

Strength for Today and Bright Hope for Tomorrow

Father, grant us insight, so that we may look deep into our Word, and not cling to superficial or shallow understandings. Grant us to focus that we may not be mesmerized by shadows or illusions, but concentrate on the substance of your Word, and this we ask in Jesus' name. Amen. (Anonymous, in *For All the Saints*, IV, 258)

A Simple Outline of 1 Peter

1:1-2	Greeting
1:3-2:11	Theology: The Coming Revelation of Christ in Glory
2:12-3:22	Application: How to Live as a Christ-follower
4:1-5:6	Faith Gets Personal: The Church Together in Suffering
5:6-13	Final Exhortations and Close of the Epistle

Beginning in Humility

Clothe yourselves, all of you, with humility toward one another, for 'God opposes the proud but gives grace to the humble.' Humble yourselves, therefore, under the mighty hand of God so that at the proper time he may exalt you" (1 Peter 5:5-6, quoting Proverbs 3:34 from the Septuagint, the Greek translation of the Hebrew Old Testament)

Part One: Be Watchful!

Be sober minded; be watchful. Your adversary the devil prowls around like a roaring lion, seeking someone to devour. Resist him, firm in your faith...." (1 Peter 5:8-9)

1 Peter warns about common sins in the non-Christian populace.

- “As obedient children, do not be conformed to the *passions* of your former ignorance, but as he who called you is holy, you also be holy in all your conduct” (1:14-15). Cf. James 1:14-15, “Each person is tempted when he is lured and enticed by his own desire. Then desire when it has conceived gives birth to sin, and sin when it is fully grown brings forth death.”
- *Sins of speech*: “Put away all malice and all deceit and hypocrisy and envy and all slander” (2:1).
- *Some sins arising from passion are legal in society but lawless in that do not honor God's will, Ten Commandments*: “The time that is past suffices for doing what the Gentiles want to do, living in sensuality, passions, drunkenness, orgies, drinking parties, and lawless idolatry. With respect to this they are surprised when you do not join them in the same flood of debauchery...” (4:3-4)
- *Some sins may be wrong before God and man*: “But let none of you suffer as a murderer or a thief or an evildoer or as a meddler” (4:15).

“You, O Lord, will keep them; you will guard us from this generation forever. On every side the wicked prowl, as vileness is exalted among the children of man” (Psalm 12:7-8).

How many of these conducts are you engaged in? Hopefully, not many, but has the devil packed it in and gone away?

We pray in this petition that God would guard and keep us so that the devil, the world, and our sinful nature may not deceive us or mislead us into false belief, despair, and other great shame and vice. Although we are attacked by these things, we pray that we may finally overcome them and win the victory. (Small Catechism, Lord's Prayer, Sixth Petition).

Bible Blinders... Things we assume from living in our times that were not true in Bible times

Individualism

Bible Blinder: In American individualism, “you” is singular. In fact, there is no singular “you” in 1 Peter. “You” is always plural. “All y’all” in the Church.

Related to this deception is our American view of personal rights.

- *We hold these Truths to be self-evident, that all Men are created equal, that they are endowed by their Creator with certain unalienable Rights, that among these are Life, Liberty, and the Pursuit of Happiness—That to secure these Rights, Governments are instituted among Men...* (Declaration of Independence, Preamble)
- *The enumeration in the Constitution, of certain rights, shall not be construed to deny or disparage others retained by the people. (The Constitution of the United States, Amendment IX)*

Damage from this deception

- If “you” is singular, I can decide if what is said suits me. I sit in judgment of God’s Word. I can even pick my gender!
- If “you” is singular, I’m not bound to others, especially to other members of my congregation. It is a voluntary association. My will be done.
 - Theologically, this is “man turned in on himself,” sin against the First Commandment.
 - Sociologically, hyper-individualism is destroying our society...and weakening congregations.

“**Individualism** tends to weaken mediating power centers that stand between the individual and the nation as a whole—from families to local communities (including local governments), (and) religious institutions.... In their place, it strengthens individuals, on the one hand, and a **central government**, on the other, since such a government is most able to treat individuals equally by treating them all impersonally. For this reason, a hyper-individualist culture is likely to be governed by a hyper-centralized government, and each is likely to exacerbate the worst inclinations of the other.” (Yuval Levin, *The Fractured Republic*)

1 Peter – Christians are individuals who humbly see themselves as together in the church to be in community and serve others.

- “You” is always plural in 1 Peter, “all y’all. We in the congregation are all in this together!
- “I’m active with you in the congregation because **God has called us.**” While America views congregational participation as voluntary, Christians do not.

- 1:15 – “He who called you is holy.”
 - 2:9 – “called you out of darkness into his marvelous light”
 - 2:21- “To this you have been called, because Christ also suffered for you, leaving you an example.”
 - 3:6 – “As Sarah obeyed Abraham, calling him ‘Lord.’” (This does not illustrate the call to the congregation but does illustrate willing submission.)
 - 3:9 – “To this you were called, that you may inherit a blessing.”
 - 5:10 – “After you have suffered a little while, the God of all grace, who has called you to his eternal glory in Christ...”
- In place of American rights, which people in the Roman Empire could not imagine, Peter urges **willing submission to all people, just as our Lord submitted Himself and now is exalted overall.**
 - 2:13 – Be subject for the Lord’s sake to every human creature (not “every human institution”).
 - 2:18 – “Slaves (not “servants”), be subject to your masters”
 - 3:1 – “Wives, be subject to your own husbands”
 - 5:5 – “You who are younger, be subject to the elders”
 - BECAUSE 3:22 – “Jesus Christ...has gone into heaven and is at the right hand of God, with angels, authorities, and powers having been subjected to him.”

NOTE: Submission to another person offends American sensibilities, but a Roman in the first century wouldn’t have been upset. The Roman Empire was a highly stratified society and everyone was in a position of submission to a person higher up, except for the emperor himself.

“Church”

Bible Blinder: *What images come to mind when you hear the word ‘church’?*

Damage from this deception

- We regard the church as a human institution, about God but not unique from other institutions.
- Ministry programs and business plans easily dominate how we approach the business of corporate church.
- The focal point of church life is easily limited to the Sunday sanctuary to the exclusion of Christian vocation in home, at work, and in community.
- People outside the church yearning for authenticity see our hypocrisies. This is especially true of younger people who are disaffected and leaving the church. Cf. *unAmerican* and *You Lost Me*

1 Peter - house churches

- What we call the “church” began as a sect within Judaism
 - “People of the Way” (Acts 9:2; 19:9, 23; 22:4; 24:14, 22)
 - “Sect of the Nazarenes (Acts 23:5; 26:28. Jesus is identified as a Nazarene, from Nazareth: Matthew 2:23; 26:71; Mark 1:24; 10:47; 14:67; 16:6; Luke 4:34; 18:37; 24:19; John 18:5; 19:19; Acts 2:22; 3:6; 4:10; 6:14; 22:8; 24:5; 26:9).
 - “Christian” (Acts 11:26)
- “The first believers met together in the private homes of individuals.... The gathering of Christian believers in private homes (or homes renovated for the purpose of Christian gatherings) continued to be the norm until the early decades of the fourth century when Constantine began erecting the first Christian Basilicas. For almost three hundred years the believers met in homes, not in synagogues or edifices constructed for the sole purpose of religious assembly.” (Bradley Blue, “Acts and the House Church,” in *The Book of Acts in Its First Century Setting*, II, 120-121)

➤ 2:4-5 “As you come to him, a living stone rejected by men but in the sight of God chosen and precious, you yourselves like living stones are being built up as a spiritual **house**, to be a holy priesthood, to offer spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ.”

➤ 4:8-11 “Above all, keep loving one another earnestly, since love covers a multitude of sins. Show hospitality to one another without grumbling. As each has received a gift, use it to serve one another as good stewards of God’s varied grace: whoever speaks, as one who speaks oracles of God; whoever serves, as one who serves by the strength that God supplies—in order that in everything God may be glorified through Jesus Christ. To him belong glory and dominion forever and ever. Amen.”

➤ 4:17 “It is time for judgment to begin at the **household** of God.”

➤ 5:1 “So I exhort the **elders** among you...” *Not clergy as we know them today, but the male head of the family, pater familiae.*

Note: The “Priesthood of All Believers” is a fine biblical teaching, but it is not in 1 Peter.

Word of God

Bible Blinder: *What image comes to mind when you hear “the Word of God”?*

- No New Testament when Peter wrote
- Only 10-15% of the population of the Roman Empire was literate (Harry Gamble, *Books and Readers in the Early Church: A History of Early Christian Texts*. New Haven, Yale. 1995)
- “Faith comes from hearing, and hearing through the word of Christ” (Romans 10:17)
- The list of peoples who heard Peter preach at Pentecost included Jewish visitors from Cappadocia, Pontus, Asia, provinces to which Peter wrote his first epistle (Acts 2:9; 1Peter 1:1)

Damage from this deception:

- We can view the Old Testament as mainly old, historical documents in times before Christ. The danger is that we do not esteem the OT as a Christian testament, just as the NT is a Christian testament. *Novum testamentum in vetere latet; Vetus testamentum in novo patet.* The NT is concealed in the Old; the OT is revealed in the New.”
- The Word of God becomes a resource book of spiritual knowledge.
- We lose an appreciation for the efficacy of God’s Word (cf. Romans 1:16; Isaiah 55:10-11)

1 Peter – The Word gives new birth and nurtures us unto salvation

- Believers are “Gospeled,” the Word is spoken and preached. 1:12 – “It was revealed to them (OT prophets) that they were serving not themselves but you, in the things that have now been announced to you through those who **preached** the good news to you by the Holy Spirit sent from heaven.”
- 1:23-25 – “²³ You have been born again, not of perishable seed but of imperishable, through the living and abiding word of God; ²⁴ for ‘All flesh is like grass and all its glory like the flower of grass. The grass withers, and the flower falls, but the word of the Lord remains forever.’ ²⁵ And this word is the good news that was **preached** to you.”
- 2:2 – “Like newborn infants, long for the pure spiritual milk, that by it you may grow up into salvation”

Viva vox Evangelii, the living voice of the Gospel.
Martin Luther: Church is God's "mouth house," not "quill house."

Imagine two evangelism scenarios. Two faithful church members are asked at work something about their faith. One has the Bible in head and heart and can give an immediate answer (cf. 3:15). The other, though a true believer, says, "Let me ask my pastor." Which one is likely to be more effective?

Almighty God, grant to Your Church Your Holy Spirit and the wisdom that comes down from above, that Your Word may not be bound but have free course and be preached to the joy and edifying of Christ's holy people, that in steadfast faith we may serve You and, in the confession of Your name, abide unto the end; through Jesus Christ, our Lord.

Religion

Bible Blinder: Similarity of religious beliefs and practices then and now

Religion for most Romans was not...

NOT about one Supreme Being, but many spirits and gods. For example, Acts 17:22-34
NOT creedal. Conflicting ideas were no problem. The idea of a catechism would have befuddled the average Roman.

NOT about personal salvation. Forgiveness for sins was not what religion was about.

NOT about guilt/forgiveness (chief article of the Church)

NOT about eternity. *Carpe diem*, seize the day. You don't want to go to the underworld, Hades.

Roman religion could be personal but NOT for personal devotion. *Portals of Prayer?*

NOT how-to live-in society (ethics)

Damage from this deception: Not knowing how vastly different Greco-Roman religion was, we can't appreciate what our brothers and sisters in faith went through. If we don't try to imagine what it was like to be in their shoes, we may well miss points of Peter's teaching. E.g. evangelism.

Dr. Mary Beard: *Rome: Empire without Limits* (BBC Documentary).

A list of topics Dr. Beard addresses:

1. "Temples were everywhere."
2. Polytheism.
3. Quid pro Quo.
4. Sacrifice.
5. "Religion and politics were bound up together."
6. "A world full of gods"
7. New gods, like Mithras from Persia.
8. Monotheism, especially Judaism.
9. "Christianity flew in the face of what Romans had traditionally thought religious was all about."

Citizenship and Government

Bible Blinder: Our constitutional rights were their rights.

Damage from this deception:

- We make easy judgments about what “they should have done,” “what we would do.
- Just like the harm from individualism versus the whole body of Christ, not knowing the differences in citizenship and government from their time to ours is self-centered.
- Our ignorance hinders extracting the most important lessons from 1 Peter for our own time and national situation.
- We fail to think of the universal church, around the world today and through time. Again, self-centered. “Knowing that the same kinds of suffering are being experienced by your brotherhood throughout the world” (1 Peter 5:9).

The First Amendment and the “establishment of religion”

Congress shall make no law respecting an establishment of religion, or prohibiting the free exercise thereof; or abridging the freedom of speech, or of the press; or the right of the people peaceably to assemble, and to petition the Government for a redress of grievances.

There was “an establishment of religion” in the first century Roman Empire but it was nothing like “church” as we know it. In some ways, first century Roman empire was like an Islamic nation today. “Religion and politics were bound up together” (Beard). A first-century Roman could not comprehend the “separation” of church and state.

The Fourteenth Amendment: Citizenship and “Due Process of Law”

All persons born or naturalized in the United States, and subject to the jurisdiction thereof, are citizens of the United States and of the State wherein they reside. No State shall make or enforce any law which shall abridge the privileges or immunities of citizens of the United States; nor shall any State deprive any person of life, liberty, or property, without due process of law; nor deny to any person within its jurisdiction the equal protection of the laws. Ratified July 9, 1868.

Note: views of slavery

Citizenship

Historically citizenship by *birth* was only to people born in the city of Rome. By the first century B.C. it was extended to all in Italy. It was often given to soldiers upon retirement. A slave could purchase his freedom or have it given to him by his master. In such a case, the slave, now a freedman, was still obligated to his former master. In **212 A.D.** the Emperor Caracalla extended citizenship to all within the Empire. (*Constitutio Antoniniana*)

The Roman Empire was a highly stratified society. Mary Beard pictures it as a triangle. Starting at the top and working down to the lowest levels:

- The emperor and his extended family.
- Senators and their families, about 600.
- Knights (*equites*) and their families, thousands.
- Roman citizens who were not involved in government
- Free non-citizens and slaves
- People of other nationalities

Factoid about emperors: Rome had 77 emperors from 27 BC to 476 AD. “18 (23.4%) of them held sway during the Early Empire (27 BC–AD 193, 220 years)... On the average emperors in the Early Empire ruled for a longer period (12.7 years as against 6.0 years), and died slightly later (53.4 years as against 46.0 years)

than subsequent emperors. During the Early Empire 55.6% of the emperors died of natural causes or illness” (*Acta Theologica Supplementum* 7, 2005)

Assuming 1 Peter was written by the apostle, most commentators assign it to the reign of Nero, 54-68 A.D.

1 Peter’s recipients probably included Roman citizens. Cf. Paul, Acts 22:28 – “The tribune answered, ‘I bought this citizenship for a large sum.’ Paul said, ‘But I am a citizen by birth.’” Most of the recipients were probably Jews or some Gentiles who were “god fearers,” attracted to Judaism or true Gentiles. Jews had been in these provinces since the 6th century B.C.

- 1 Peter 1:1 – “Peter, an apostle of Jesus Christ, to those who are elect exiles of the Dispersion in Pontus, Galatia, Cappadocia, Asia, and Bithynia.”
- 1 Peter 2:11 – “I urge you as sojourners and exiles.”
- Cf. Genesis 23:4 – Abraham says, “I am a stranger and sojourner among you.”
- Cf. Psalm 39:12 – “I am a sojourner with you, a guest, like all my fathers.”

Exiles, sojourners: These were recognized terms, denoting people from other lands who were living permanently in Asia Minor or who were there for shorter periods of time. Jews had been in Asia Minor since the 6th century B.C.

“Due Process”

Peter’s hearers did not know our due process. Pliny the Younger, governor of Bithynia, to Emperor Trajan, c. 112 AD: “This is the course that I have adopted in the case of those brought before me as Christians. ***I ask them if they are Christians. If they admit it, I repeat the question a second and a third time, threatening capital punishment; if they persist, I sentence them to death.*** For I do not doubt that, whatever kind of crime it may be to which they have confessed, their pertinacity and inflexible obstinacy should certainly be punished. There were others who displayed a like madness and whom I reserved to be sent to Rome, since they were Roman citizens. Thereupon the usual result follow; the very fact of my dealing with the question led to a wider spread of the charge, and a great variety of cases were brought before me. An anonymous pamphlet was issued, containing many names. All who denied that they were or had been Christians I considered should be discharged, because they called upon the gods at my dictation and did reverence, with incense and wine, to your image...”

Note: Suspicion of sedition; informers (*delatores*) “Truth is lacking, and he who departs from evil makes himself a prey” (Isaiah 59:15)

Paul: “I appeal to Caesar” (Acts 25:11). Cf. Philo of Alexandria, *Legatio ad Gaius*, 42-41 BC

1 Peter 2:13-17 “¹³Be subject for the Lord’s sake to every human creature (not “human institution” as ESV), whether it be to the emperor as supreme, ¹⁴or to governors as sent by him to punish those who do evil and to praise those who do good. ¹⁵For this is the will of God, that by doing good you should put to silence the ignorance of foolish people. ¹⁶Live as people who are free, not using your freedom as a cover-up for evil, but living as servants of God. ¹⁷Honor everyone. Love the brotherhood. Fear God. Honor the emperor.”

- “Human creature.” There is no precedent in Greek for translating “institution.” Peter’s point is to lower yourself before anyone you meet.
- “For the Lord’s sake” Everyone in Roman society had to be submissive. Peter’s point is to be submissive “for the Lord’s sake,” because of Jesus’ example.
- “Governors sent out by him.” The emperor or Senate sent their own out to rule the provinces, usually for a year at a time. These governors did not have a large staff. There was no civil service as we have today.
- “Punish...praise.” Cf. Romans 13:1-7

- “Live as people who are free.” This is the freedom of the Gospel, but it is to be used in humble submission and service for the good of others.
- “Love the brotherhood” Probably means the bring the Gospel and oversee the churches.
- “Honor the emperor,” but don’t worship him.

Shame and Honor

Bible Blinder: Unlike the other Bible blinders we’ve looked at, shame and honor does not interfere with our reading Scripture. Instead, our focus on right and wrong, sin and forgiveness is a different focus than most of the world uses.

Damage from the Deceit:

- Witness to Jesus dying to forgive our sins does not make sense to 80% of people in the world.

Difference between Guilt/Forgiveness and Shame/Honor

“The majority of shame researchers and clinicians agree that the difference between shame and guilt is best understood as the difference between ‘I am bad’ and ‘I did something bad.’

Guilt = I did something bad.

Shame = I am bad.” (Brene Brown, *Dare to Lead*, 128)

“Shame is the intensely painful feeling or experience of believing that we are flawed and therefore unworthy of love, belonging, and connection. Shame drives two tapes: *Never good enough. Who do you think you are?*”

- “Shame is getting laid off when we’re expecting our first child.
- Shame is hiding my addiction.
- Shame is raging at my kids.
- Shame was my response to seeing my parents’ shame when I came out.
- Shame is covering up a mistake at work and getting caught.
- Shame is failing at my business after my friends invested in it.
- Shame is getting a promotion, then getting demoted six months later because I wasn’t succeeding.
- Shame is my boss calling me a loser in front of our colleagues.
- Shame is watching things change so fast and no longer knowing how and where I can contribute. The fear of being irrelevant is a huge shame trigger that we are not addressing at work” (Brene Brown, *Dare to Lead*, 125-127).

1 Peter: The Christians, most lowly and often shamed and shunned, will soon be honored just as their Lord Jesus who was shamed before men but honored and exalted by God.

- 1 Peter 1:7 “Praise and glory and honor at the revelation of Jesus Christ.”
- 1 Peter 2:4-9 “⁴ As you come to him, a living stone rejected by men but in the sight of God chosen and precious, ⁵ you yourselves like living stones are being built up as a spiritual house, to be a holy priesthood, to offer spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ. ⁶ For it stands in Scripture: ‘Behold, I am laying in Zion a stone, a cornerstone chosen and precious, and whoever believes in him will not be put to shame.’ ⁶ So the honor is for you who believe, but for those who do not believe, ‘The stone that the builders rejected has become the cornerstone,’ ⁸ and “A stone of stumbling, and a rock of offense.’ They stumble because they disobey the word, as they were destined to do.’ (This is not eternal predestination of some people to hell but rather the consequence of their unbelief). ⁹ But you are a chosen race...

Augsburg Confession IV: *Furthermore, it is taught that we cannot obtain forgiveness of sin and righteousness before God through our merit, work, or satisfactions, but that we receive forgiveness of sin and become righteous before God out of grace for Christ's sake through faith when we believe that Christ has suffered for us and that for his sake our sin is forgiven, and righteousness and eternal life are given to us.*

When you honor God, you obey God. When you disobey God, you dishonor God. Hence, forgiveness is necessary in a shame/honor culture.

Vocabulary

Because we're reading 1 Peter almost 2000 years after it was written, we may read more into words in the text than Peter and his hearers knew. Here are some passages where we need to distinguish what the word meant then and what it means now.

- 1:1 – Exiles; 2:11 – Sojourners and exiles. This meant more than our “pilgrimage” to heaven.
- 1:1 – Elect or chosen – The doctrine of election or predestination was not what we know today.
- 1:2 – Trinity – The word did not exist when Peter wrote. Neither did the word “sacrament.”
- 1:2 – Mercy
- 1:3 – Hope
- 1:3 – Born again
- 1:9 – Salvation of your souls
- 1:17 – Judgment
- 1:17 – Fear of God
- 2:13 – Submit
- 2:18 – Servant/Slave

Epistle of Hope

What does that mean?

What that meant in 20th century “Christian” America v what it meant in 1st century Asia Minor or 21st century America

First Peter has been called an epistle of hope, rightly so. “Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ! According to his great mercy, he has caused us to be born again to a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead” (1 Peter 1:3). What exactly is that hope? Decades ago, when America's public culture had a Christian worldview, when the kingdom of God and the kingdom of this world often blended, hope could be in many things. “I hope you get better,” “I hope the children do well,” and so on. Of course, pastors tried to focus that hope, “Hope in God,” (Psalm 42:11), but laser focus was harder when American public life wasn't challenging the church.

Now the church is often on the defensive. So, what does hope mean now? Here's a revealing fact about 1 Peter. This short epistle has only three references to the resurrection of Jesus, but it has, by my count, ten references to Christ's return in glory on judgment day. **Seeing Christ in glory is the object of hope**, not my earthly lot. Even more focused, hope in 1 Peter is not in the resurrection of Jesus. Look closely at the verse quoted above. Our hope is “through” the resurrection of Christ. That is, His resurrection, without which our faith is in vain (1 Corinthians 15:17), has given us birth to hope of heaven, “to an inheritance...kept in heaven for you.” “Set your hope fully on the grace that will be brought to you at the revelation of Jesus Christ” (1 Peter 1:4,13). The church's loss of privilege in American society helps us see our hope, and leads us to pray, “grant that heav'nly minded He make us” (Lutheran Service Book, 617:3).

Part Two: *How Does 1 Peter Present Christ?*

Overview: Peter presents the eternal Christ as now exalted, his exaltation the result of His willing humiliation for the sake of the chosen. Following in His footsteps, He is leading us from our present suffering to exaltation in glory (1:2, 20; 3:18, 22; 5:10).

3, the number of passages that explicitly mention the **resurrection**:

- 1:3 “Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ! According to his great mercy, he has caused us to be born again to a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead.”
- 1:21 “You, who through him are believers in God, who raised him from the dead and gave him glory, so that our faith and hope are in God.”
- 3:21-22 “Baptism...and appeal to God for a good 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 having been subjected to him.”

What is the logic of the resurrection? Why is it so important?

10, the number of passages that directly mention or imply the revealing of Christ in glory.

- 1:5 “Who by God’s power are being guarded through faith for a salvation ready to be revealed in the last time.” (About “salvation,” cf. 1:9. About “last time,” cf. 1:20)
- 1:7 “So that the tested genuineness of your faith—more precious than gold that perishes though it is tested by fire—may be found to result in praise and glory and honor at the revelation of Jesus Christ.”
- 1:9 “...obtaining the outcome of your faith, the salvation of your souls.”
- 1:13 “Therefore, preparing your minds for action, and being sober-minded, set your hope fully on the grace being brought to you by the revelation of Jesus Christ.”
- 2:12 “Keep your conduct among the Gentiles honorable, so that when they speak against you as evildoers, they may see your good deeds and glorify God on the day of visitation.”
- 4:5 “But they will give account to him who is ready to judge the living and the dead.”
- 4:7 “The end of all things is at hand.”
- 4:13 “Rejoice insofar as you share Christ’s sufferings, that you may also rejoice and be glad when his glory is revealed.”
- 4:17 “For it is time for judgment to begin at the household of God; and if it begins with us, what will be the outcome for those who do not obey the gospel of God?”
- 5:4 “And when the chief Shepherd appears, you will receive the unfading crown of glory.”

The State of Humiliation: “As man, Christ did not always or fully use or manifest the divine powers and majesty that were communicated to His human nature. This began with the lowly manner of His incarnation, continued in the manner of His birth and life, and was completed with His death and burial. We call this His state of humiliation.” (*Luther’s Small Catechism with Explanation*, 2017; 183).

In 1 Peter the State of Humiliation is essential and to be remembered (e.g. *eidotes*, “knowing,” in 1:18), *but it is past*.

- **First Christological Passage (1:18-21), CHRIST OUR SAVIOR:** “¹⁸...knowing that you were ransomed from the futile ways inherited from your forefathers, not with perishable things such as silver or gold, ¹⁹ but with the precious blood of Christ, like that of a lamb without blemish or spot. ²⁰ He was foreknown before the foundation of the world but was made manifest in the last times for the sake of you ²¹ who through him are believers in God, who raised him from the dead and gave him glory, so that your faith and hope are in God.”

- “ransomed” recalls either (1) exodus or (2) being freed from slavery
- “Futile ways inherited from your fathers” is life without Christ. Vanity is a Petrine theme.
- “Silver or gold” was valued by Roman society (e.g. Crassus, an extremely wealthy man who was put to death when Parthians poured molten gold down his throat)
- “Like that of a lamb” Passover
- “Without blemish or spot” Purity of Christ. Cf. 3:18, “For Christ also suffered once for sins, the righteous for the unrighteous.”
- “Before the foundation of the world.” The Son is eternal. Cf. 1:2, 10-12.
- “Made manifest in the last times.” The end time has begun. Inaugurated eschatology.
- “Who through him” Christ is mediator, leading us to God. Cf. 3:18

- **Second Christological Passage (2:21-25), CHRIST OUR EXAMPLE:** “²¹ For to this you have been called, because Christ also suffered for you, leaving you an example, so that you might follow in his steps. ²² He committed no sin, neither was deceit found in his mouth. ²³ When he was reviled, he did not revile in return; when he suffered, he did not threaten, but continued entrusting himself to him who judges justly. ²⁴ He himself bore our sins in his body on the tree, that we might die to sin and live to righteousness. By his wounds you have been healed. ²⁵ For you were straying like sheep, but have now returned to the Shepherd and Overseer of your souls.

- “Called” 1:15; 2:9, 21; 3:6, 9; 5:10
- “Leaving you an example.” The Greek word described a stencil that helped children learn how to make letters.
- “Deceit,” “revile,” “threaten.” If you have little or no physical power against someone who treats you unjustly, it’s natural to “lip off.” This would have been especially true for slaves. Cf. 2:1. This Christological passage is filled with quotations from Isaiah 53.
- “Judges justly.” Present tense. Cf. 1:17, 4:17. God is already judging the world. The Last Day will be the definitive revelation of God’s justice, salvation for those who believe (1:9) and condemnation for those who do not (4:5).
- “Shepherd” Jesus. Cf. 5:4

In addition to the first two Christological passages, the following verses also explicitly mention or intimate the **Passion**:

- 1:2 The eternal will of God that Christ would become a covenant sacrifice
- 1:3 “from the dead”
- 1:11 “sufferings (and subsequent glory) of Christ”
- 2:4 The passion is not specifically mentioned but is understood in the rejection of Christ.
- 3:18 Beginning of third Christological passage, followed by Peter’s application
- 4:13 Sharing in the sufferings of Christ

The State of Exaltation: “Jesus, who remains true man, manifests the divine attributes communicated to Him in His incarnation. His power and majesty are manifested fully and constantly in His victorious descent into hell, His resurrection from the dead, His ascension into heaven, His present reign at the right hand of God, and His future return for judgment. We call this His state of exaltation.” (*Luther’s Small Catechism with Explanation*, 2017; 185).

Christ’s State of Humiliation is past, but the State of Exaltation is NOW!

- **Third Christological Passage** (3:18-19, the suffering and vindication of Christ, with Peter’s application to his hearers, 20-22). **CHRIST FROM SUFFERING TO EXALALTATION:** “¹⁸For Christ also suffered once for sins, 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, ¹⁹ in which he went and proclaimed to the spirits in prison, ²⁰because they formerly did not obey, when God’s patience waiting in the days of Noah, while the ark was being prepared, in which a few, that is, eight persons, were brought safely through water. ²¹Baptism, which corresponds to this, now saves you, not as a removal of dirt from the body but as an appeal to God for a good conscience, through the resurrection of Jesus Christ, ²² who has gone into heaven and is at the right hand of God, with angels, authorities, and powers having been subjected to him.” 1 Peter presents Christ as now at the right hand of God and soon to be revealed to our sight in glory.
 - “Christ also suffered once for sins” Cf. Hebrews 10:2
 - “That he might bring us to God.” Our mediator. “No one comes to the Father except through me” (John 14:6).
 - “Put to death in the flesh but made alive in the spirit” Christ goes from State of Humiliation to State of Exaltation
 - “To the spirits in prison” The “giants” of Genesis 6:1-4. According to the apocryphal Book of Enoch (more known in Peter’s day than now), the giants were condemned but hoped that God would let them out of their prison. God did not. The next verses in Genesis, 6:5 through 9:28, tell of Noah and the flood. Noah was a cultural figure in Asia Minor (cf. Martin Luther in Germany.)
 - “Baptism” More than a symbol.
 - “An appeal to God for/of a good conscience.” Commentators have various interpretations, but most consistent with 1 Peter is that Baptism lets us come before God with a clean conscience. “Appeal” was part of Roman contractual law.
 - Ascension, right hand, Lord over all. Cf. Colossians 1:15-20.

How does 1 Peter present Christ in relation to God the Father?

SON “Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ,” 1:3 The word “**son**” is only used once in 1 Peter, in 5:13 about John Mark. It is not used of Jesus but is a logical inference from “Father of our Lord Jesus Christ.” Note that the first person of the Trinity is a begetting Father, not only begetting his Son, “our Lord Jesus Christ,” but also begetting the recipients of the epistle through the resurrection (a new birth to life) of Christ (1:3, 14, 23).

MEDIATOR The person and work of Christ mediates between God and mankind. He brings us to God through faith now and into heavenly glory at the Last Day. Prepositions help illustrate this.

- The Father’s abundant mercies have given new birth *through, dia*, the resurrection of Christ (1:3).
- “*through, dia*, him (you are believers in God)” (1:21)

- The household of faith offers “acceptable sacrifices *through, dia*, Jesus Christ (2:5).
- The many aspects of congregational life are that “God might be glorified *through, dia*, Jesus Christ” (4:11).
- Christ is now “*at, en*, the right hand of God” (3:22).
- And, God has called the recipients “to his eternal glory” *by, en*, Christ (5:10).

Also: Christ died “that he might bring us to God” (3:18)

Christ is clearly God (see note on *kyrios* at 1:3. *Kyrios, Lord*, is used for God in the Septuagint, the Greek translation of the Old Testament) but is presented as “the mediator between God and man” (1 Timothy 2:5).

Note: The epistle so emphatically puts Christ before our eyes that we might miss the dominance of God, God the Father who looms over the work of Christ and the believers. Peter uses *Pater* (Father) three times for God (in relation to Christ, 1:2, 3, and in relation to the hearers, 1:17) but **uses the word *theos* (God)**

38 times.

Note about HEAVEN Our entrance to “the inheritance ...reserved in heaven” is a result of the mercies of God the Father (1:3) through His Son. “Heaven, in the Bible, is not a future destiny but the other, hidden, dimension of our ordinary life—God’s dimension, if you like God made heaven and earth; at the last he will remake both and join them together forever.” (N.T. Wright, *Surprised by Hope*, 19).

“*Heaven is actually a reverent way of speaking about God so that ‘riches in heaven’ simply means ‘riches in God’s presence’... But then, by derivation from this primary meaning, heaven is the place where God’s purposes for the future are stored up. It isn’t where they are meant to stay so that one would need to go to heaven to enjoy them; it is where they are kept safe against the day when they will become a reality on earth.*” (N.T. Wright, *Surprised by Hope*, 151)

How does 1 Peter present Christ in relation to the Holy Spirit?

The Holy Spirit is the sanctifying, “holying” Spirit (1:2), the **Spirit of Christ** working through the prophets (1:11), sent with the word of the Gospel (1:12), which word gives new birth to hope, holiness, and growth (1:3, 23; 2:2). The result is “the Spirit of God and glory rests upon believers” (4:14).

Occurrences of *pneuma*, “spirit” in 1 Peter

- 1:2 – Holy Spirit
- 1:11 – Spirit of (pre-incarnate Christ)
- 1:12 – Spirit now sent from heaven with the Gospel of Christ
- (3:4 – Human spirit)
- (3:18 – Probably means when Christ had come alive after being dead. Temporal)
- (3:19 – Demons of Genesis 6 in “prison”)
- (4:6 – Similar to 3:18)

Athanasian Creed ²⁰*The Father is not made nor created nor begotten by anyone.* ²¹*The Son is neither made nor created, but **begotten of the Father alone.*** ²²*The Holy Spirit is of the Father and of the Son, neither made nor created nor begotten, but proceeding...* ²³*And in This Trinity none is before or after another; none is greater or less than another;* ²⁴*but the whole three persons are coeternal with each other and coequal, so that in all things, as has been stated above, the Trinity in Unity and the Unity in Trinity is to be worshipped.*

Summary of 1 Peter’s Christology:

Before creating the world, the Father's love ordained the covenant sacrifice of his Son (1:2, 20), the Just One for the unjust (3:18), to bring us to God (3:18).

This eternal plan was manifest by the appearance of Christ "at the end of times" (1:20). In his suffering for us, unjust sinners, the rejected Jesus entrusted himself to the Father who judges (present tense, 1:17) justly (2:23). (If the Father's just judgment didn't accept Christ's substitutionary sacrifice, the builders' rejection of Christ would be affirmed, 2:4) By raising Christ from the dead, God affirms the Christ rejected by men as elect and precious, giving him glory (1:21) and seats him at his right hand (3:22). "The stone the builders rejected has become the head of the corner" (2:7).

All that is history (incarnation, passion [State of Humiliation], resurrection, "descent," ascension [State of Exaltation]). All that remains is Parousia, the exalted Christ at the right hand of the Father revealed to all people.

What happens if the Church does not emphatically present Christ as exalted now and soon to be revealed in glory?

"In short, the modern world quite literally "manages" without God. We can do so much so well by ourselves that there is no need for God, even in his church. Thus **we modern people can be profoundly secular in the midst of explicitly religious activities**. Which explains why so many modern Christian believers are **atheists unawares**. Professing to believe in supernatural realities, they are virtual atheists; whatever they say they believe, they show in practice that they function without practical recourse to the supernatural.... The call to follow Jesus Christ runs directly counter to this deadly modern pressure toward secularization." (Os Guinness, *The Call*, 149)

"Belief that Jesus of Nazareth has been raised from the dead is closely linked in the New Testament with the belief that he has been taken into heaven, where, in the words of the psalm (110:1), he has been seated at the right hand of God.... We are safe in saying **it is impossible to collapse the ascension into the resurrection or vice versa**. You can't get away with the suggesting that "Jesus is raised from the dead" and "Jesus is ascended into heaven" are two ways of saying the same thing.... In fact, some kind of belief in Jesus's ascension has recently been shown to be not just a strange added extra to Christian belief, as has sometimes been thought, but **a central and vital feature without which all sorts of other things start to go demonstrably wrong**.

What happens when you downplay or ignore the ascension? The answer is that **the church expands to fill the vacuum**. If Jesus is more or less identical with the church—if, that is, talk about Jesus can be reduced to talk about his presence within his people rather than his standing over against them and addressing them from elsewhere as their Lord, then we have created a high road to the word kind of triumphalism. This indeed is what twentieth-century English liberalism always tended toward: by compromising with rationalism and trying to maintain that talk of the ascension is really talk about Jesus being with us everywhere, the church effectively presented *itself* (with its structures and hierarchy, its customs and quirks) instead of presenting Jesus as its Lord and itself as the world's servant, as Paul puts it. And the other side of triumphalism is of course despair. If you put all your eggs into the church-equals-Jesus basket, what are you left with when, as Paul says in the same passage, we ourselves are found to be cracked earthenware vessels. If the church identifies its structures, its leadership, its liturgy, its buildings, or anything else with its Lord—and that's what happens if you ignore the ascension or turn it into another way of talking about the Spirit—what do you get? You get, on the one hand, what Shakespeare called 'the insolence of office' and, on the other hand, the despair of late middle age, as people realize it doesn't work. (I see this all too frequently among those who bought heavily into the soggy rationalism of the 1950s and 1960s.) Only when we grasp firmly that the church is *not* Jesus and Jesus is *not* the church—when we grasp, in other words, **the truth of the ascension, that the one who is indeed present with us by the Spirit is also the Lord who is strangely absent, strangely other, strangely different from us and over against us**, the one who tells Mary Magdalene not to cling to him—only then are we rescued from both hollow triumphalism and shallow despair." (N.T. Wright, *Surprised by Hope, Rethinking Heaven, the Resurrection, and the Mission of the Church*, 109. 112-113)

Part III: *Devotional Thoughts, Prayers, and Hymns*

“Master of all things, Lord of all, who hast ordained that our life should be a **pilgrimage** throughout its course, even to the end; so guide and order the conflict within us and our struggle without that what is good may conquer, and all evil be overcome, that all things may be brought into harmony, and God may be all in all. So do Thou guide and govern us, that every day whatsoever betide us, some gain to better things, some more blessed joy in higher things may be ours, that so we, though but weaklings, may yet, God-guided, go from strength to strength, until at last, delivered from that burden of the flesh, through which comes so much struggling, we may complete our pilgrimage in triumph and enter into the land of harmony and eternal peace. Hear us of Thy mercy: through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.” (George Dawson (1821-1876) in *For All the Saints*, III, 348)

“Give us grace, O God, to listen to Thy call, to obey Thy voice and to **follow Thy guiding**. Thou leadest us to pleasures that never fade, to riches which no moth nor rust can corrupt or destroy. Unsearchable riches are in Thy hand: O give us grace to know thy value of them and to covet them. Thou leadest us to fountains of living water: suffer us not to wander or turn aside till we attain unto the pleasures which are at Thy right hand forevermore. Establish, settle, strengthen us, that our goodness may not be like the early dew, which passeth away, but make us steadfast, immovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, forasmuch as we know that our labor is not in vain in the Lord. Grant this, we beseech Thee, for Thy dear Son, Jesus Christ’s sake.” (Ludovicus Vives, 1492-1540, in *For All the Saints*, III, 294)

“When the present world’s life is compared with Christ’s life and doctrine, we can conclude that most of the world’s life is contrary to Christ. What else is the worldly life but greed, concern for security, lust of the flesh and eye, and prideful living? This, now, is the world: great earthly honor, wide reputation, a big name, disloyalty, contention, war, unchastity, enmity, curiosity in word and work, fraud, falseness, and calumny. In short, the lives of world-children are today nothing but world-love, self-love, vain-glory, and self-seeking.

“Contrariwise, Christ’s life is nothing else but pure sincere love of God and neighbor, friendliness, meekness, humility, patience, loyalty to the death, mercy, righteousness, truth, purity, holiness, contempt for the world and its lust and wealth, denial of self, a steady cross, tribulation and affliction, continual search for God’s kingdom, and a fervent desire to fulfill God’s will.

“Where are true Christians? They are but a small flock in a little vineyard cottage. Only God know where they are. Yet Christ dwells with them and among them until the world’s end.” (*Devotions and Prayers of Johann Arndt*, 22).

“O God our Father, help us to a deeper trust in the life everlasting. May we feel that this love which is now, ever shall be; this robe of the flesh is Thy gift to Thy child, and, when it is worn out, Thou wilt clothe him again; this work of life is the work Thou hast given us to do, and , when it is done, Thou wilt give us more; this love, that makes all our life so glad, flows from Thee, for Thou art love, and we shall love forever. Help us to feel how, day by day, we see some dim shadow of the eternal day that will break upon us at the last. May the Gospel of Thy Son, the whisper of Thy Spirit, unite to make our faith in the life to come, strong and clear; then shall we be glad when Thou shalt call us, and enter into Thy glory in Jesus Christ. Amen.” (Robert Collyer, 1823-1912, in *For All the Saints*, III, 308)

Church of God, elect and glorious, / Holy nation, chosen race;
Called as God's own special people, / Royal priests and heirs of grace:
Know the purpose of your calling, / Show to all His mighty deeds;
Tell of love that knows no limits, / Grace that meets all human needs.

God has called you out of darkness / Into His most marv'lous light;
Brought His truth to life within you, / Turned your blindness into sight.
Let your light so shine around you / That God's name is glorified
And all find fresh hope and purpose / In Christ Jesus crucified.

Once you were an alien people, / Strangers to God's heart of love;
But He brought you home in mercy, / Citizens of heav'n above.
Let His love flow out to others, / Let them feel a Father's care;
That they too many know His welcome / And His countless blessings share.
(*Lutheran Service Book*, 646:1-3)

But God had seen my wretched state / Before the world's foundation (1 Peter 1:20),
And mindful of His mercies great, / He planned for my salvation (1:2).
He turned to me a father's heart (1:2-3); / He did not choose the easy part / But gave His dearest treasure.

God said to His beloved Son: / "It's time to have compassion.
Then go, bright jewel of My crown (1:20), / And bring to all salvation (1:9).
From sin and sorrow set them free; / Slay better death for them that they / May live with You forever"
(1:18-21)

The Son obeyed (1:2) His Father's will, / Was born of virgin mother;
And God's good pleasure to fulfill, / He came to be my brother.
His royal pow'r disguised He bore; / A servant's form, like mine, He wore (2:18-25)
To lead the devil captive.

"Now to My Father I depart, / From earth to heav'n ascending (3:21-22),
And, heav'n'ly wisdom to impart, / The Holy Spirit sending (1:12);
In trouble He will comfort you / And teach you always to be true
And into truth shall guide you (1:22). (*Lutheran Service Book*, 556: 4-6, 9)

Pardon for sin and a peace that endureth, / Thine own dear presence to cheer and to guide;
Strength for today and bright hope for tomorrow, / Blessings all mine, with ten thousand beside!
Great is Thy faithfulness! Great is Thy faithfulness! / Morning by morning new mercies (1:2-3) I see;
All I have needed Thy hand hath provided; / Great is Thy faithfulness, Lord unto me!
(*Lutheran Service Book*, 809:3)