

WEEKEND Edition 12/13 November 2022 "Elect Exiles" (1 Peter 1:1)

Good morning my "Walking with Jesus" friends,

*I've been reflecting lately on the tumultuous year of 2022, and I see major trends around our world which are nurturing global **FEAR** in many people, in almost every nation. Do you see it?* Fear of economic collapse; fear of unrestrained violence; fear of global leaders perhaps drawing us toward nuclear war or at least WWII; fear of global pandemics which can kill huge numbers of people and bring large megacities into lockdown; fear of corruption in leadership and tyranny in government; fear of anarchy in the streets; fear of moral implosion and so much more.

Two weeks from now is Thanksgiving weekend. What will be the measure of our thankfulness then? 6 weeks from now will be Christmas and 7 weeks from now will be the last weekend of '22 and the eve of '23. **What will our world be like then?**

Since the end of May "Walking with Jesus" has taken us on a remarkable journey. We spent June and July with the **followers of Jesus**, especially in Jerusalem, during the weeks and months immediately after the ascension of Jesus back to heaven. It was an exciting time in history and a remarkable spiritual tsunami led by the Holy Spirit. Jerusalem and much of Palestine were profoundly impacted by the new Jesus movement! Then in early August we joined **Paul and Barnabas on their first missionary journey** going to places the Gospel had not yet been proclaimed! Those places are today in the nation of Turkey. Upon their return, we then sat with **James, the 1/2 brother of Jesus, as he wrote one of the first letters of the New Testament to Jewish Christians** desperately needing encouragement.

Then in September we sat with **Paul as he wrote his first letter, Galatians**, to the Christians back in the towns where he and Barnabas had proclaimed the Gospel. Clarity was needed, as some false teachers were confusing the people about the truths of Jesus and His Gospel. Last month, October, we've been with the good friend of Jesus, **the apostle John, as he's been writing his first letter** to Christians helping them understand the evidence which confirms that someone is truly a born-again follower of Jesus.

My, it's been a great journey and as you may know every episode of *"Walking with Jesus"* is archived and available to you on our web site under the Daily Archives tab. Here's the quick link if you're looking for any past episode:

<https://walkingwithjesus.ddawj-365.com/daily-reading-archives-the-miracle-of-jesus-church/>

Now beginning today, I invite you to join me as we sit with perhaps the most famous of all the disciples of Jesus.... Peter. The year is about 65ad or so. It's been nearly 35 years since Jesus ascended back to heaven. The Gospel has spread far and wide beyond Jerusalem as all the apostles, Paul and Barnabas, and others who knew the Gospel of Jesus well, were passionately led by the Holy Spirit to courageously travel from town to town telling anyone who would hear them both the story of the person Jesus, and the important truths of the saving Gospel of Jesus Christ. They did so at their own peril, for they faced fierce opposition. Stephen the deacon was stoned to death by fierce Jewish opposition (Acts 7:58) and the apostle James was beheaded by King Herod. (Acts 12:2) As Paul wrote to the Christians in Corinth, he had been beaten, flogged, and imprisoned many times, and depending on exactly when Peter was writing this, his first letter, it's possible Paul had recently been executed. *It was a terrifying time to be a Christian in the Roman empire!*

Over the previous 20 years or so, as we've seen, several spiritual letters had been written and circulated from the apostles, and those are treasured as they arrived by courier and were read to clusters of Christians in towns all over the Roman Empire. These letters and the Gospels which were being written by Matthew, Mark, Luke and John, are today all part of our New Testament. *Without printing presses or photocopy machines, these scrolls were all very carefully hand copied, one at a time, and so there were very few copies of them, and they had not as yet been compiled into a collection.*

The reason I've chosen to invite us to join the apostle Peter as he writes his first letter is because the world to which Peter was writing was so very much like our world of 2022! My opening paragraph today could easily describe the late first century. Jews and Christians were being horribly persecuted all over the Roman empire. Tensions were rising in and around Jerusalem, and in fact in 70ad, perhaps only four or five years after Peter wrote this letter, the Roman army was sent by the Caesar, to destroy the great city of Jerusalem, slaughter the Jews and Christians living there, and demolish the great Jewish Temple. *Fear was the predominant emotion everywhere and into this fear Peter was led by the Holy Spirit to write a letter which TODAY is bringing great hope to Christians who live in similar fear throughout Asia, Central Asia, Europe, Africa, South America and even some parts of North America!*

So come to Rome with me, as that is where scholars believe Peter was at the time, he wrote this letter. Perhaps he was under house arrest as Paul had been. Peter didn't know it, but in less than three years' time he would be executed by the Caesar Nero in Nero's determination to eliminate Christianity from the empire, or at least cause the Christians to live terrorized.

So Peter begins: ***"I am Peter, an apostle of Jesus Christ, writing to God's elect exiles, scattered throughout the provinces of Pontus, Galatia, Cappadocia, Asia and Bithynia..."*** (1 Peter 1:1) The specific audience for Peter's letter was Christians, both Jews and Gentiles, who lived in the region today known as the nation of Turkey, as we see by the provinces named, but Peter's letter was intended for all Christians anywhere in the world.

Peter called them "elect exiles" and those words would have been energizing to those first century Christians. To know that God had 'elected' or chosen them to be His people was a glorious thought.

To be living as 'exiles' was a harsh reality since many of them had been run out of their hometowns because of their identity as a Jesus follower. Most lived in poverty as many employers were unwilling to employ them. Many lived harassed mercilessly by Roman soldiers. "Elect exiles"... what a remarkable title, and yet *Peter wanted them to understand that Jesus had lived like that too!* Jesus had been sent by God out of the glories and perfection of heaven, to come to live here among a wicked humanity, for the purpose of bringing God's truth and God's hope to our broken world. (John 3:16-19) But the world had rejected Jesus and His message of hope...all the way to brutalizing and executing Him on the cross! (John 1:9-11)

Jesus, in His resurrection, was victorious over death, sin and Satan and therefore Peter wanted these dear Jesus followers to know that Jesus empathized with them in their difficult lifestyle and victorious Jesus was working in His power through the Holy Spirit, to strengthen and sustain them in their misery.

Tomorrow we'll look closely at the very next thing Peter wrote which was very powerful and brought great encouragement and hope to these 'elect exiles', but for today, may I urge you to look around your world through the lenses of what Peter saw in 65ad. How similar is your world to theirs? *Do you feel like an 'elect exile'? Are you chosen by God as a follower of Jesus yet living in a wicked world with opposition to God and God's truth all around you?* Please consider that the victorious, risen Jesus is ready TODAY to help you in your situation, just as Jesus was helping these 'elect exile' Christians in the first century! And here's a song to help us find hope in Jesus in these tumultuous days:

Today's Scripture is 1 Peter 1:1.