



---

# OPENING THE SCRIPTURES

---

## A Bona Fide Spiritual Adviser

### A Precursor to a Study of 1 Peter

David Anguish

In his devotional commentary on 1 Peter, E. M. Blaiklock, a self-described “professional classicist and historian” who served twenty-one years as the Chair of Classics at the University of Auckland, New Zealand, shares some insights into the Roman Empire in the mid-first century AD. Rome itself was enduring the tumultuous final years of Nero’s reign before his suicide in 68. In the east, conflict with their Jewish subjects was intensifying, exploding into a war in 66 that ended in 70 with the destruction of Jerusalem, the Temple, and Judaism as it had existed in Judea. Blaiklock notes that an observant man in the period didn’t need a gift of prophecy to see what was coming, including the impending crisis for the Christian minority that was already despised by much of the populace.

First Peter was written to Christians for whom “the end was truly near—the end of peace, the end of an era, of a chapter—but not of all things, at least not for those who trusted in Christ” (Blaiklock 1977, 12). Its author was a man who had witnessed Jesus’ ministry and passion—his sufferings and resurrection are woven into the text. Peter had seen Jesus transfigured, been called to feed his flock, and walked with the risen Lord by the lake. He had also experienced the new birth that John would write about three decades later (Blaiklock 1977, 17–18).

These memories strengthened Peter’s faith; his exhortations in light of them aimed to strengthen the resolve of his readers who had not personally seen Jesus (1 Pet 1.8). But the memories allud-

ed to in the letter also trigger other recollections that make his encouragement even more valuable for us. Peter's growth had not been automatic or instant. His impulsive bravado often left him out over his skis as it were, claiming more than he could deliver. More than any other disciple for whom we have record, he is known for taking two steps back for every step forward.

That's important to remember as we hear his counsel at a time when God's people continue to be cultural "foreigners and exiles" (1 Pet 2.11). We also stumble, occasionally thinking we've nearly "arrived" only to be reminded that we've got a ways to go. As much as we benefit from the grown-up, mature counsel of a saint who had withstood the devouring efforts of the diabolical roaring lion (1 Pet 5.8), we can also benefit from remembering that he didn't get there instantly. As we prepare to study the text and its background in more detail, let's recall some events from Peter's journey.

### **A Work in Progress**

John's Gospel says Simon's brother Andrew introduced him to Jesus, and that Jesus immediately renamed him "Cephas (which is translated Peter)" (John 1.35–42). Reading the other accounts in light of John's, it appears the brothers encountered Jesus multiple times before committing to leave everything to follow him (cf. Matt 4.18–22 = Mark 1.16–20). Luke's first reference to him indicates Peter made that decision after Jesus used his boat to teach and then told the brothers and their partners to go into deeper water for a catch of fish. When, to Peter's surprise, they caught so many that both boats were overwhelmed, he fell at Jesus' feet and asked him to go away, believing he was too sinful to be in his presence (Luke 5.1–11).

Peter was the first to declare Jesus was the Messiah (Mark 8.29). And when, after Jesus fed the 5,000, many of the disciples left him because of his hard teaching, it was Peter who answered when Jesus asked the twelve if they would also leave: "Lord, to whom would we go? ... You are the Holy One of God!" (John 6.68–69).

Events just prior to and concurrent with Jesus' death exposed Peter's excessive confidence and clay feet. At their last meal together, he objected when Jesus began to wash the disciples' feet, but when told his refusal would mean he had no share with Jesus, he exclaimed, "Lord, wash not only my feet, but also my hands and my head" (John 13.8–9). When Jesus then told them they would all run away when he was arrested, Peter was emphatic that even if it meant his death, he would never leave. "No, Peter" Jesus told him, "you'll deny me three times before morning." When that prediction was realized, he wept bitterly, haunted by the memory of Jesus' look when he failed (Luke 22.62; cf. Mark 14.27–31; Luke 22.33–43, 54–61).

Devastated by Jesus' arrest and execution, the disciples were stunned again when some of the women reported that his body was missing and that he had appeared to them alive. Peter thought they were talking "nonsense," but, with another disciple (John 20.3–4), hurried to the grave to see for himself. After examining the scene, he "went home, wondering at what had happened" (Luke 24.11–12). His bewilderment would evaporate when Jesus appeared to him later that day (Luke 24.34).

One of Peter's last encounters with the risen Jesus restored his status among the twelve and tested his resolve (Beasley-Murray 1987, 404–407). In a reversal of the denials, Jesus asked three times if he loved him, a repetition that grieved the disciple. After each affirmation of his love, Jesus told him to take care of his sheep. He also told him his life would be hard and that to glorify God he would eventually die. Significantly, Jesus' final words to him that day were, "Follow me" (John 21.15–19; cf. Luke 5.11).

Seven weeks after the resurrection, Peter took center stage on the day all Jerusalem was told Jesus was alive (Acts 2.14–41). In Luke's telling, in the succeeding years, he became the de facto face of Christianity's initial advance into the Greco-Roman world (cf. Acts 3.1–11; 4.8–22; 5.1–32; 9.32–43). He was then chosen to take the gospel to the Gentiles and defend that outreach to some of his Jewish brothers who thought he had gone too far (Acts 10.1–11.18; 15.7–11).

But even when he led so boldly, Peter experienced growth pains. When God called him to re-think the longstanding Jewish cleanliness issue, Peter pushed back (Acts 10.14–17; 11.8). He eventually accepted that "God shows no partiality" in accepting people for salvation (Acts 10.34–35, 44–48), but would later yield to pressure to return to the traditional ways, a relapse that, thanks to Paul, was temporary (Gal 2.11–14). He remained a work in progress.

### Memoirs of Growth

A writing by Papias, lost to us but interpreted by Eusebius (*Eccl. Hist.* 3.39.15–16), reports that Peter's memories of his years with Jesus formed the substance of Mark's gospel (Black 2001, 40–41, 44–45). As noted above, 1 Peter also shows evidence of some of those memories, as in his reference to the resurrection's provision of the "living hope" that sustains believers in the midst of suffering, and the echo of a memory of how his own hope had been rejuvenated when he learned Jesus was alive (1 Pet 1.3, 21). Also, in phrasing that reminds us of Jesus' final admonition to him (John 21.15–19), he commends his readers for loving the Lord even though they had not seen him (1 Pet 1.8); later, using the same word Jesus had used, he tells the community's elders to shepherd the flock (ποιμαίνω, *poimainō*; 1 Pet 5.1; John 21.16). And finally, as he encourages them to endure suffering, he points to Jesus' example of suffering for doing right (1 Pet 2.18–25; 3.17). Since Jesus had thus suffered, Christians were to prepare themselves to also suffer (4.1, 12–19).

### Conclusion

Peter's journey with its multiple stumbles forms the backdrop of his exhortation to the Christians to endure the suffering they were about to face; 1 Peter uses the words (verb πάσχω, *paschō*; noun πάθημα, *pathēma*) more than any other NT writing (16 times; 1 Pet 1.11; 2.19–21, 23; 3.14, 17–18; 4.1, 13, 15, 19; 5.1, 9–10). In a way many do not, Peter knew what it meant to face hostility from those who were following the dictates of a prowling devil, the roaring lion he had to resist (cf. John 21.18; 1 Pet 5.8).

It's noteworthy, then, that three times in the letter, Peter uses παρακαλέω (*parakaleō*), "to urge, exhort, encourage" (Danker 2009, 267). All are in contexts of duress and suffering at the hands of a hostile world (1 Pet 2.11; 5.1, 12). As our culture has become increasingly resistant, and even

hostile, to the Way, we will do well to meditate on his reflections and what they mean for our own growth.

### Works Cited

- Beasley-Murray, George R. 1987. *John*. Word Biblical Commentary. vol. 36. Word Books, Publisher.
- Black, David Alan. 2001. *Why Four Gospels? The Historical Origins of the Gospels*. Kregel Publications.
- Blaklock, E. M. 1977. *First Peter: A Translation and Devotional Commentary*. Word Books, Publisher.
- Danker, Frederick William, with Kathryn Krug. 2009. *The Concise Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament*. University of Chicago Press.

### An Additional Thought

“Peter addressed his epistle specifically to believers as ‘resident aliens’ in this world (1:1). He called on his readers to conduct themselves in reverence ‘during this time of temporary residence’ (1:17) and urged them as ‘aliens and temporary residents to abstain from fleshly desires that war against’ them (2:11). This ‘resident alien’ motif also lies at the foundation of how Peter conceived of believers’ identity in this life: this world is not their home; rather, they are pilgrims, strangers, and resident aliens....”

“Does our lifestyle reflect this reality? In the Sermon on the Mount Jesus warned us against amassing treasures on earth. Materialism is rampant in our culture, especially among many young people. It often appears that their lives depend on whether they are able to get the latest gadget in the moment it is released on the market. To make matters worse, this materialism has crept in from the general culture into the church. It is time believers remembered that, according to God’s Word, they are mere pilgrims and resident aliens in this world.”

~ Andreas J. Köstenberger, L. Scott Kellum, and Charles L. Quarles. 2009. *The Cradle, the Cross, and the Crown: An Introduction to the New Testament*. B & H Academic, 739

Unless otherwise indicated, all Scripture quotations are from the NET  
(All emphasis in Bible quotations added by the author)

Permission is granted to reprint original materials with the credit line,  
“Reprinted from David Anguish, ‘Opening the Scriptures,’ June 16, 2026”

Feedback is welcome. Direct comments to [david@davidanguish.com](mailto:david@davidanguish.com)

To receive each new issue of this newsletter in your inbox, click [here](#).