

Strangers on the earth

Getting to grips with the message of 1 Peter

This first letter of Peter speaks right into the challenges Christians face in the western world in the 21st century.

Its aim is to encourage you as a believer, and to instruct you in how to live in such a way that you *“declare the praises of Him who called you out of darkness into His wonderful light.”*

The background to the series is on this page of our website.

*

1. 1 Peter 1.1-2 [w/b Sunday 3rd February 2019]

“.., God’s elect, exiles, scattered ..”

Knowing who you are in Christ, seeing clearly the primary truths about yourself as a follower of Jesus - that’s always vitally important if we are to live in a way which goes against the flow of contemporary culture and sees us living both faithfully and fruitfully for God in a society which pays scant regard to His Word and to His ways.

Peter is, therefore, careful to start his letter by describing those to whom he is writing in terms which underline the realities which undergird their life in Christ. Nor is he alone in speaking in such terms of believers. The writer to the Hebrews uses very similar language in rehearsing the perspective which Abraham had.

[Despite your best intentions, there may not be time for all the questions to be addressed in your Community Group! It may be helpful to try and ensure that in this study you cover questions 3, 5, and 6. As always try to leave good time for shared prayer!]

*

1. **Read Hebrews 11.8-16.** This chapter illustrates what the Bible means by faith: Abraham is in many ways the prototypical believer and his experience sheds light on our own.

As you read these verses what do you find most striking about his experience?

If someone asked you in what ways you were living 'by faith' how would you answer?

2. Read Hebrews 11.8. God has called *us* in Christ to 'a place we will later receive as our inheritance': the writer here refers back to that same call of the Lord to Abraham.

How have you experienced that call of the Lord?

What do you learn about 'faith' from the example of Abraham in this verse?

Have you had a similar experience?

3. Read Hebrews 11.9-10. For all that he was living, and indeed 'made his home', in 'the promised land', Abraham did so as 'a stranger in a foreign country'.

What makes you as a Christian sometimes feel "*like a stranger in a foreign country*" as you live out your life in today's world?

What does the writer mean by '*the city with foundations, whose architect and builder is God*'?

Do you think as Christians we have tended to become too much 'at home' in this world and have lost the forward-looking perspective illustrated here?

4. Read Hebrews 11.11-12. Faith is here described in terms of our holding on to the faithfulness of God - and that in respect of the astonishing promises made by Him.

To what promises of God do you cling?

What makes it hard for you to hold on to the faithfulness of God?

5. Read Hebrews 11.13-16. The writer again (see v.9) uses the phrase 'foreigners and strangers on earth' to describe these early Old Testament believers.

How does the writer describe that to which these people were all looking forward?

Do you think Christians are given sufficient teaching about the 'better country - a heavenly one'?

To what extent would you say this *hope* informs and shapes your living?

6. Read 1 Peter 1.1-2. At last we're getting to 1 Peter! Peter introduces himself and reminds those to whom he's writing of the most significant truths about them.

What three truths about believers does Peter underline in the first verse?

How do they help you understand your life and experience as one who has trusted in Jesus?

7. Read 1 Peter 1.1-2. 'Identity' has become a hugely important theme today: from the start of his letter Peter reminds his readers of their true identity in Christ.

In what ways, according to v.2, can our identity as Christians be said to be essentially 'trinitarian'?

How does each of these truths help and encourage you in your life as a follower of Jesus?