

# Do Not Be Surprised at the Fiery Ordeal Among You

An Expositional Journey Through 1Peter

**1 Peter 1:1-2**

1 Introduction, Part 1

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August 27, 2017

## **1Peter 1:1-2**

**1 Peter, an apostle of Jesus Christ, To those who reside as aliens, scattered throughout Pontus, Galatia, Cappadocia, Asia, and Bithynia, who are chosen<sup>2</sup> according to the foreknowledge of God the Father, by the sanctifying work of the Spirit, to obey Jesus Christ and be sprinkled with His blood: May grace and peace be yours in the fullest measure.**

To the Glory of God

Now beginning today, I am going to lead this Church through a verse by verse “journey” through the Epistle of **1 Peter**. And it is always good to refresh our minds as to *why* this method of preaching is so important. You see, the one, single, foremost objective in our own personal lives and in our corporate life as a physical and local part of the one, holy, universal, and apostolic Church is to know God and to love God and to enjoy God forever. So we seek to worship God in both Spirit and in Truth. And the only way that any of us has to do that is through our glad submission to what He has revealed in sacred Scripture. We do not worship God by engaging in rebellion or by celebrating those who do. And so, delighting in God by obeying and submitting to all that He has said will bring Him Glory and will display Jesus Christ as the supreme Treasure of the Universe.

We must understand that Preaching is not “conversation”. Preaching is not a “discussion” about religious issues. Preaching is the authoritative “heralding” of the glorious Gospel by men who are broken, contrite, and who tremble at God’s Word.

So, the reality is that there is simply no way for anyone to truly delight in God and obey Him without first *knowing* and *understanding* and *comprehending* what God the Holy Spirit has revealed in every verse of every chapter of the 66 Books of the Holy Bible. And “expositional preaching/teaching” is the only way that is accomplished. And so, for that reason, going verse by verse through an entire Book and explaining what those words mean, and how we may apply what those words say to our own lives, is *especially* glorifying to God and edifying to believers.

Now I have long believed that if Jesus is not worthy of my joyful obedience, then He is not worthy of my passionate love. So, to say, “I love God”, and then to live as though I don’t know Him or enjoy Him is schizophrenic at best, and probably indicative that I have not experienced the miracle of the New Birth. So, if Jesus *is* worthy of my love, then He is *infinitely* worthy and deserving that I live my life by struggling against the lusts of my flesh, by the Power of the Holy Spirit, to be found humbly and joyfully submitted to what Jesus expects out of me, all to the Glory of God.

So, *everything* that I am seeking to accomplish by going through every single verse of this Epistle is bathed in a deep and profound love for my Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ.

And that means that I’m not simply trying to “get smart” about the Bible so I can win arguments. My goal is also *not* to be an academic or an intellectual. I have no desire to be a Pharisee. My goal is to be a faithful, fruitful, and busy *bond-slave* of Jesus Christ. And I don’t think I can do that *effectively* by remaining ignorant about what God took the time to reveal in Scripture. So, my feeble effort in this Sermon Series will be designed to ask and answer two questions:

1. What did Peter teach in this Epistle?
2. What does obedience to what Peter taught look like?

So, each week, for the next several months, we will go deep into the actual words that God the Holy Spirit moved upon the Apostle to write down, and we will take them apart and find out what they mean. But, there *will* be some interruptions in this journey. For example, on the last week of October and the first week of November, I will seek to obey **Hebrews 13:7** that says:

**Remember those who led you, who spoke the word of God to you; and considering the result of their conduct, imitate their faith.**

... and so, on those two Lord's Days, I will preach a biography of one of the fathers of the Church. And beginning with the first week of January, we will take a "vacation" from our journey through **1 Peter** and we will examine a particular issue that is vital to the people of the Covenant of Peace Church to begin the new year.

Now the first inspired Letter from the Apostle Peter was written to show us what living as "scattered aliens" looks like. This Book is God's Word to believers to teach them *how* to live in a city or a region or a country that is *increasingly* becoming hostile to God and to Jesus and to the people of the Church *because* of their rejection of the Divine Truth of Scripture.

And so, this Book was *very* relevant to the believers who lived in the second half of the 1<sup>st</sup> Century in the Middle East and those areas dominated by the Roman Empire who were undergoing intense persecution. But this Epistle is also very relevant to believers who live in the first half of the 21<sup>st</sup> Century in the United States of America that is rushing as fast as possible to throw away 230 years of history and precedent, and adopt a way of life and a world-view that is hostile to the Scriptures and is pagan in origin. So, in a nutshell, this Epistle was very important 2,000 years ago and it is very important today.

Now this Book is called "**The Epistle of 1 Peter**". And an "Epistle" is an inspired letter from an Apostle or someone chosen by an Apostle. Now, before the Epistles were written, the "teaching Books", or the *didactic* Books of the Scriptures, were the first five Books of Moses. Didactic Books are the Books that teach God's people what Holiness and Righteousness and Obedience looks like. So, the didactic Books teach us what loving and serving God really is.

As Jesus completed His earthly Ministry and ascended up into Heaven, the four Gospel records were written to teach us Who Jesus is and what Jesus said and what Jesus did while He was here. **The Book of the Acts of the Apostles** was written by Dr. Luke, under the commission of the Apostle Paul, to give us the diary of the Christian Church during its first thirty-years of existence, while **The Book of the Revelation** is the Apostle John's final Revelation of the glorified Christ.

So, as more and more believers were being born into the Kingdom of God, the Apostles saw the need to have more in-depth teaching concerning Holiness and Service and Obedience. And they also saw the need to:

- ✓ Expound on all that Jesus was and said and did while He was here.
- ✓ Explain how the glorious New Covenant was not a new religion, but a fulfillment of the Old or the First Covenant.
- ✓ Reveal what specific Old Testament Scriptures meant.

... and the result of this Effort by the Apostles was 21 inspired Letters that were designed to be read and studied and understood and obeyed by the people of the Church:

- ✓ 3 from the Apostle John
- ✓ 13 from the Apostle Paul
- ✓ 1 from an unknown writer
- ✓ 1 from James
- ✓ 1 from Jude
- ✓ 2 from the Apostle Peter

Now, normally, "letters" are written to one person, while "Epistles" are written to larger groups of people. And so, these 21 Epistles became known as the "memoirs of the Apostles"<sup>1</sup>, and the early fathers of Christianity recommended that they be read and taught and learned by the people of the Church.

Now, if my calculations are correct, Jesus was born around 4 BC and lived on earth approximately 33-1/2 years before He was crucified. So, the Resurrection and Ascension of Jesus and the birth of the Church would have happened around 29 AD. The Church historian, Eusebius says that the **Gospel of Matthew** was written by the Apostle Levi around 41 AD, about twelve years later. James wrote his Epistle around 44 AD, while Paul wrote **Galatians** around 49 AD. And then from 50AD until 94 AD, the other 24 Books were written.

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<sup>1</sup> Justin Martyr; *First Apology* and *Dialogue with Trypho*; 155AD

So, it just isn't true, as some teach, that people passed down the New Testament by word of mouth for many generations before writing them down. As we found out during our "journey" through the Gospel of Luke, Dr. Luke, who penned down his Gospel Record around 60 AD, actually interviewed eyewitnesses of the events that he recorded, who were still alive at that point, including Mary, the mother of Jesus.

Now, keep in mind that during the early days of the Church, Christianity was an illegal and persecuted religion that was made up primarily of Jews. And many considered Christianity to be nothing more than a variation of Judaism, and a "fad" that would soon fade away. And so, for any self-respecting Jew, to confess Jesus as "Lord" (meaning "Messiah"), and for them to believe that God raised Jesus from the dead, and then for them to *abandon* Pharisaical Judaism and embrace "the Way" (as Christianity was originally called), *guaranteed* their persecution. And it almost certainly meant the loss of their employment, the confiscation of all their worldly goods, some form of imprisonment, and possibly even torture and death. And yet, look what Dr. Luke wrote in **The Acts 5:14**:

**And all the more believers in the Lord, multitudes of men and women, were constantly added to *their number*,**

So, it simply isn't true that people turn away from the Church because they are persecuted, or because the pathway is straight and narrow. No, people leave the Church for the very same reason they just walked off and left Jesus standing in the middle of the road, they aren't saved and they don't love Jesus. Because the saints, who occupied the early Church, were not only willing to be *inconvenienced* by this radical Love in Jesus Christ, but they were willing to suffer and die for it. And nothing has changed in the 21 Centuries that followed. Biblical Christians in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century are *not* those who can work up some form of humanly engineered "commitment". They're *not* people who seek to simply "show-up" on Sunday and "tip their hat" to the Lord. No, genuine Blood-bought sons and daughters of the Lord Christ are those who have been so radically transformed by the miracle of the New Birth that they are eager to live their lives to God's Glory, and they're willing to suffer and die for Jesus Christ.

Now, on October 9, 54 AD, the last ruler of the Julio-Claudian dynasty became the Emperor of the Roman Empire at the age of 16. And his birth name was *Lucius Domitius Ahenobarbus*, but has forever gone down in history simply as "Nero". And Nero has the inglorious distinction of being the man who ordered the martyrdom of both Peter and Paul. According to history, Paul was beheaded and Peter was crucified upside down, because he didn't think he was worthy to die like his Savior. It took four days for Peter to die, and all the while, he was preaching the Gospel to those who stood by.

Nero was the adopted son of the Emperor Claudius, and he assumed the throne of the Roman Empire when his mother murdered his adopted father. And Nero's mother *continued* to play a huge role in the young Emperor's life during the first few years of his reign until he had her murdered. And just thirteen years into his reign, on June 9, 68 AD, Nero committed suicide at the age of 30.

Now like most Roman Emperors, Nero was a highly intelligent, but a very wicked man. And he made his mark as a builder. The Roman Empire expanded considerably under his reign of 13 years and Nero financed his huge building projects by raising taxes on the middle and upper-class citizens, which made them despise him. As a result, there were *many* attempts to assassinate him. And when those plots were discovered, Nero personally participated in their torture and death.

At some point, in or around 60 AD, Nero set about to begin a huge public building project in the capital city of Rome, but he was hindered in this effort because Rome was filled with thousands of small and poorly built houses and buildings all over the city. And for several years, Nero would forcibly evict people out of their own homes to make way for his building projects.

But eviction simply was too slow. And so, on July 19, 64 AD, Nero ordered his people to set the city of Rome on fire. Now, at that time, Rome was a city of very narrow streets and houses and commercial buildings were built very close together. And on both sides of those narrow streets there were high wooden tenements where the people lived. So, once the fires were started, it quickly became a nightmare. The flames rushed down the narrow streets and consumed the wooden buildings like they were kindling. Thousands died.

The fires raged for days, and just as it seemed they would die out, Nero ordered more to be set. According to one Roman historian, Nero found a front row seat in the Tower of Maecenas and watched the raging inferno consume the city of Rome. Some say that Nero was sadistically amused by the flames, and considered them quite lovely, especially late in the evening.

Meanwhile, the citizens of Rome, who were working frantically to save their homes and businesses and families, were purposefully hindered in their efforts because as soon as they made progress on one part of the fire, another one was started.

The people of Rome were totally devastated. And they were outraged. Not only was this a cruel and senseless man-made disaster that killed many thousands of people and ruined them financially, it also devastated them culturally and religiously as well. The Temple of Luna, the Ara Maxima, the great altar, the Temple of Jupiter Stator, the Shrine of Vesta, all the religious elements of their life were destroyed along with many of the idols of the various household gods. So, this was not merely a physical and emotional and financial catastrophe, but it also was a patriotic and religious attack never seen before.

Now remember, this was the capital city of the entire Roman Empire. It was the pride and joy of every self-respecting Roman and the glory of what the Empire had waged so many wars over. And now it lay in smoldering ruins. But, to add insult to injury, the people began to realize that none of their many, many deities had been able to stop it. The historian, Philo, tells us that priests were working overtime, trying to explain it all. After three weeks, 70% of the homes were destroyed, 50% of all businesses were ruined, and tens of thousands of people lay dead or dying, and the stench of burned flesh filled the air.

Now what was amazing was that Nero had spoken often about the "problem" of all the people and their homes getting in the way of his building programs. And so, the Roman people knew that Nero was behind the disaster. So, in order to prevent a revolt that would topple his Empire, Nero needed a scapegoat, and he found it in the despised group of people called "little christs", or "Christians". Nero said the followers of Jesus had set fire to Rome.

Now keep in mind, that for the first 300 years of its existence, Christianity was a persecuted and illegal religion. And during the latter half of the 1<sup>st</sup> Century, Christians were thought of in four ways:

1. As atheists
2. As cannibals
3. As homosexuals
4. As anarchists

The official State-sponsored religion of the Roman Empire of that day was "polytheistic"; they had literally *hundreds* of deities. But, like the Jews, these "Christians" were "monotheistic", meaning they worshipped only one God, a Jewish Rabbi, Who had been crucified and Who supposedly rose from the dead and ascended into Heaven some thirty-five years earlier. So, the polytheistic Romans considered the monotheistic Christians to be "atheists", because they rejected the worship of multiple gods.

And those Christians also talked about "eating the Flesh" and "drinking the Blood" of their Messiah on a regular basis. And Romans knew that only cannibals did that. Also, those followers of Jesus greeted one another with a kiss and embraced one another and spoke often about loving each other, even among the men, so obviously they were perverted.

But what was even worse to the Romans was that Christians talked about the Kingdom that Jesus had established, and that He was coming back to this earth to rule over the entire world. And so, Christians were viewed as political anarchists, who were not loyal to Rome or Caesar, and who sought to overthrow the Government.

Now what really troubled the rulers of the Empire was that by the latter half of the first century, many prominent Governmental dignitaries had embraced Jesus Christ. As we studied, Dr. Luke wrote his Gospel record and the **Book of the Acts** to a man named "Theophilus", who some suggest was high up, not only in politics, but in Caesar's very household. Just four years earlier, when the Apostle Paul wrote his Letter to the saints in Philippi, he said this in **Philippians 4:22**:

**All the saints greet you, especially those of Caesar's household.**



And by 64 AD, many wives of prominent Romans had come to faith in Jesus. And for a woman to act independently of her husband and reject polytheism in order to embrace the one, true, and living God was an insult that knew no equal. Christian wives were routinely condemned as being "non-submissive to their husbands". Also, the Gospel had rescued many hundreds of young people from their sins, and they had become very passionate followers of Jesus. But this meant that families were now divided. And so, Christianity was seen as a fanatical cult that split families apart and gave women the courage to rebel against their husbands.

Now to add insult to injury, as much as the Romans despised and persecuted the Christians, so did the Jews. And early on, some of the most intense persecution against the Church came from the Jews. So, in reality, genuine believers back then had no place to hide, no place of comfort. Everywhere they went there were controversy or abuse or persecution and hardship. Christianity, in general, was looked at as being very radical and very weird, and something that only uneducated and uncultured people would want, while Christians *themselves* were looked down on with great suspicion, as the worst segment in society, who could not be trusted.

So, way before this terrible fire, believers in Jesus were horribly persecuted and ridiculed and mocked. For nearly forty years after the Resurrection, Christians had been isolated and ostracized, and laws were passed to prevent them from holding positions of authority, and to restrict what they could and could not buy and own.

But, now that Nero convinced the people of Rome that these despised atheists, these cannibals, these sexually perverted people, and these low-class anarchists had burned down the capital city of the Roman Empire to kill the Romans so they could take over the Government, great persecution, like had never been seen, rose up against them.

Tacitus, the Roman historian, reported that Nero had Christians rolled in pitch and then set them on fire as they were pierced on high poles, while they were still alive, so he could watch sporting events at night and light up his evening garden parties. Nero is the one, who would order the captured Christians to be sewed into animal skins and then turn hunting dogs and lions and tigers on them to rip them to shreds.

There seemed to be no end to the persecution. It was open season on Christians. Even the Jews were encouraged to join in with the Roman soldiers to hunt believers down and kill them. And so, born-again believers were nailed to crosses. They were hung by the neck and burned alive. Their wives and daughters were abused and their sons made slaves. Christians were imprisoned, racked, seared, broiled, burned, scourged, stoned, decapitated, and hanged. Others were lacerated with red hot knives and some were thrown on the horns of wild bulls.

And it wasn't long before the persecution that started in the capital city of Rome began to spread throughout the entire Empire. And so, great hostility and violence came to the believers in areas like Pontus, Galatia, Cappadocia, Asia and Bithynia. And as the persecution gained strength, believers began to question:

- ✓ Why is this happening?
- ✓ Where is Jesus?
- ✓ Why doesn't He stop it?
- ✓ Is this the end?
- ✓ Has God forgotten us?
- ✓ Are we all going to die?

It is no wonder that many Christians, both then and now, believed that Nero was the "beast" of the **Book of the Revelation**, and that the number "666", the "mark of the beast", was actually "616", and was the name Nero used to identify himself.

So, it was while all of this was going on, in 64 AD, that God the Holy Spirit began to move upon the Apostle Peter to write down this amazing Letter. So, this anointed Treatise was written to give suffering saints hope, to tell believers *why* they are being persecuted, to teach oppressed Christians *how* to respond to what evil men are doing to them, and to encourage these "**scattered aliens**" to remain faithful, even to the point of death. Peter addresses this Epistle:

### **1 Peter 1:1b-2a**

**1 ... To those who reside as aliens, scattered throughout Pontus, Galatia, Cappadocia, Asia, and Bithynia, who are chosen**

**2 according to the foreknowledge of God the Father...**

So, Peter calls these believers “aliens, who have been “scattered” throughout these various regions due to the intensity of the persecution enacted by Nero. And this word “aliens” comes from the Greek word that means: *one who comes from a foreign country into a city or land to reside there by the side of the natives; a stranger; sojourning in a strange place, a foreigner; an alien*<sup>2</sup>

Now Peter was especially helpful to be used by God to encourage the Church during these dark days of suffering. After all, He identifies himself here in verse one as:

**1 Peter 1:1a**  
**Peter, an apostle of Jesus Christ...**

So, just who was Peter? Well, Peter was one of the earliest believers of Jesus, and had personally witnessed Jesus being transfigured, and had actually walked with Jesus on the water.

Peter was born in Bethsaida, which was a province of Galilee, to his father, *John* or *Jonas*. We don't know when he was born or who his mother was. Now it is important to remember that, back in the first century, Israel was an *occupied nation*, governed by the Romans. And as such, there were several languages that were spoken. Very few Jews actually spoke or wrote Hebrew during those days, they mainly spoke Greek or even Aramaic. Their Scriptures, the 39 Books of the Old Testament, were all written in Greek. But Syriac, Aramaic, and Latin, along with Greek, were the dominant languages in Israel during that time. For example, Jesus spoke almost exclusively in Aramaic. And there is reason to believe that Peter spoke primarily in Aramaic as well. So, Peter's name in Syriac was *Shemayon Kepa*, in Hebrew it was *Shimon bar Yona*. But he was normally called *Simeon* or *Simon*. It was Jesus, Himself, Who changed Peter's name to *Cephas* or *Kepa* (Peter) which means: *a small pebble or a small stone*.

Now it was the Apostle Matthew who gave us Peter's conversion testimony in **Matthew 4:18-20**:

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<sup>2</sup> (from Thayer's Greek Lexicon, Electronic Database. Copyright © 2000, 2003, 2006 by Biblsoft, Inc. All rights reserved.)

**18 Now as Jesus was walking by the Sea of Galilee, He saw two brothers, Simon who was called Peter, and Andrew his brother, casting a net into the sea; for they were fishermen.**

**19 And He said to them, "Follow Me, and I will make you fishers of men."**

**20 Immediately they left their nets and followed Him.**

... and it was at *this* point that Peter began following Jesus as one of His "disciples" or students. So, Peter is following Jesus, but his walk is very weak and it is haphazard and it is at a distance. But Jesus knew what He was doing, and so it wasn't long before Peter began to rise among the other disciples into a place of leadership.

The only person mentioned more times in the Gospel records and the **Book of the Acts** than Peter was Jesus. But every time we see a list of the Apostles, Peter's name is always first. Peter spoke up when everyone else was silent, so that tells us that Peter was the spokesman for the entire group of men known as "Apostles". And Jesus referred to Peter as the "protos" or the "first" among the others.

Now we know from the Gospel records that Peter was the disciple with the "foot shaped mouth". He was a very *impulsive* man who spoke before he thought, and was quick to display anger and even violence. He is also the only disciple that Jesus called "*Satan*".

But Peter was also one to display great love and affection and faith toward Jesus. He was the one who ran ahead, asking questions that no one else dared, and quickly blurting out answers when the others remained quiet. So, Peter was the one who would believe when others didn't. For example, Levi gives us this account in **Matthew 14:25-33**:

**25 And in the fourth watch of the night He came to them, walking on the sea.**

**26 When the disciples saw Him walking on the sea, they were terrified, and said, "It is a ghost!" And they cried out in fear.**

**27 But immediately Jesus spoke to them, saying, "Take courage, it is I; do not be afraid."**

**28 Peter said to Him, "Lord, if it is You, command me to come to You on the water."**

**29 And He said, "Come!" And Peter got out of the boat, and walked on the water and came toward Jesus.**

**30** But seeing the wind, he became frightened, and beginning to sink, he cried out, "Lord, save me!"

**31** Immediately Jesus stretched out His hand and took hold of him, and said to him, **"You of little faith, why did you doubt?"**

**32** When they got into the boat, the wind stopped.

**33** And those who were in the boat worshiped Him, saying, "You are certainly God's Son!"

Now some criticize Peter for not having enough faith here, but they forget that he *did* walk on water for a while. And as they find fault with Peter, they need to answer some questions like, *"Why didn't John walk on the water with Jesus? And where was Andrew, Bartholomew, or James?"*

So, even though we might be tempted to see Peter as a bumbling, impulsive man, getting himself in one jam after the other, we must remember that Peter was the one to whom God revealed the identity of Jesus in **Matthew 16**, please go there with me:

#### **Matthew 16:13-19**

**13** Now when Jesus came into the district of Caesarea Philippi, He was asking His disciples, **"Who do people say that the Son of Man is?"**

**14** And they said, "Some *say* John the Baptist; and others, Elijah; but still others, Jeremiah, or one of the prophets."

**15** He said to them, **"But who do you say that I am?"**

**16** Simon Peter answered, "You are the Christ, the Son of the living God."

**17** And Jesus said to him, **"Blessed are you, Simon Barjona, because flesh and blood did not reveal *this* to you, but My Father who is in heaven.**

**18** **"I also say to you that you are Peter, and upon this rock I will build My church; and the gates of Hades will not overpower it.**

**19** **"I will give you the keys of the kingdom of heaven; and whatever you bind on earth shall have been bound in heaven, and whatever you loose on earth shall have been loosed in heaven."**

Now to correctly understand Who Jesus is and who Peter is and what the "Rock" is, on which the Church is built, we must take some time with this Passage. This Passage is key to understanding Christianity itself, and Peter's role in it. Look again at verse 13:

**Now when Jesus came into the district of Caesarea Philippi, He was asking His disciples, "Who do people say that the Son of Man is?"**

So, that is the issue at hand, Who is Jesus? And Who Jesus is has *always* been the issue, it is the issue today, and it will *always* be the issue. Is Jesus God Almighty in human flesh, or is Jesus simply a prophet or a teacher or a "good man" or a moral example or a spiritual concept or a 1<sup>st</sup> Century Jewish rabbi?

This simply cannot be overstated; Who Jesus is is central to whether or not we are saved and forgiven and on our way to Heaven, because Jesus categorically and clearly and repeatedly said He was God. And so, if Jesus was *not* God, then there are only three possible answers:

1. **Jesus was *not* God and He *knew* it, but said He was anyway.** And that makes Jesus to be a deceiver and a false teacher, and someone to reject and condemn, not someone to admire and follow and love.
2. **Jesus was *not* God, but He *thought* He was.** And that makes Jesus to be mentally unstable, and needing medication and probably some therapy. But we should not follow and obey and serve a mentally deranged individual.
3. **Jesus was God.** And that makes Jesus to be *exactly* Who He said He was, and therefore, is entitled to our worship and adoration and obedience. And that means that Salvation is in His Name alone.

But look at how the disciples said that various people were responding to the Question: *Who is Jesus?*

**And they said, "Some *say* John the Baptist; and others, Elijah; but still others, Jeremiah, or one of the prophets."**

So, some people said that Jesus was a resurrected John or Elijah or Jeremiah or some other OT Prophet. Now, I have no doubt that those who said these things were very sincere and probably thought

they were giving Jesus a compliment by equating Him to one of the Old Testament Prophets.

But, in fact, they weren't complimenting Jesus at all, and were actually uttering blasphemy because Jesus categorically said He was God. So, this is all or nothing. Either Jesus is God or we *cannot* trust anything He said or anything He did. And, if Jesus was God, then we *must* trust *everything* He did and *everything* He said. So, now look at how Jesus zeroes into what these men personally thought:

**He said to them, "But who do you say that I am?"**

*"Okay, that is what those other people say about Me, but Who do you say that I am?"* And Matthew tells us that this is when Peter spoke up:

**Simon Peter answered, "You are the Christ, the Son of the living God."**

Now this single Statement of "Who Jesus is" is the very *foundation* of our Salvation and of the Christian Church itself. The only entity on earth that preaches and teaches that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of the living God, is the Christian Church, and the only people who believe that and confess it are Christians. And this is a Truth that must be divinely revealed to the individual. Look what Jesus said next:

**Blessed are you, Simon Barjona, because flesh and blood did not reveal *this* to you, but My Father who is in heaven.**

So, Jesus says here that Peter wasn't using his own cognitive reasoning capabilities here, but that God the Father had sovereignly revealed to Peter Who Jesus is. Now, this is what the Apostle Paul meant when he said:

**1 Corinthians 12:3b**

**... no one can say, "Jesus is Lord," except by the Holy Spirit.**

For any sinful rebel to truly and honestly know Who Jesus is is a Work of God the Holy Spirit in the mind of that individual. And for any fallen child of Adam to confess that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of the

living God, to the point of actually believing it and then acting on it, takes a sovereign and supernatural involvement in that person by God Himself.

So, this is way more than simply repeating a phrase. Believing and confessing Jesus as "Lord" involves two aspects that are different and unique, but which are inseparable:

1. Faith
2. Repentance

Faith and Repentance are two sides of the same coin. To have faith *requires* repentance and to repent *requires* faith. And both of these are *ongoing*. They don't just believe and repent one time. Genuine Christians *keep on* believing, they *keep on* repenting, and they *keep on* loving and forgiving and trusting, all through their life, as they *keep on* growing in the Grace and the Knowledge of God.

There is no such thing as anyone believing in Jesus and *not* turning from sin, and there is no such thing as anyone turning away from sin without belief in Who Jesus is and trust in What Jesus did on our behalf. Believing Who Jesus is, and then that belief becoming so real and so powerful in your life that you then have a "change of mind" to the point that you turn away from sin, is a *requirement* for Salvation.

And down through the years, this simple but profound Truth has been watered down by the leaders of the modern Church to be nothing more than, "*asking Jesus into your heart*". Yet, I pray you can see that Salvation is much more than that.

"Saving Faith", or the type of faith or the type of belief that forgives sinners and makes them righteous, *cannot* exist outside of a Divine Revelation of Who Jesus is. And, when that Revelation becomes real, it will *crush* the pride of rebels, and it will bring them under deep and powerful conviction over their sin. And then that glorious Revelation will empower them to turn from their sin and alter their behavior so that they may honor this Jesus Whom they now believe and trust to be God in human flesh. And this is why Paul said:

**Romans 10:10a**

**for with the heart a person believes, resulting in righteousness ...**



When belief in Who Jesus is does *not* result in obedience or righteousness, then that belief is *not* saving faith, and the individual is deceived about the faith that he thought he had. Now I'm not teaching sinless perfection here, but there must be *some* level of obedience toward what Jesus expects out of us, and there must be a burning desire to obey and follow Jesus, or the individual is not saved.

Salvation comes on the heels on knowing Who Jesus is. And knowing Who Jesus is is a Divine Revelation. Now look what Jesus told Peter next:

**I also say to you that you are Peter, and upon this rock I will build My church; and the gates of Hades will not overpower it.**

Now the man-made Roman religious system teaches that right here Jesus made Peter the "Rock" on which the Church is built. And that is why they have a "pope", and that is why they convey to that pope special authority and power.

But, in reality, Jesus was saying two things here. The "Rock" on which the Christian Church is built is the Divine Revelation of Who Jesus is. And when Jesus changed Shi-mon's name here to "Peter", which in the Aramaic would have been Keppa or Petra, that word means "a stone", which indicates that Peter, as representative or as the spokesman, the protos of the entire group of Apostles, would establish Christianity on the "Rock" of this Divine Revelation.

So, the Church is not built on Peter; the Church is built on the Revelation of Who Jesus is that Peter and the other Apostles would preach. And the Apostle Paul agrees with this as he said in **Ephesians 2:19-20**:

**19 So then you are no longer strangers and aliens, but you are fellow citizens with the saints, and are of God's household,**

**20 having been built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Christ Jesus Himself being the corner *stone*,**

Now this Passage does *not* say that Jesus is the "Foundation" of the Church. No, Paul says here that Jesus is the "Cornerstone" on which the Foundation is laid. The Foundation is the Revelation that *Jesus is the Christ, the Son of the living God*, that was divinely revealed

to Peter, as being the representative of the NT Apostles, which is why Paul lists them first here. And we are to preach that very same Revelation today. Now, the OT Prophets saw Jesus, too, but they only saw Him in shadows and types and symbols, which is why they come second. Now look what Jesus told Peter next:

**I will give you the keys of the kingdom of heaven; and whatever you bind on earth shall have been bound in heaven, and whatever you loose on earth shall have been loosed in heaven.**

Once again, the Roman religious cult teaches that Peter, himself, and each successive pope, has this Power reserved for himself. But, Jesus is not talking about any one man having this Power, but rather that the Divine Revelation, the Rock on which the Church is built, that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of the living God, that Revelation has this kind of Power to "bind" and to loose".

So, here is how that works. No one can be saved, no one can be forgiven and made righteous and go to Heaven, unless and until they believe in the Divine Revelation that Jesus is the Christ the Son of the living God, and that Revelation having such an impact on that person that they turn away from their sin.

And so, as this Revelation is preached and taught to every creature in every nation, those whom God has gifted to be able to believe in the Revelation will be *loosed* from their sins, and they will be "stolen" away from satan's kingdom, and they will be *translated* into the Kingdom of God by the miracle of the New Birth.

But those who refuse to believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of the living God, to the point where they turn away from sin, will remain "bound" in sin and they will remain slaves to sin and captives of the devil. So, Salvation depends on Who Jesus is, and everything hinges on our faith in Who Jesus is being so powerful that we change. There is no Salvation for anyone apart from believing that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of the living God, and that belief empowering him to repent and obey.

Now I need to say one more thing about Peter today. First of all, I am in awe of this man. And nothing that I say should be construed to mean that I am relegating him to second class status. I'm not. Peter was the spokesman for the Apostles. Jesus called him the "protos", or

the "first". He was the natural leader who did more and said more than any Apostle except Paul. So, I greatly admire Peter, which is why I am studying what he wrote.

But all that is a long way off from what you see today in the office of pope. Peter, being the leader of the Apostles, and the pope, having infallibility, are not even in the same universe. And that is why I say this: The office of pope, as we know it today, is a man-made and fabricated position that evolved over time by an apostate religious system that has officially and formally isolated itself from the Authority of sacred Scripture.

And as one who has *not* forgotten the "protest", and as one who has *not* failed to call the Christian Church back to the Book, I ascribe to the concept of "Sola Scriptura" that says that the only infallible commodity on earth is the Scriptures, not any pope or cardinal or bishop or priest or pastor.

And the Truth of the matter is that there is *nothing* in Scripture, no hint, to even suggest that Peter went to Rome for any other purpose other than to die there at the hands of the Romans. There is no verse or passage in any of the inspired 66 Books to even hint that Peter was in the ministry in the Church at Rome at all, much less its leader.

And Peter's Co-Apostle and Co-Laborer in the Gospel, the Apostle Paul, wrote an exhaustive Epistle to the saints in the Church at Rome. And, in Chapter 16, Paul addresses no less than 28 people, and yet Peter is not mentioned a single time. And that is very telling because Paul could not have been more insulting than to name all those people in that one Church, and not send greetings to their spiritual leader.

But the reality is that Paul was not insulting at all, because Peter *wasn't* the immediate leader of the Church that was at Rome. But he *was* a leader. And Peter was an Apostle, and a Pastor of the one, holy, universal, and apostolic Church of the Lord Jesus Christ.

And in the second half of the 1<sup>st</sup> Century, just a few years before his death, God the Holy Spirit moved upon this amazing man to write two inspired Letters, called Epistles. The first one primarily discusses the issue of suffering in the life of faithful believers, while the second one deals primarily with the issue of false teachers.

And God willing, over the next several months, we will look at every word of every verse of every sentence of every chapter of both of these magnificent Books. And the goal will be that through

understanding what God moved upon Peter to write, we will see the Glory of God in the Face of Jesus Christ, and we will be changed into that same Image. So, hold on to your hat, we're going on a journey together that will change all of our lives.

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.