

New Testament Lesson # 46
November 25-December 1
“Rejoice with Joy Unspeakable and Full of Glory”
1 and 2 Peter
By Lenet Hadley Read

I. Peter’s writings should be among those **we automatically look to for comfort and guidance in times of adversity.**

- A. Other sources are: Job, D& C 121-22; Ether 12.
But Peter’s epistles are particularly outstanding.

II. Why? Peter was writing when the Saints faced the most terrible trials of all times.

A. One was the terrible martyrdoms Christians would face in that age. John wrote: “When [the angel] had opened the fifth seal, I saw under the altar the souls of them that were slain for the word of God, and for the testimony which they held” (Revelation 6:9).

B. Peter, Church President and Prophet, knew of these upcoming sufferings in advance. **His warnings about “a fiery trial” were literally fulfilled when Rome was burned.**

“In July, A.D. 64, a disastrous fire raged for nine days and destroyed the imperial capital of Rome. Contemporary public opinion said that Nero, seeking to cover his crimes and to appropriate a sizable area in the center of the city for a new palace, was himself the incendiary” (*The Life and Teachings of Jesus and His Apostles*, p. 403).

“To dispel this rumor, Nero cast the blame for the fire on the Christians.... A general persecution against the saints followed.... great numbers were convicted, not so much of guilt for the [fire but for] hatred of the human race. And mockery was added to their deaths: they were covered with the skins of wild beasts and torn to death by dogs, or they were nailed to crosses when daylight failed, *were set on fire and burned* to provide light at night” (Naphtali Lewis and Meyer Reinhold, *Roman Civilization*, 3:226-27. Quoted in *L&T of Jesus*, p. 403). [Emphasis added].

III. It was under this persecution that both Peter and Paul were martyred, believed to have occurred in A.D. 68. Both Paul and Peter knew of and testified of their future deaths. Paul had written how he was “ready to be offered,” and Peter wrote, “knowing I must shortly put off this tabernacle.”

A. More waves of persecution followed and thousands of Christians were martyred. Trajan, determined to see Christianity destroyed, “directed that Christians not only be sought out, but if they were discovered and did not renounce the faith, they were to be executed.... To deny Christ and deify Caesar, *or to die* was the choice given many of the early saints of the church” (*L&T of Jesus*, p. 404). [Emphasis added]

IV. Thus, Peter forewarned them that “Your adversary, the devil, is as a roaring lion, [who] walketh about, seeking whom he may destroy” (1 Peter 5:8). And he gave very special insights to help the saints endure one of the greatest times of trial.

- A. He promised they would suffer for “a season” (1 Peter 1:6) [**But only for a season**].
B. He taught members of Christ’s church should expect trials and not think it “strange” when they come. “Think it not strange concerning the fiery trials that try you” (1 Peter 4:12-19).

1. “For the trial of your faith, [is] much more precious than of gold that perisheth,” (1 Peter 1:7).

2. **That is, the trial of our faith, if we endure it well, will make us more precious than gold, for gold perishes, but the Human Soul cannot!** And as heat burns the impurities out of gold, so our “fiery trials” can help remove all spiritual impurities from us.

C. One of the very effective insights Peter offers is that **it is only when we suffer, while innocent, that our suffering is of greatest value.**

1. “For what glory is it, if, when ye be buffeted for your faults, ye shall take it patiently? But if, when ye do well, and suffer for it, ye take it patiently, this is acceptable with God” (1 Peter 2:20).

D. Peter reminds us that just as Jesus suffered **“the just for the unjust,”** it is “Better [for us] to suffer for well doing than [for] evil works (1 Peter 3:17).”

E. **In fact, Peter makes it clear that those called to be followers of Christ are also called to suffer as He did.**

1. “[Jesus] Himself was disallowed of men, but He was chosen of God, and [thus] precious” (1 Peter 2:4).

2. Similarly, His saints are the “Elect according to the foreknowledge of God the Father” (1 Peter 1:2).

3. Thus we are “also as [living] stones ... built up [to be] a spiritual house, an holy priesthood, *to offer up spiritual sacrifices*, acceptable to God” (1 Pet. 2:5). [emphasis added].

4. “For ye are a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, an holy nation, a peculiar people; that *ye should shew forth the praises of him who hath called you out of darkness into his marvelous light*” (1 Peter 2:9-10).

5. **“For so is the will of God, that with well doing ye may put to silence the ignorance of foolish men”** (1 Pet 2:15).

E. All the scriptures above unitedly testify that as followers of Jesus we may be called to suffer as He did; that we are to offer up our own living sacrifices so we may manifest the greatness of the Lord through our loving obedience; and that we may eventually silence the foolish by the way we endure our trials. (It was the way Jesus endured His suffering that caused some to believe in Him).

V. New Testament prophets knew the Saints faced *many* challenges. In 2 Peter, (and in Jude’s epistle), warnings were about *apostasy and betrayals from within* the Church.

A. Peter warned concerning the apostasy coming upon the Church:

1. “There shall be false teachers among you” (2 Peter 2:1).

2. “Many will follow pernicious ways. And with covetousness shall they with feigned words make merchandise of you” (2 Peter 2:3).

3. Peter warns of those who are “wells without water” (2 Peter 2:17-22).

VI. But Peter also gave hope. [**In spite of martyrdom, there was immediate hope in the resurrection, and in the glorious joys for those who proved faithful**].

A. “God in past delivered the righteous, so will he deliver you” (2 Peter 2:4-5).

B. However, there was also hope in **Christ’s eventual victory over evil in the last days.**

1. The world, once destroyed by water, would be destroyed in the future by fire (2 Peter 3:6-9). Thus the wicked will eventually be cut off.

2. Christ will come as a thief in the night; the heavens shall pass away; the elements melt with fervent heat, earth and [evil] works therein shall be burned up (2 Peter 3:10 and beyond).

3. There will be a new heaven and new earth. Those who hoped to dwell on it must be found to be peaceful, without spot and blemish (2 Peter 3:14).

4. After all, God saved the people from Egypt, but destroyed unbelievers; and He cast down angels who kept not their first estate (Jude 1:5-7). So it will be with the wicked at the Last Day.

5. Then the prophets give this thought provoking challenge. “Knowing all these things, what manner of persons ought ye to be?” (2 Peter 3:12).

VII. Nevertheless, the prophets show that God is ultimately a God of love. Peter reveals Christ’s love for mankind was so great, it extends even to the dead.

A. Peter verifies the Gospel is being preached to the dead (1 Peter 4:5-6).

1. Jesus was the first who went and preached to the spirits in prison (1 Peter 3:19) thus making salvation possible for them as well.

2. While speaking of Christ’s work among the dead, Peter said, perplexingly, “the like figure whereunto even baptism doth also now save us” (1 Peter 3:21).

a. This may be confusing to some, but it is very important scripture! **The number Peter refers to is “eight” (8), which he had just previously used in verse 19. Using the number eight in relation to baptism suggests that age eight is the correct age to be baptized.**

b. Circumcision, its predecessor, occurred on the 8th day, but was changed to **age eight** for baptism. One Latter-day Saint who traveled throughout areas of early Christianity noted that the number eight was always found in the structures of early Christian baptistries. She found earliest Christians taught that Jesus Christ was also purposely resurrected on the eighth day, after the seven days of Passover. And they taught that the time that the righteous will inherit the new earth will be at the beginning of the Eighth Age, after the Millennium. Thus the **number “eight” in many ways signifies “the time of entering into God’s covenant, and ultimately the inheritance of those who keep their sacred covenants.”** (For more information see Grave Vlam, “The Mormon Doctrine of Baptism as Reflected in Early Christian Baptistries,” *Dialogue*, Spring, 1968 or Lenet Hadley Read, “The Sabbath, the Lord’s Day,” in *The Lord’s Holy Days*, p. 69; or Orson Whitney, “Saturday Night Thoughts,” *The Deseret News*, May 1921).

B. As Jesus Christ showed His great love, so we should also show ours, as Peter tells us, “So Feed the flock here on the earth; and when the chief Shepherd shall appear, ye shall receive a crown of glory” (1 Peter 5:2-7).

C. **And this obviously includes our showing our love by ministering to the dead, as did Jesus. We do so through Family History and Temple work.**

VIII When we do all those things taught by Peter, we can “Make our calling and election sure” (2 Peter 1:10).

A. These promises are far greater than being saved.

B. For he revealed “... it is written [By God], **Be ye holy; for I am holy.**” (1 Peter 1:16).

C. He revealed “Whereby are given unto us exceeding great and precious promises; that by these **ye might be partakers of the divine nature...**” (2 Peter 1:4).

D. The marvelous truths revealed by Peter and by other prophets in ancient times and our own day, is that we might look forward not only to being saved from death, but through repentance, obedience, personal sacrifice, and the atonement of Jesus Christ, we might dare to hope to take upon ourselves even the very nature of the Lord --- which is Holiness. He has not only promised this is possible, but commanded us to seek for it.

We may not achieve it in this life, but we **have reason to hope an Eternity dwelling with Him who is Holy will work its marvelous changes upon those who are pure in heart!**