

1:1 *An Apostle Speaks to the Exiles of the Dispersion*

A Pilgrim and Stranger.

Didymus the Blind: Why does Peter, an apostle to the Jews, write to those who are scattered in the dispersion, when most of them were still living in Judea at that time? To understand his meaning, we have to compare what he says with texts like “I am a pilgrim and stranger on earth, as were all my forefathers.”² The souls of all are like strangers who are joined to bodies for as long as they dwell in time. If these souls were thought to be the substance of the body, they would be natives on earth. But these souls are concealed in a covering of flesh and are in fact like strangers on earth. They feel the pains of the flesh because they are quite assimilated into natural bodies. This is why terrors are brought on the inhabitants of the earth, which affect both the things which are earthly in themselves and the souls which are covered in an earthly image. Commentary on 1 Peter.³

To Jews in Diaspora.

Andreas: This apostle was appointed to preach to those of the circumcision, but he deliberately did not limit his preaching to those who lived in Judea. Instead, by sending this circular letter, he sought to preach to Jews scattered all over the world, to the effect that they must hold onto the faith which they have received, for by keeping it they would inherit many great, good, eternal and heavenly things. Catena.⁴

To All Jews Everywhere.

Oecumenius: Like James, Peter was an apostle to the Jews, but he was sent to all Jews everywhere, and not just to those who lived in Palestine. Commentary on 1 Peter.⁵

1:2a *Destined by God the Father*

Foreknowledge Has Become Knowledge.

Didymus the Blind: What Peter says agrees with the statements of Paul, such as: “He has chosen us in himself before the foundation of the world, to be holy and spotless before him in love, predestinating us to be adopted as sons.”⁷ ... Foreknowledge is not to be regarded as anything other than the contemplation of the future. It becomes knowledge as the things which are foreseen come to pass. Therefore, although the people to whom Peter was writing had once been chosen according to God’s foreknowledge, by the time he was writing to them their election had already taken place. Commentary on 1 Peter.⁸

Before Birth I Knew You.

Oecumenius: Peter is showing here that although he is later in time, he is in no way inferior to the prophets of old. For he is the equal of Jeremiah, to whom God said: "Before I formed you in the womb, I knew you."⁹ He goes on to say that he has been sent by the sanctifying power of the Holy Spirit, whose mission was to separate, by spiritual gifts, those who were obedient to the gospel of Christ's suffering and who were sprinkled by his blood, from all other peoples. Commentary on 1 Peter.¹⁰

1:2b Sanctified by the Spirit for Obedience to Jesus Christ

The Spirit Knows Eternally.

Origen: We must not suppose that the Spirit knows God as we do, only through the historic revelation of the Son. For if the Holy Spirit knows God only in this way, then he has passed from ignorance to knowledge, and it is certainly as impious as it is foolish to confess him as the Holy Spirit and then ascribe a prior ignorance to him. On First Principles 1.3.4.¹¹

Father, Son and Spirit.

Andreas: See how Peter says that he was called to be an apostle of Jesus Christ by the foreknowledge of God the Father. Furthermore, he explains what his apostleship is like by saying that it is in the sanctification of the Spirit, for obedience and sprinkling with the blood of Jesus Christ. Moreover, we who believe in him have also been sanctified by the Spirit, and he sprinkles us too with his blood in order to cleanse us. For how can we not know that God sanctifies us by his own Spirit and cleanses us believers with his own blood? For Christ was God in human flesh. Catena.¹²

1:2c Grace and Peace

Children of Peace.

Basil the Great: May it be granted to us, after we have struggled nobly and subdued the spirit of the flesh, which was at enmity with God, when our soul is in a calm and tranquil state, to be called the children of peace and to share the blessing of God in peace. Sermons 13.8.¹⁴

1:3a *Blessed Be God*

When God Is the Giver.

Andreas: They have received immortality and the hope of eternal life. These good things in heaven are better than human things. For this reason they praise God the Father, who shows his great mercy in doing these things faithfully. When God is the giver, the things given are both better and certain to materialize. The statement also has relevance to the Old Testament, for in it God gave the land of the Canaanites to those who believed in him. Catena.¹

1:3b *By His Great Mercy*

His Mercy Great Enough.

Hilary of Arles: Peter means that God has acted to redeem us without any help from us. His mercy is great enough to be able to forgive every sin which has been committed in thought, word and deed, from the beginning to the end of the world. Introductory Commentary on 1 Peter.²

1:3c *Born to a Living Hope Through the Resurrection*

The Blessings God Gives.

Oecumenius: What exactly are the blessings which God has given us in Christ? First, there is hope, not the kind of hope which he gave to Moses, that the people would inherit a promised land in Canaan, for that hope was temporal and corruptible. Rather God gives us a living hope, which has come from the resurrection of Christ. Because of that, he has given all those who believe in Jesus the same resurrection. This is a living hope and an incorruptible inheritance, not stored up here on earth but in heaven, which is much greater. Commentary on 1 Peter.³

Christ Rises in Us.

Clement of Alexandria: If God first generated us out of matter, the Father of our Lord later regenerated us into a better life. Christ rises again in us according to our faith, just as earlier he died in us because of our unbelief. It was furthermore said that no soul, whether it is righteous or evil, will ever return to a corruptible body in this life, lest by taking on flesh it should once more acquire the opportunity to sin, but

rather that both good and evil souls will return in the resurrection body. For soul and body are joined together each according to its proper nature. They fit together rather like stuffing in food, or a construction of stones. Adumbrations.⁴

1:4a *To an Inheritance Imperishable*

The Inheritance Foreknown.

Origen: For God foresaw that the faith and behavior of people would be put right by the teaching of the gospel, and so he chose them in Christ before the foundation of the world, predestinating them to be his children by partaking of the Spirit of sonship. For foreknowledge means no more than seeing what is inside a person. It is now no longer foreknowledge in effect but knowledge of something real which has been foreseen. Those to whom Peter is writing were chosen according to foreknowledge, but the calling does not come to people who are hidden from view, for their innate awareness removes any doubt about their true nature. Catena.⁶

An Inheritance Unfading.

Didymus the Blind: In order to show how the inheritance of the blessed will continue forever, Peter calls it incorruptible and unfading, demonstrating by this that it is a pure and divine inheritance which will remain uncontaminated in the eyes of those who care nothing for their present wealth, knowing that they have something better and eternal waiting for them. Commentary on 1 Peter.⁷

Of the Second Adam.

Hilary of Arles: An incorruptible inheritance must be an infinite one, since everything finite is corruptible. The inheritance of the first Adam was corrupted by sin, but the inheritance of the second Adam can never be touched by the stain of sin. Introductory Commentary on 1 Peter.⁸

1:4b *Kept in Heaven for You*

1:5a *Guarded by Faith*

Kept by Faith.

Andreas: Peter says that God has blessed us greatly and that he has done so through his Son. Furthermore, he says that those who receive these things are those who are protected in the power of God, as Christ himself prayed: “Holy Father, protect them.”¹¹ If the inheritance is kept in heaven for believers, some grow cold thinking that it has been left for us in the earthly Jerusalem, assuming that the rewards of the kingdom will be acquired by the appearance of luxury every thousand years. They should be asked why they say that this bodily luxury is immortal and unfading but at the same time they limit it to every thousandth year. They need to be told that these words show that the inheritance is in the kingdom of heaven and that it cannot be known by the senses of mortal beings. We have been assured that we shall receive all these great things by the Father himself, who is the one who gives them. For it is certain by other means also that he will bless us with these things through his own Son, and not simply through the Son but through his resurrection. For if everything has been granted to us, what is there left to give? The inheritance is immortal and unfading, and what is even greater, it is not here on earth but in heaven. Catena.¹²

1:5b *A Salvation Ready to Be Revealed*

1:6 *For a Little While You Suffer Various Trials*

In Suffering You Give Birth.

Origen: Read “grieve” in this verse in the sense of “suffer,” as in “in grief you shall bring forth children.”¹⁴ For a woman experiences grief not in bearing children but rather in suffering before birth. Exhortation to Martyrdom 39.¹⁵

Perseverance to the End.

Didymus the Blind: Those who are afflicted in various ways because of Christ and who persevere to the end have their faith tested and proved. They ought therefore to rejoice, even if some of their labor appears to be involuntary. Peter calls this kind of labor grief, a word which he uses in one of the two meanings described by the apostle Paul, who said that there is one grief which leads to death and another

which leads to repentance. ¹⁶ Obviously it is the second of these which is meant here. Commentary on 1 Peter.¹⁷

Relief Is Near.

Andreas: Right now we have to suffer for the sake of the preaching, but relief for those who toil is near. Catena.¹⁸

1:7 *Genuine Faith Tested by Fire*

Gold Tried by Fire.

Hermas: Just as gold is tried by fire and becomes useful, so also you who live in the world are tried in it. So then, you who remain in it and pass through the flames will be purified. For just as gold casts off its dross, so also you will cast off all sorrow and tribulation, becoming pure and useful for the building of the tower. Shepherd, Visions 3.1.²⁰

The Saints Shine Like Refined Gold.

Athanasius: Because the saints saw that the divine fire would cleanse them and benefit them, they did not shrink back from or get discouraged by the trials which they faced. Rather than being hurt by what they went through, they grew and were made better, shining like gold that has been refined in a fire. Festal Letters 10.²¹

Not All Suffer Now.

Chrysostom: The righteous suffer so that they may be crowned with glory, but sinners suffer in order to bring judgment on their sins. But not all sinners pay the price of their sins in this life, but await the resurrection. And not all the righteous suffer now, lest you think that evil is to be praised and you come to hate the good. Catena.²²

Faith More Precious Than Gold.

Hilary of Arles: The glory of the redeemed will never fade after they have been raised from the dead, for it will have withstood the fire of temptation, whereas the gold of this world is said to rust. ²³ Introductory Commentary on 1 Peter.²⁴

1:8a *Without Having Seen Him You Love Him*

When He Appears.

Oecumenius: If you love him now when you have not seen him but have only heard about him, think how much you will love him when you finally do see him and when he appears in his glory! For if his suffering and death have drawn you to him, how much more will you be attracted by his incredible splendor, when he will grant you the salvation of your souls as your reward. Commentary on 1 Peter.²⁶

1:8b *With Unutterable Joy*

The Sweetness of Heavenly Blessing.

Hilary of Arles: Not even a thousand ironclad tongues can sound out the sweetness of the heavenly blessings. Introductory Commentary on 1 Peter.²⁷

1:9 *The Outcome of Faith*

Made Incorruptible by Grace.

Clement of Alexandria: It appears from this that the soul is not naturally incorruptible but is made so by the grace of God, through faith, righteousness and understanding. Adumbrations.²⁹

The Soul Prays and Sings.

Origen: If it is the mind which prays and sings in the spirit and the mind which receives perfection and salvation, how is it that Peter says: "As the outcome of your faith you obtain the salvation of your souls"? If the soul neither prays nor sings with the spirit, how shall it hope for salvation? On First Principles 2.8.3.³⁰

The Harbinger of Salvation.

Cyril of Alexandria: Unbelief is a horrible and wicked thing, but faith is the highest good, for it is the harbinger of our entire salvation. Catena.³¹

1:10 *The Prophets Inquired*

Prophets and Believers Receive the Same Salvation.

Didymus the Blind: Some say that the promises and the salvation of the saints who lived before the coming of the Savior was inferior to those given to people who came afterwards and who saw Jesus in the flesh, who heard his teaching and beheld the miracles he did in his body. We must however show that this opinion is false. Christ comes in two ways. One is through the intellect, by which God is received as a divine Word. The other is through the senses, by which he appears as a historical person coming out of the womb of Mary. But the first way is more purely divine than the second, which was made necessary by the sinful behavior of mankind. For God comes to all the saints through the intellect and by his word, whether they lived before or after the coming of Christ, sanctifying each one according to his deeds. Those who lived before the coming of Christ were less informed, not because of their wickedness but because of God's dispensation of time. Therefore it is said that the prophets examined how and at what time the salvation of their souls would be fulfilled by the sufferings of Christ and his subsequent glory. They preached these things, knowing that they were not going to be revealed directly to them but would appear at some future time. Therefore it is wrong to say that their sanctification was somehow inferior to ours. Commentary on 1 Peter.¹

1:11 *Predicting the Sufferings of Christ*

The Spirit of Christ Within Them.

Clement of Alexandria: Here it is stated that the prophets spoke with wisdom and that the Spirit of God was in them because they belonged and were subject to Christ. For the Lord works through archangels and their associate angels, who are called the spirit of Christ. Adumbrations.³

Prophets Predicted the Incarnation.

Andreas: The apostle insists that the one who spoke by the prophets was the Holy Spirit of Christ. Nor was Christ a mere man, as the heretics say, but he was the incarnate Son of God, consubstantial with the Father. "Christ the power of God and the wisdom of God." ⁴ ... For this reason the Savior said: "Many prophets and righteous men desired to see what you are seeing, and they did not see it." ⁵ Catena.⁶

They Predicted His Sufferings.

Oecumenius: The Spirit of Christ predicted his sufferings to Isaiah: "He was led like a sheep to the slaughter," ⁸ and he predicted the resurrection to Hosea: "On the third day we shall be raised up before him, and we shall go on to know the Lord, and we shall find him like the ready morning." ⁹ Commentary on 1 Peter.¹⁰

1:12a *The Prophets Served You*

They Foretold the Future Glory.

Ambrose of Milan: The mysteries of the more perfect sacraments are of two kinds.... Of one kind are the things which the prophets foretold about the future glory, for they were revealed to them. And the saints have preached the good tidings "by the spirit of God sent from heaven. Into these things angels desire to look," as the apostle Peter says. Letters to Laymen 66.¹¹

1:12b *Those Who Preached the Good News*

The Comforter.

Clement of Alexandria: These things were announced by the Holy Spirit, who is the comforter of whom Jesus said that, unless he himself went away, the Comforter would not come. ¹³ The angels who want to glimpse these things are not the ones who fell, despite what many people think. Rather, these are the angels who desire to obtain the fullness of his perfection. Adumbrations.¹⁴

1:12c *Things into Which Angels Long to Look*

The Mysteries Accomplished.

Irenaeus: There is one Son who accomplished the Father's will and one human race in which the mysteries of God are accomplished, which angels long to behold. Against Heresies 5.36.3.¹⁵

Angelic Love.

Hilary of Arles: The angels long to look into these things because of the greatness of their love. They meditate on the Spirit and go on doing so forever, because love never comes to an end. Introductory Commentary on 1 Peter.¹⁶

The Longing of Angels and Humans.

Niceta of Remesiana: If the angels desire to look upon him, should not human beings be all the more afraid to despise him? The Power of the Holy Spirit 19.¹⁷