brought and settled in their own land, and their lonely lives are to be filled with happy companionship, and they to be in a more blessed unity than now. 'Fellow-citizens with the saints and of the household of God.' If we, dwelling in this far-off land, were habitually to talk, as Australians do of coming to England or 'going home,' though born in the colony, it would be a glad day for us when we set out on the journey. If Christian people lived more by faith, as they profess to do, and less by sight, they would oftener think of the home-coming and the union; and would be happy when they thought that they were here but for awhile, and when they realised these two blessed elements of permanence and of companionship, which another Apostle packs into one sentence, along with that which is greater than them both, 'so shall we ever be with the Lord.'