

1 PETER

1:1 *Why does Peter refer to the people he is writing to here as "strangers" (KJV, NIV)?*

Strangers in this context refers to temporary residents as aliens in a foreign place. Peter uses the word here metaphorically of believers to whom heaven is their own country. They are merely pilgrims and sojourners in the places where they reside on earth (CP 2:11 with Gen 23:4; Psa 39:12; He 11:13). The believers in 1 Pe 1:1 were scattered abroad as a result of the persecution of the early church in Jerusalem (CP Jas 1:1 with Ac 8:1-4).

1:2 *Does the phrase "elect according to the foreknowledge of God the Father" here teach as some claim that God predestines salvation for those he chooses?*

No! This is not teaching that at all. *The foreknowledge of God the Father* here simply means that God saw ahead that he would have to send a Saviour to redeem mankind from Adam's fall, and He predetermined a plan for man's redemption and the Saviour through whom it would be accomplished - the Lord Jesus Christ (CP Gen 3:15; Psa 22; Isa 7:14; 9:6-7; 49:1-8; 50:2-11; 52:13 - 53:12; Zech 13:6; Mt 1:18-25; Lu 1:26-35; 68:75; 2:34-35; Jn 1:29; Ro 1:1-4; 16:25-27; Ga 4:4-5; He 10:1-10; Rev 13:8). Rev 13:8 does not teach that the names of those whom God has predestined to salvation have been written in the Book of Life from the foundation of the world, as those who espouse this view claim. Rev 13:8 teaches that it was the atoning death of Christ for the redemption of mankind that God predestined from the foundation of the world, as all those scriptures teach.

The *elect according to the foreknowledge of God the Father*, are all those who choose Jesus as their Saviour in obedience to God's plan of redemption for the human race through Christ's death and resurrection (CP 1 Pe 1:3-12, 18-20 with Jn 3:14-17; Ro 3:21-26; Eph 1:3-13; 2:4-10; 3:1-12; 2 Th 2:13-14; Tit 1:1-3; 2:11-14; He 2:9-14). For a more detailed study on this subject see also comments on Mt 13:10-11, 20:16, Jn 3:36, 6:37, 12:37-40, Ac 13:48, 28:23-29, Ro 8:28-30, 9:7, 9:10-13, 9:14-18, 9:19-21, 11:2, Eph 1:3-6, 1 Jn 2:2.

1:5, 9-10 *For study on whether salvation is past, present or future see comments on 1 Cor 1:18.*

1:6-7 *For study on believers rejoicing in suffering see comments on Jas 1:2-4.*

1:7 *Which appearing of Jesus is referred to here?*

(CP 1 Cor 1:6-8; Php 3:20; Col 3:4; 1 Th 1:10; 2:19; 3:13; 2 Ti 4:8; Tit 2:13; 1 Jn 2:28; 3:2). These scriptures, together with 1 Pe 1:7, all refer to the time when Jesus comes again to take all the saints of God back to heaven with Him at the first resurrection (CP Jn 14:1-3; 1 Cor 15:51-58; Php 3:20-21; 1 Th 4:13-

18). See also comments on Jn 14:1-3; 1 Cor 15:51-58; Php 3:20-21; 1 Th 3:13, 4:13-18.

1:10-12 *What do we learn here?*

We learn from this that even though the Old Testament prophets foretold God's plan of redemption which was to come through the sufferings of Christ, they did not know to whom, or when, it would happen, nor of the glory to follow the suffering. All they knew was that it was not for them, nor for their time (CP Gen 3:14-15; 49:1, 10; Isa 52:13 - 53:12). The angels also desire to look into God's redemptive plan. They observe believers constantly and even now are being taught by the church the manifold wisdom of God (CP 1 Cor 4:9; 11:4-10; Eph 3:9-11; 1 Ti 5:21). *Principalities and powers* in Eph 3:10 refers to both good and bad angels (See also comments on 1 Cor 11:3-16, Eph 3:9-12).

1:17 *How are we to understand the reference to fear here?*

As the one whom we address as Father is the same one who judges His children impartially, we should order our conduct on earth with a wholesome fear of displeasing Him (CP Psa 2:11-12, 85:9, 119:120; Pr 3:7-8, 9:10, 14:27, 16:6, 19:23; Ecc 12:13; Isa 66:1-2; Lu 12:4-5; 1 Cor 9:26-27; Php 2:12; 1 Pe 3:1-2, 3:15). Sojourning in 1 Pe 1:17: "... Pass the time of your sojourning here (on earth) in fear" means to be a stranger; to dwell at a place only for a short time; to reside in a foreign land without the right of a citizen. This teaches us that earth is not our home and we should not settle down in an earthly way of life as though it were permanent (CP Psa 119:54; He 11:8-10, 13-16; 1 Pe 2:11). The Christian's home is in heaven. We are merely pilgrims on earth. (See also comments on Php 2:12-13; He 11:1; 1 Pe 2:11).

1:23-25 *What is the underlying teaching here?*

The underlying teaching here, without limiting God's sovereignty to move upon the hearts of sinners, is that everyone must hear the gospel to be saved (CP Mt 24:14, 28:18-20; Mk 13:10, 16:15-16; Lu 24:46-48; Ac 1:8, 10:42; Ro 10:14-17; Col 1:3-6). We learn from Col 1:3-6 here that the gospel is essentially a reproductive organism which is constantly bearing fruit. But it must first be preached in order to reproduce. (See also comments on Ro 10:14-17).

2:5 *What do we learn from what Peter says here?*

We learn from this that Christians are living stones of which the New Testament church is built, and Christ, who was rejected of men, is the chief cornerstone, or foundation (CP 1 Cor 3:9, 16-17; 2 Cor 6:16; Ga 6:10; He 3:1-6; 1 Pe 2:5, 9 with Isa 28:16; Zech 10:3-4; Mt 21:42 (also Psa 118:22; Mk 12:10; Lu 20:17; Ac 4:11); Ro 9:33; Eph 2:19-22; 1 Pe 2:4, 6-9). We also learn here that the church is not a building made with hands, but a spiritual building embodied in the Christian community (see also comments on Mt 16:13-18, 21:42-45, 1 Cor 3:16-17(A)).

2:11 *How are fleshly lusts defined here?*

What Peter is saying in effect here is that in view of the fact that Christians in this present world are strangers in a foreign land, without rights as citizens because their citizenship is in heaven, they must discipline themselves not to succumb to self-serving passions and desires that could damn their souls for eternity (CP V12 with Ro 8:13, 13:14; Ga 5:24; Tit 2:11-12; 1Pe 4:1-4). Self-serving passions and desires covers the whole spectrum of fleshly lusts which are fixed on sensual objects as pleasure, profits, honours, derived from a corrupt, ungodly world system. (See also comments on Ro 13:11-14; Ga 5:24-26; 1Pe 4:1-4).

2:13-17 *See comments on Ro 13:1-2*

2:24 *What does Peter mean by what he says here?*

Peter is attesting here to bodily healing in the atonement as an established fact accomplished by Jesus' stripes (CP Isa 53:4-5). This clearly affirms that Christ's atoning death provides for our physical healing as well as our spiritual healing. *Griefs* and *sorrows* in V 4 (KJV), mean sicknesses and pains (CP Mt 8:16-17). Matthew asserts here that Isaiah's prophecy was being fulfilled in the healings Jesus rendered to the sick. He was not implying that the prophecy was completely fulfilled during Jesus' earthly ministry and therefore there is no bodily healing in the atonement, as so many Christians believe. If that was correct then there would be no spiritual healing in the atonement either, because Jesus healed and forgave sins at the same time. Jesus bore our sicknesses and our pains so that we could be healed of them, the same as He became a sin offering so that we could be forgiven our sins. Sin and sickness go hand in hand (CP Mt 9:1-8; Mk 2: 1-12; Jn 5:1-14). Here we learn that as sin and sickness go hand in hand at one end of the spectrum, so too do healing and forgiveness at the opposite end. Sadly, there are a great many Christians who will not accept this truth and cannot obtain their healing as a result. Yet these scriptures clearly prove that God's redemptive plan is all-inclusive. It provides for physical healing as well as spiritual healing. Jesus' healings in His earthly ministry simply foreshadowed the healing His atoning death on the cross would provide (CP Ga 3:13-14, 28-29).

There can be no confusion over what this scripture means. It confirms everything the other scriptures in this study teach. Jesus died on the cross so that all who believe on Him can be partakers of the salvation benefits He bought for us with His blood. What is the curse He died to redeem us from? (CP De 28:15-68). There are 54 verses relating to all the curses here and everything listed is what Christ died to save us from but for the purpose of this study we will only look at the different sicknesses that are listed. These include deafness, blindness, lameness, barrenness, mental illness, fear, consumption, fever, emaciation, cancer, ulcers, boils, haemorrhoids, rheumatism, arthritis, dermatitis, etc, etc. Verse 61 even takes into account sicknesses and plagues not listed. No doubt we could

include herpes, aids, emphysema, heart disease and many others among them but praise God, Jesus has redeemed us from them all and healing is ours if we will but believe and comply with the conditions (CP Ro 5:17). This scripture clearly teaches that the abundant life Jesus promised believers applies to this life, not the next as many would have us believe, and sickness and disease have no place in it (CP 3 Jn 2). This is further evidence that it is still in God's eternal purpose to heal us. The word *wish* here means pray. The verse should read, "beloved I pray above all things that thou mayest prosper and be in health, even as thy soul prospereth." There are three blessings of God involved in John's prayer here: material prosperity, bodily healing and health, and the saving of Gaius' soul. If any one of those blessings was not the will of God, John would have known and he would not have prayed for them. If such blessings are the will of God for one man, they are for all men alike who will have faith for them, because in the gospel of Christ there is no respect of persons.

It is plainly evident from scripture that God still heals, that He always heals and that it is His will to heal everyone who meets the conditions. God does not change. He is the same yesterday, today, and forever. In Him there is no variability, neither shadow of turning. It is also plain in scripture that sickness is not God's chastening of His children; it is not a blessing in disguise, and God is not glorified in sickness. Only good gifts and perfect gifts come down from God. Now we need to know what we must do to be healed, and what are some of the hindrances to healing (CP Mk 9:23). First, we must dispel any doubt that God will heal us. We have the assurance of His word. His promises are right throughout scripture as we have found in this study, but for the promises to work we must meet the conditions (CP Psa 66:18-20). If there is any unconfessed or unrepented sin in our life the Lord will not hear any prayer we pray, whether it be for healing or anything else. We must bring the sin before God and confess it before our fellowship can be restored with Him (CP 1Jn 1:7-10). Any sin not confessed and repented of puts a wall up between us and God and because of this we can no longer experience God's favour, or His salvation. See also comments on Mt 8:16-17, 9:1-8, Ga 3:13(B).

3:1-6 *What lesson is Peter teaching Christian wives here?*

Peter is teaching Christian wives here that they must be submitted to their husbands according to the divine order, whether their husbands are believers or not (CP Gen 3:16; 1 Cor 11:1-10; Eph 5:22-24, 33; Col 3:18; Tit 2:3-5). 1 Cor 11:10 refers to a wife's long hair as a sign of her subjection to her husband. The phrase *because of the angels* indicates that angels are always present in the assembly and the divine order must always be observed. Eph 5:22-24 teaches that the relationship between a husband and wife is a picture of that between Christ and the church. Just as the church is submitted to Christ, so too wives are to be submitted to their husbands. Her conduct as a dutiful, loving, devoted wife should be a testimony to her husband of her faith in Christ, which could be the catalyst which wins him to Christ. Wives are not to reproach their husbands for their behaviour toward them, but are to manifest the meekness, gentleness and

kindness of the Lord Jesus Christ (CP Mt 5:5; 2Cor 10:1).

Wives should not try to influence their husbands for Christ with their outward appearance, but rather by their inner life of holiness, and submission to their husbands. This is not teaching against wives wearing nice clothes and some jewellery. But scripture does teach against Christian women generally wearing extravagantly expensive clothes and adorning themselves with showy, expensive jewellery that draws attention to themselves and detracts from the worship of God, (CP 1i 2:9-10). See also comments on 1 Cor 11:3-16, Eph 5:22-24, 1Ti 2:9-10.

3:7 *What lesson is Peter teaching husbands here?*

After admonishing believing wives in V1-6 to be submitted to their husbands, Peter now addresses believing husbands, and highlights their reciprocal obligations to their wives. Husbands must always be considerate of their wives' feelings and needs and show them love, courtesy and understanding (CP Eph 5:25; 1Th 4:4). *Vessel* (KJV) in 1Th 4:4, is referring to a wife (see comments on 1Th 4:4). Wives generally are weaker than their husbands, both physically and emotionally, and husbands have to make allowances for this. But wives are not inferior to their husbands, and must never be treated as such (CP Ga 3:28). Christian husbands and wives share spiritual privileges as equals in Christ. They are heirs together of everlasting life and if husbands do not regard their wives as Peter instructs them here, their prayers will not be answered. The same as wives' prayers will not be answered if they are not submitted to their husbands (CP 1Cor 7:3-4; Col 3:19). 1Cor 7:4 teaches that both husband and wives must recognize their dependence upon each other. Col 3:19 teaches that if the wife is not submitted to him, the husband must not be bitter against her. He must give it over to God. (See also comments on Eph 5:22-24, 5:25-32, 1Pe 3:1-6.)

3:15 *What does Peter mean by what he says here?*

Peter is admonishing believers here to reverence Christ as Lord over every facet of their daily lives and to always be ready to testify, gently and respectfully, to anyone who asks, of the hope they have in Christ. (CP Psa 119:46; Col 4:6). 1Pe 3:15 applies primarily to times when believers are persecuted for their faith, but it is also applicable to everyday life (CP 2Ti 2:24-26). Believers must never be found wanting in their witness to God's saving grace (CP Jn 4:35-36; 2Cor 6:2).

3:18-20 (A) *Who are the spirits in prison?*

Firstly, we must reject out of hand any teaching that these are the spirits of humans being given another chance of eternal life, as some in the contemporary church teach (CP He 9:27; Rev 22:11-12). These scriptures clearly refute any suggestion that there is further opportunity for salvation after death. As someone is when they die, that is how they will remain throughout eternity. Furthermore, human

spirits are never just called spirits in scripture. Where human spirits are referred to in scripture, they are qualified as such (CP Nu 16:22; 27:16; 1Cor 14:32; He 12:23).

The spirits in prison in 1Pe 3:18-20 are fallen angels – the angels God cast down to hell in 2Pe 2:4, and bound in chains in Jude 6-7. They rebelled against God and sinned in the days of Noah, precipitating the flood that destroyed everyone on earth except Noah and his family (CP 2Pe 2:4). *Hell* in 2Pe 2:4 is **tartarus**, a prison for fallen angels. These angels are the spirits in prison Jesus preached to in 1Pe 3:19. They are the same angels that are bound in chains in Jude 6-7 (CP Jude 6-7). The angels' "first estate" is their original status in God's order – the exalted position they held in heaven above earthly humans (CP Psa 8:4-5; He 2:6-7). The "habitation" they left was their heavenly abode; the "strange flesh" they went after were human women, and the sin they committed was fornication. These angels left their heavenly abode and went in unto earthly women, taking them for wives and producing the giants of the Old Testament which corrupted all flesh and precipitated Noah's flood (CP Gen 6:1-8, 11-13, 17). A great many Christians do not believe that the "sons of God" in Gen 6 are angels because both Paul and John refer to believers as the sons of God in the New Testament (CP Jn 1:12; Ro 8:14, 19; Php 2:15; 1Jn 3:1, 2). But we must remember that when Moses wrote Genesis he would not be using New Testament expressions – there were no believers in Christ as such in his day. Also, sons of God in the Old Testament always refers to angels in the three other places in scripture where the expression is used (CP Job 1:6; 2:1; 38:7). In Job 1:6 and 2:1, we see Satan, a fallen angel, come *also* among the sons of God who presented themselves before the Lord, and in 38:7 God told Job that the sons of God shouted for joy when they saw the universe spring into existence. The clear inference in all these scriptures is that the sons of God are angels, and the fact that both Paul and John designated believers sons of God in the New Testament, has no bearing on angels being called sons of God in the Old Testament.

Another objection to the sons of God being angels in Gen 6, although it is purely academic in light of what the foregoing scriptures teach, is that the sons of God were men of the righteous line of Seth, Adam's third son, who took wives from the evil line of Cain. The main objection though to the sons of God being angels, is because it is generally supposed that angels are sexless and therefore it is not possible for them to fornicate with women. Those who espouse this view claim that is what Jesus teaches in Mt 22:23-30 (CP Mt 22:23-30). Jesus is not teaching here that angels are sexless, but that in the eternal state marriage will be unnecessary for believers who have part in the first resurrection. In the divine order, the basic purpose of marriage is for procreation, but as those having part in the first resurrection will no longer be subject to death, the need for procreation will no longer exist, so in this regard resurrected believers will be like the angels in heaven. Angels, as created beings do not die, and therefore do not reproduce themselves (CP Lu 20:34-36). (See also comments on Mt 12:38-40, Eph 4:9, He 9:27, 1Pe 3:18-20(B), 2Pe 2:4-6.) It should be noted

that Jesus is also not teaching here that Christians will *become* angels.

(B) What did Christ teach to the spirits in prison?

The word "preached" in 1Pe 3:19 should have been translated *herald* or *proclaim*. The Greek word used in this passage is **kerusso**, which means to herald or proclaim, as a public crier, whereas the Greek word for *preach* (the gospel for salvation), is **euaggelizo**. This also teaches us that Jesus was not giving the spirits in prison a second chance at eternal life, but that He was making a proclamation to them. Scriptures do not tell us what the proclamation was but the general consensus among Christians who subscribe to this view is that Jesus proclaimed His victory over death and Satan on the cross to them, which is outlined for us in Col 2:15 (CP Col 2:15). Jesus preached to these spirits as 1Pe 3:18-20 teaches, between His death and His resurrection, while He was in hell (CP Psa 16:10; Ac 2:27 with Mt 12:38-40). We learn from Mt 12:38-40 how this all ties in: *heart* in V40 means a vault or cell; by implication, a prison. This is *Tartarus*, the prison for fallen angels in 1 Pe 3:19, 2 Pe 2:4 and Jude 6-7 (CP 1Pe 3:19-20; 2Pe 2:4; Jude 6-7). Jesus spent three days and three nights in Tartarus between His death and resurrection, just as He prophesied He would in Mt 12:40. (See also comments on Mt 12:38-40, Eph 4:9, He 9:27, 1Pe 3:19-20(A), 2Pe 2:4-6.)

3:20-21 What do we learn from what Peter says here?

We learn from this that the water that carried Noah and his family to safety in the ark during the flood was an Old Testament type of the salvation that is by faith in the finished work of Christ, portrayed by water baptism in the New Testament (CP Gen 6:5-8, 13, 17-18; 7:1, 7, 17-24). Peter is not teaching in 1 Pe 3:20-21 that as water saved the eight people in the ark from the flood in the Old Testament, so too water baptism saves repentant sinners from hell in the New Testament. Far from it - Peter is very careful to point out that water baptism does not symbolize the putting away of sins, but the response of repentant sinners' hearts - the answer of a good conscience - toward God, and the affirmation of their new-found faith in the resurrected Christ to save them. The broad picture that Peter paints for us here is that just as Noah's building of the ark was a testimony to his faith in God for his salvation before the flood, so too believers going through the waters of baptism is a testimony to their faith in Christ for their salvation before they are baptized. (For more detailed studies on water baptism see comments on Mt 28:19-20, Mk 16:16, Ro 6:3-5).

4:1-4 What do we learn from this?

This teaches that as Christ suffered for sinners, so Christians must also be prepared to suffer to put away sin. Christians must not live like the unsaved people around them, sharing their sinful pleasures and thus avoiding persecution. They must live a holy life for all to see and be prepared to suffer for it. They can no longer give in to the cravings and desires of their

lower nature, but must bring their bodies under subjection to the will of God (CP 1Cor 9:27; 1Pe 2:11). In this present world Christians are strangers in a foreign land, without rights as citizens, because their citizenship is in heaven. In the past they lived dissolute and profligate lives of self-gratification, now they must spend the time they have left in this world for God's glory (CP Ac 8:1-13; Ro 6:1-23; Col 3:1-14). See also comments on Ro 6:1, 6:3-5, 6:6-11, 6:12-14, 6:15, 6:16, 6:17-20, 6:21-23; Col 3:1-3; 1Pe 2:11.

4:6 What does it mean that the gospel was preached to "them that are dead"?

Them that are dead is a reference to those who had the gospel preached to them during their lifetime, but who are now dead. In order that all men may be judged justly, the gospel was given to all alike. It goes as far back as Abel. He offered animal sacrifices to God which pointed to the supreme sacrifice, Jesus (CP Gen 4:3-4 with He 11:4; Ga 3:8; He 4:1-2; 11:7-10, 31-34). *That they might be judged according to men in the flesh, but live according to God in the spirit* in 1 Pe 4:6 means that many were judged by men and suffered persecution and even martyrdom for the faith. But though they were dead physically, they still lived spiritually with God. All their judgements had been fully accomplished while they lived so they will live eternally with Jesus. These are the "spirits of just men made perfect" in the "church of the firstborn" referred to in He 12:23 (CP He 11:35-40 with 12:23). Anyone who has not heard the gospel or been under the law will be judged on the basis of what light they have had and how their lives accorded with their conscience. God has not left anyone without light sufficient to justify or condemn them in the judgement (CP Ro 1:19-21; Ro 2:12-16).

4:7-11 What is the underlying teaching here?

Peter is exhorting believers here to view their present lives in light of Christ's imminent return and the end of this age (CP He 10:24-25; Jas 5:7-9). As the end of this age draws near believers must be self-controlled and alert, able to pray (CP Lu 18:1-8). Believers are to love one another sincerely and fervently from the heart. The phrase, "love shall cover a multitude of sins" in 1Pe 4:8 means that love is blind to the faults of others (CP 1Cor 13:1-7; Col 3:14; He 13:1). Believers are to be hospitable and kind to those in need (CP Mt 25:31-40; 2Cor 9:7; He 13:2; Jas 2:14-17, 26; 1Jn 3:16-19). Believers are to minister to others through their spiritual gifts (CP Mt 24:44-47; 25:14-30; Ro 12:6-8; 1Cor 4:1-2). Last but not least, believers must never be found wanting in their witness to Christ. They must never compromise God's word. He must be glorified in everything they do (CP 1Pe 3:14-16 with Mt 5:14-16).

4:17 What is the purpose behind the judgement of believers?

The purpose behind the judgement of believers is to refine their faith (CP Mt 5:10-12; Lu 6:22-23; 2Cor 4:8-11, 17-18; Jas 1:2-4, 12; 1Pe 1:6-9; 4:12-16). Trials are not sent by God to test Christians' faith, as

so many in the church believe, but by Satan to destroy it, if it were possible (CP Eph 6:11-18; 1Pe 5:8-11). Although God does not cause persecutions and trials to beset believers, He permits them for the ultimate good of believers in the purposes of God (CP Mal 3:1-4; Jn 15:2; Ro 8:18; 1Pe 1:6-9; 2:11-12, 19-20; 3:14-17; 4:19; Jas 1:1-4). Those who are unswerving in their faith and have totally committed themselves to God's care, can unreservedly depend upon His care and protection. They need never fear the judgement that will fall upon those who have rejected the gospel (CP Psa 31:5; 34:22; 37:5; Pr 3:5-8; 1Cor 10:13; 1Th 1:3-10; 5:9, 23-24; 2Th 3:3; 2Ti 1:12; He 10:23). See also comments on Ro 5:3-5, Jas 1:2-4, 1Pe 5:8-11.

5:1-3 *What is the underlying teaching behind what Peter says here?*

Peter is highlighting here the divine order of government for the New Testament church. God has committed the direction and government of the church to a plurality of elders co-equally. He has not committed it to just one man as is the norm in the contemporary church (CP Ac 20:17).

Firstly, we must distinguish between those designated elders in scripture and those designated elders in the contemporary church. Those designated elders in the contemporary church are not the recognized leaders of the local church, whereas the elders in scripture are. They are God's appointed shepherds/pastors of the local New Testament church. They constitute the presbytery, the ruling body in the New Testament church (CP V28). Paul's admonition to the elders here to collectively heed their responsibility to feed the church of God over which the Holy Spirit had made them overseers, teaches that God has committed the direction and government of the local New Testament church to the plurality of elders co-equally. *Feed* is from the Greek word **poimaino**, which means to pastor or shepherd. It is the plurality of elders' responsibility co-equally to pastor God's people who comprise the local church.

Overseers is from the Greek word **episkopos**, which means bishop (CP Ac 1:15-20). We learn from this that apostles are also bishops. Judas Iscariot forfeited his bishoprick - the office, charge, or duty of an overseer in the New Testament church - when he betrayed Jesus. He also forfeited his apostleship and eldership at the same time. *Bishop* is simply another name for elder. **Episkopos** is equal to **presbuteros** the Greek word for elder or presbyter. The terms bishop/overseer, elder/presbyter and pastor/shepherd all refer to one and the same person. However, although they all refer to one and the same person, the terms are not synonymous - they do not all mean the same: *elder/presbyter* refers to the man, *bishop/overseer* refers to the office, and *pastor/shepherd* refers to the work he does (CP 1Ti 3:1-7; Tit 1:4-9). These scriptures not only confirm that it is the elders to whom God has committed the direction and government of the local New Testament church, but they also teach that the elders are men. The Greek words **episkopos** for bishop, and **presbuteros** for elder, both only refer to a male, thus signifying that men only are ordained of God as elders

in the New Testament church. Also, the fact that anyone aspiring to the office of a bishop or elder must be the husband of one wife if married, is further confirmation that elders can only ever be men, not women as well. Contrary to what a great many Christians in the contemporary church believe there is no provision in scripture for the ordination of women to public ministry in the New Testament church. Scripture does not teach that a bishop or elder can be the wife of one husband.

There is just as much confusion concerning elders in the contemporary church as there is concerning apostles and prophets. Sadly, not many Christians know who the elders really are in the divine order for the church. They simply see them as having been a long-time member of the church, but that is only a part of what qualifies them as elders (CP Eph 4:7-16). This clearly spells out for us that the men who function in the ministry gifts of V11 are the ones God has designated as the ruling elders in the New Testament church. Christ gave these men to the church and ordained them to remain there while ever the church exists and we do not have to look for any one else in scripture beyond them as the elders to whom God has committed the direction and government of His church. The ruling body of elders in the church consists of apostle/elders, prophet/elders, evangelist/elders and teacher/elders who collectively and co-equally pastor the church (CP 1Pe 5:1). Peter highlights the co-equality of the ruling body of elders in his statement here "...who am also an elder." This *elder* is not **presbuteros** but **sumpresbuteros**, which means literally *one on the same level with*. Peter was a fellow elder, or co-presbyter with them. This is further confirmation that the divine order of government in the local New Testament church involves a plurality of elders co-equally. Peter is addressing a plurality of elders from each of the local churches at Pontus, Galatia, Cappadocia, Asia and Bithynia in this letter (CP 1Pe 1:1). Some who are opposed to the concept of a plurality of elders co-equally ruling the New Testament church teach that in 1Pe 5:1 Peter is identifying with the elders as an apostle and with the people as an elder, but that begs the question, why? He had already identified himself as an apostle to the elders and people alike in 1:1, and in 5:1 he simply asserts to the elders among them that he and they are co-equals in the divine order of government in the church. We should accept that assertion at face value, not look for hidden agendas behind it (CP Ac 14:21-23).

Here for the first time in scripture we see elders being appointed in the local church. They were already presiding over the church at Judaea when Paul and Barnabas took the relief money there from Antioch (CP Ac 11:29-30). They were also already presiding with the apostles over the Jerusalem church when Paul and Barnabas went there to settle the question of gentile circumcision at Antioch (CP Ac 15:1-6). In Ac 14:21-23 Paul and Barnabas appointed elders in the churches they had previously pioneered on their first apostolic mission journey in Ac 13 (CP 1Ti 1:1-4; Tit 1:4-5). We learn in 1Ti 1:1-4 that elders who had already been appointed in the local church at Ephesus were teaching error so Paul left Timothy there in the foundation ministry of apostle to straighten them out.

Tit 1:4-5 teaches that Paul likewise left Titus in the foundation ministry of apostle in Crete to appoint elders in the local churches there. We see in all these scriptures a definite biblical pattern whereby elders are appointed after local churches have been established by apostles. The elders collectively then become the presbytery, responsible for the direction and government of the church. This is not teaching that elders are appointed by men, but that those functioning in the ministry gifts of Eph 4:11 are acknowledged and ordained to ministry in the church by the apostle or the ruling body of elders in accordance with the divine will (CP 1Ti 4:14; 2Ti 1:6; 4:5). The word "presbytery" in 1Ti 4:14 is referring to the ruling body of elders who prophesied over Timothy and laid hands on him to bring forth his ministry gift of apostle (CP 1Ti 3:1-7). The term "desire" in V1 means to stretch oneself out in order to grasp or touch something. It includes the idea of reaching after or seeking. However believers desiring the office of bishop/overseer/elder/presbyter must have the desire first confirmed by the word of God as outlined in V2-7, and also by the church as outlined in V10 (CP V10).

This means that nobody can be ordained an elder based solely on desire, burden, vision, administrative ability, business acumen, the call of God some may feel they have on their life, or even Bible College training. The requirements for ordination are stipulated by God and stand as absolutes in God's order for church government. Moral issues are not all that is involved. Spiritual maturity and faithfulness in service are just as important. Men must first prove their faithfulness in lesser areas of ministry before seeking promotion to the highest office in the local New Testament church (CP 1Ti 3:8-13). V13 here teaches that those who serve faithfully as deacons obtain for themselves a position of trust and influence in the church. This is a definite promise of promotion for those faithful in the lesser things first. There are still more scriptures proving the plurality of elders as the ruling body co-equally in the local church which we need to examine (CP Php 1:1). "Bishops" here are the ruling elders or presbyters (CP 1Ti 5:17). "The elders that rule well" are those who preside over the local church (CP He 13:7,17,24). "Them who are to be obeyed" again are the ruling elders. *Obey* here means to assent to; follow (CP Jas 5:14). James also teaches a plurality of elders ruling the church co-equally here. He does not refer to any one man but to the plurality of elders co-equally.

The number of elders in any church will depend entirely upon the size of the congregation. The apostle who pioneers the church may be the only one to start with, but others should be appointed as quickly as they are seen to be functioning in any of the ministry gifts of Eph 4:11, and can satisfy the requirements God has laid down for their ordination in 1Ti 3:1-7 and Tit 1:4-9. They then become co-leaders in the church with the apostle (CP Ac 15:1-29; 21:17-25). These scriptures clearly confirm all that the foregoing scriptures teach - that the direction and government of the local New Testament church is not vested in the ministry of one man alone as it is in the contemporary church, but in the plurality of elders co-equally. James alone did not decide on what action

to take concerning the question of gentile circumcision in Ac 15 as some teach. The Greek construction of the phrase "wherefore my sentence is ..." in V19 according to Kenneth Wuest's "Expanded Translation of the Greek New Testament" is "...wherefore as for myself, my judgement is ..." James is simply putting forward his opinion on the issue the same as Peter did in V7-11, only he was more explicit than Peter by also proposing what action they should take. The fact that they all agreed to the action proposed as Chapter 15 clearly emphasizes, proves the co-equality in the plurality of elders involved.

There were a number of apostles present with the elders in Ac 15 but only James was present when Paul returned to Jerusalem in Ac 21. On both occasions though the elders were co-equal with the apostles in receiving Paul and his companions and in the decision making process which ensued. There is nothing in any of these scriptures to indicate that James, who appears to be resident apostle in the Jerusalem church in Ac 21, outranked the elders who presided over the church with him. However, the mantle of spokesman for the apostles and elders falls upon the apostle as the one set first in the church in the foundation ministry. In the absence of the apostle the next in line is the prophet, and after him the teacher. This is the divine order (CP 1Cor 12:28). There is no need to look beyond what scriptures teach about government in the New Testament church (see also comments on Ac 1:15-17, 6:1-6, 11:27, 13:1-4, 20:17, Ro 11:13, 16:1-2; 1Cor 12:28; Eph 2:20 (A), 4:11-12; Php 1:1; 1Tim 3:1-7, 3:8-13; 1Pet 5:1-3.)

5:5-6 *Are the elders referred to here the same as in V1?*

No. in V1 Peter is addressing the leaders of the church – the ruling elders, or presbytery (CP V1). In V5 Peter is referring not to authority, but age – an older man – one senior in age (CP Ac 2:17; 1Ti 5:1-2). Peter is admonishing young men in the assembly in 1Pe 5:5 to respect and honour the older men. But the older men are to respect and honour the younger men too. They must all be submitted to each other (CP Pr 3:34). Christians must all be humble toward each other, regardless of age or authority. God is only obligated to promote the humble, and He will lift them up in due time (CP Isa 57:15; Mt 11:28-30; Jn 13:3-17; Ro 12:10; Php 2:3-8; Col 3:12; Jas 4:6, 10).

5:8-11 *How are we to understand what Peter says here?*

We saw in our study on 1Pe 4:17 that these believers were undergoing severe trials of their faith. God does not send these trials but He permits them for the ultimate good of believers (CP Mal 3:1-4; Jn 15:2; Ro 8:18; 1 Pe 4:12-19; 1:6-9; 2:11-12, 19-20; 3:14-17; Jas 1:1-4). Now, in 1 Pe 5:8-11 Peter warns believers against succumbing to the devil in the midst of their trials and giving up on God. He encourages believers to resist the devil and stand firm in the faith, because believers suffering trials and tribulations do not stand alone. Everywhere in the world there are believers suffering for their faith. In V 10 Peter explains that any suffering seems as though it will never end but when contrasted with eternal life with Christ, it is only

temporary. The goal God has for everyone of His children is to share in His eternal glory in Christ (CP Mt 5:10-12; Lu 6:22-23; Ro 8:16-18; 2Cor 4:17; Php 1:27-30; 1Pe 4:13). It is to this end that God will equip, establish, strengthen

and set believers in firm foundations who do not succumb to the devil. (See also comments on Ro 5:3-5, Jas 1:2-4, 1Pe 4:17).