

Jesus in the Writings of Peter



SABBATH AFTERNOON

Read for This Week’s Study: *1 Pet. 1:18, 19; Col. 1:13, 14; Isa. 53:1–12; John 11:25; Ps. 18:50; 2 Pet. 1:1.*

Memory Text: “Who Himself bore our sins in His own body on the tree, that we, having died to sins, might live for righteousness—by whose stripes you were healed” (*1 Peter 2:24, NKJV*).

As we have studied 1 Peter, it should be clear by now that regardless of the context, and whatever the specific issues he’s addressing, Peter’s focus was on Jesus. Jesus permeates all that he writes; He’s the golden thread woven through the letter.

From the first line, where Peter says that he is an “apostle” (“one sent”) of Jesus Christ, until the last, when he writes, “Peace to you all who are in Christ Jesus” (*1 Pet. 5:14, NKJV*), Jesus is his key theme. And in this epistle he talks about Jesus’ dying as our sacrifice. He talks about the great suffering that Jesus went through and uses Jesus’ example in that suffering as a model for us. He talks about the resurrection of Jesus and what it means to us. In addition, he talks about Jesus not only as the Messiah, the *Christos*, the “anointed one,” but about Jesus as the Divine Messiah. That is, we see in 1 Peter more evidence of the divine nature of Jesus. He was God Himself, who came in human flesh and who lived and died so that we can have the hope and promise of eternal life.

This week we will go back through 1 Peter and look more closely at what it reveals about Jesus.

* Study this week’s lesson to prepare for Sabbath, May 20.

Jesus, Our Sacrifice

An overarching theme of the Bible, maybe even *the* overarching theme, is that of God's work in saving fallen humanity. From the fall of Adam and Eve in Genesis to the fall of Babylon in Revelation, Scripture in one way or another reveals the work of God in seeking to save "that which was lost" (*Luke 19:10*). And this theme is revealed in Peter's letters, as well.

Read 1 Peter 1:18, 19 and Colossians 1:13, 14. What does it mean to be redeemed, and what does blood have to do with redemption?

First Peter 1:18, 19 describes the significance of the death of Jesus this way: "Forasmuch as ye know that ye were not redeemed with corruptible things, as silver and gold, . . . but with the precious blood of Christ, as of a lamb without blemish and without spot." There are two key images in these words: redemption and animal sacrifice.

Redemption is used in the Bible in several ways. For example, the firstborn donkey (which could not be sacrificed) and the firstborn son (*Exod. 34:19, 20*) were redeemed by the sacrifice of a substitute lamb. Money could be used to buy back (redeem) items that had been sold because of poverty (*Lev. 25:25, 26*). Most important, a slave could be redeemed (*Lev. 25:47–49*). First Peter informs readers that the cost of buying them back (redeeming) from their "futile ways inherited from your fathers" (*1 Pet. 1:18, RSV*) was nothing less than the "precious blood of Christ, as of a lamb without blemish" (*1 Pet. 1:19*). The lamb image, of course, evokes the concept of animal sacrifice.

Peter thus likens Christ's death to that of a sacrificial animal in the Hebrew Bible. A sinner brought a sheep without blemish to the sanctuary. The sinner then laid his hands on the animal (*Lev. 4:32, 33*). The animal was slaughtered, and some of its blood was smeared on the altar; the rest was poured at the base (*Lev. 4:34*). The death of the sacrificial animal provided "atonement" for the one who offered the sacrifice (*Lev. 4:35*). Peter is saying that Jesus died in our place and that His death redeemed us from our former lives and the doom that would otherwise be ours.

What does the fact that our hope of salvation exists only in a substitute punished in our place teach us about our utter dependence upon God?

The Passion of Christ

Christians often talk about “the passion of Christ.” The word *passion* comes from a Greek verb that means “to suffer,” and the phrase *the passion of Christ* usually refers to what Jesus suffered in the final period of His life, beginning with the triumphal entry into Jerusalem. Peter, too, dwells on the theme of Christ’s suffering in those last days.

Read 1 Peter 2:21–25 and Isaiah 53:1–12. What do they tell us about what Jesus suffered on our behalf?

There is particular significance to the suffering of Jesus. He bore “our sins in His own body on the tree [a reference to the cross; compare with Acts 5:30], that we, having died to sins, might live for righteousness” (1 Pet. 2:24, NKJV). Sin brings death (Rom. 5:12). As sinners, we deserve to die. Yet, the perfect Jesus—who had no guile on His lips (1 Pet. 2:22)—died in our place. In that exchange, we have the plan of salvation.

Read Isaiah 53:1–12 again. What do the texts say that Jesus suffered as He worked out the plan of salvation in our behalf? What does this tell us about the character of God?

“Satan with his fierce temptations wrung the heart of Jesus. The Saviour could not see through the portals of the tomb. Hope did not present to Him His coming forth from the grave a conqueror, or tell Him of the Father’s acceptance of the sacrifice. He feared that sin was so offensive to God that Their separation was to be eternal. Christ felt the anguish which the sinner will feel when mercy shall no longer plead for the guilty race. It was the sense of sin, bringing the Father’s wrath upon Him as man’s substitute, that made the cup He drank so bitter, and broke the heart of the Son of God.”—Ellen G. White, *The Desire of Ages*, p. 753.

What should our response be to what Christ has endured for us? How are we to follow His example, as 1 Peter 2:21 says?

The Resurrection of Jesus

Read 1 Peter 1:3, 4, 21; 3:21; John 11:25; Philippians 3:10, 11; Revelation 20:6. To what great hope are these texts pointing, and what does it mean to us?

As we have already seen, 1 Peter is addressed to those who are suffering because of their belief in Jesus. It is particularly appropriate, then, that right at the beginning of his letter Peter directs his readers' attention to the hope that awaits them. As he says, the hope of a Christian is a living hope, precisely because it is a hope that rests on the resurrection of Jesus (*1 Pet. 1:3*). Because of Jesus' resurrection, Christians can look forward to an inheritance in heaven that will not perish or fade (*1 Pet. 1:4*). In other words, no matter how bad things become, think about what awaits us when it is all over.

Indeed, Jesus' resurrection from the dead is a guarantee that we also can be raised (*1 Cor. 15:20, 21*). As Paul puts it, "And if Christ be not raised, your faith is vain; ye are yet in your sins" (*1 Cor. 15:17*). But because Jesus has been raised from the dead, He has shown that He has the power to conquer death itself. Thus, the Christian hope finds its basis in the historical event of Christ's resurrection. His resurrection is the foundation of ours at the end of time.

Where would we be without that hope and promise? Everything that Christ did for us culminates in the promise of the resurrection. Without that, what hope do we have, especially because we know that contrary to popular Christian belief, the dead are in an unconscious sleep in the grave?

"To the Christian, death is but a sleep, a moment of silence and darkness. The life is hid with Christ in God, and 'when Christ, who is our life, shall appear, then shall ye also appear with Him in glory.' John 8:51, 52; Col. 3:4. . . . [A]t His second coming all the precious dead shall hear His voice, and shall come forth to glorious, immortal life."—Ellen G. White, *The Desire of Ages*, p. 787.

Think about the apparent finality of death. It's so harsh, so unforgiving, and so real. Why, then, is the promise of the resurrection so important to our faith and to everything we believe in and hope for?

Jesus as the Messiah

As we saw earlier, one of the crucial turning points in Jesus' earthly ministry was when, in response to a question about who He was, Peter answered: " 'You are the Christ, the Son of the living God' " (*Matt. 16:16, NKJV*). The word *Christ* (*Christos* in Greek) means the "anointed," the "Messiah"; in Hebrew it is *mashiyach*. It came from a root word that means "to anoint," and it was used in various contexts in the Old Testament. (It was even used in one place to point to a pagan king, Cyrus [*see Isa. 45:1*].) Thus, when Peter called Jesus the Christ, he was using a word that expresses an ideal derived from the Hebrew Scriptures.

Read the following texts from the Old Testament that use the word *Messiah* or *anointed*. What does the context teach us about what it means? How might Peter have understood what it meant when he called Jesus the Messiah?

Ps. 2:2 _____

Ps. 18:50 _____

Dan. 9:25 _____

1 Sam. 24:6 _____

Isa. 45:1 _____

Though Peter had been inspired by the Lord to declare Jesus as the Messiah (*Matt. 16:16, 17*), there's no question that he didn't fully understand what this meant. He didn't understand who exactly the Messiah was, what He was to accomplish, and, perhaps most important, how He would accomplish it.

In that lack of understanding, Peter was not alone. There were many different ideas in Israel about the Messiah. In and of themselves, the uses of the word *Messiah* or *anointed* in the above texts don't present a full picture, however much they might foreshadow what the Messiah would ultimately be and do.

John 7:42 reveals some of what was expected of the Messiah: He would be descended from David, from the town of Bethlehem (*Isa. 11:1–16, Mic. 5:2*). That part they got right. In the popular imagination, however, a Messiah from the line of David would do what David did: defeat the enemies of the Jews. What no one expected was a Messiah who would be crucified by the Romans.

Of course, by the time he wrote his epistles, Peter more clearly understood Jesus as the Messiah (He is called Jesus *Christ* 15 times in 1 and 2 Peter) and all that He would accomplish for humanity.

Jesus, the Divine Messiah

Peter knew not only that Jesus was the Messiah but that He was the Lord, as well. That is, by the time of these epistles, Peter knew that the Messiah was God Himself. Though the title “Lord” can have a secular meaning, the term also can be a clear reference to divinity. In 1 Peter 1:3 and 2 Peter 1:8, 14, 16, Peter is referring to Jesus, the Messiah, the Christ, as the Lord, as God Himself.

Like other writers in the New Testament, Peter describes the relationship between Jesus and God with the words *Father* and *Son*. For example, “Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ” (1 Pet. 1:3, *NKJV*; compare 2 Pet. 1:17). Jesus is described as the beloved Son (2 Pet. 1:17), and some of Jesus’ authority as Lord, and His heavenly status, comes from this special relationship that He has with God the Father.

Read 2 Peter 1:1, John 1:1, and John 20:28. What do these texts tell us about the divinity of Jesus?

Second Peter 1:1 says “our God and Savior Jesus Christ” (*NKJV*). In the Greek original, the same definite article (that is, “the”) is used for both God and Savior. Grammatically this means that both “God” and “Savior” are used of Jesus. Second Peter 1:1, then, stands as one of the very clear indications in the New Testament of the full divinity of Jesus.

As the early Christians struggled to understand Jesus, they gradually put the evidence of the New Testament together. In the writings of Peter, the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit are distinct (for example, Father/Son: 1 Pet. 1:3, 2 Pet. 1:17; Holy Spirit: 1 Pet. 1:12, 2 Pet. 1:21), as indeed they are in the rest of the New Testament. Yet, at the same time, Jesus is portrayed as fully divine, as is the Holy Spirit. Over time, and after much discussion, the church developed the doctrine of the Trinity to explain as well as possible the divine mystery of the Godhead. Seventh-day Adventists include the doctrine of the Trinity as one of their 28 fundamental beliefs. Thus, we see in Peter a clear depiction of Jesus, not only as the Messiah but as God Himself.

When you think about the life and death of Jesus and then realize that *He was God*, what does this tell you about the kind of God we serve and why we should love and trust Him? Bring your answer to class on Sabbath.

Further Thought: “It seems logical to begin with ‘Messiah,’ since the Christian church owes its name to the Greek equivalent *Christos*, the ‘Anointed One.’ The Hebrew word relates to the deliverer figure whom the Jews awaited and who would be God’s agent in the inauguration of a new age for God’s people. Both the Hebrew and the Greek terms are derived from roots meaning ‘to anoint.’ Evidently, by calling Him ‘Christ,’ the New Testament writers regarded Jesus as specially set aside for a particular task.

“The title *Christos* occurs more than 500 times in the NT. Although there was more than one concept of Messiahship among Jesus’ contemporaries, it is generally recognized that by the first century Jews had come to look on the Messiah as someone in a special relationship with God. He would usher in the end of the age, when the kingdom of God would be established. He was the one through whom God would break through into history for the deliverance of His people. Jesus accepted the title ‘Messiah,’ but did not encourage its use; for the term carried political overtones that made its use difficult. Though reluctant to avail Himself of it in public to describe His mission, Jesus rebuked neither Peter (*Matt. 16:16, 17*) nor the Samaritan woman (*John 4:25, 26*) for using it. He knew Himself to be the Messiah, as seen in Mark’s report of Jesus’ words about giving one of His disciples a cup of water ‘because you bear the name of Christ’ (*Mark 9:41*).”—*The SDA Bible Commentary*, vol. 12, p. 165.

Discussion Questions:

- 1 Read Isaiah 53:1–12. According to this passage, what has Jesus done for us? Write down the specifics of what He has done on our behalf. In what ways can we clearly see in these verses the idea of Jesus as our Substitute? Why do we need Him as our Substitute?
- 2 Throughout history, some have used the biblical promise of an afterlife to help keep people oppressed. *Well, yes, your life is hard here and now, but just focus on what God has promised for us when Jesus returns.* Because this truth taught in the Word of God has been abused, many reject the Christian notion of an afterlife; instead, they see it merely as a ploy by some people to oppress others. How would you respond to that charge?
- 3 In class, go over your answer to Thursday’s question about Christ’s divinity and what it tells us about the character of God. Why is His divinity and what it does reveal about God such good news?

God Is a Faithful Husband: Part 3

Through the years, God has given me special evidences of His love. Long before I married, I heard a young man play the piano. I was so impressed that I told God that if I had children, I would want them to learn to play the piano for His glory. God answered that prayer. My daughter is truly a gifted musician. I could never afford piano lessons, but she has a natural musical ability. She has a friend who owns a piano, and when she visited their home they allowed her to play. She has never had a formal piano lesson, but God has been her teacher. She plays beautifully and has been recognized nationally for her playing, and best of all, she gives God the glory. She plays for the church, and many people come to the church just to hear her play.

I never had enough money to save for an emergency. Then one day, my son was riding a bicycle and was hit by a driver who fled the scene. Someone brought my son home with injuries to his collarbone and plenty of scrapes and bruises.

That day my brother-in-law, who is a doctor, had come to visit. Twice he had stood up to leave; then without explanation, he sat down again. He was standing to leave when the people brought my injured son home. My brother-in-law attended to him and took the boy to the hospital. He gave him medical care and even bought the medicines that my son needed. Then he brought my son back home. He told me, "I hadn't planned to stay long this morning, but something—or Someone—told me to stay. Now I understand that the voice I heard was God's."

Yes, I can truly say that God is my husband. He provides for me and cares for me. My children are His, and I give Him all the glory for taking me, a young widow, through a difficult time into victory in His name. To God be the glory.

The Thirteenth Sabbath Offering this quarter is going to the West-Central Africa Division. The offering will help to build a special youth multipurpose center at Babcock University in Nigeria and a Seventh-day Adventist mission academy in the country of Gabon. Thank you for supporting mission through your generous offerings.

ELISE GWET *lives and works in Yaoundé, Cameroon.*

The Lesson in Brief

▶ **Key Text:** *1 Peter 1:18–21*

▶ **The Student Will:**

Know: See that Jesus Christ is at the center of Peter’s theology and teaching, including His Messiahship, His suffering and death, His resurrection, and His second coming.

Feel: Grasp the privilege of being called by God to participate in the sufferings of Christ, and experience faith and hope in the glory that is to be revealed in us at His return.

Do: Forsake an empty way of life and do faithfully that which is right, serving others in love.

▶ **Learning Outline:**

I. Know: Jesus as Messiah, Redeemer, and Lord

A What specific aspects of Jesus’ life and ministry does Peter highlight in this epistle?

B What seems to be the central focus of Peter’s references to Jesus’ life and ministry?

II. Feel: The Call to Follow in Jesus’ Steps

A In what specific context does Peter call his readers to follow in the footsteps of Jesus?

B How does Jesus’ fulfillment of Old Testament prophecies influence our decisions about following Jesus today?

III. Do: Preparing for Jesus’ Return

A What does Peter advise his readers to do as they prepare for Jesus’ return?

B How do we view the coming judgment? Is it with fear or with eager anticipation? Discuss.

▶ **Summary:** Peter weaves a clear message about Jesus into all of his discussions. Jesus is the Divine Messiah of Old Testament prophecy, sent to redeem His people from their sinful ways of life by the sacrifice of Himself. He was resurrected from the dead and will soon be revealed again in glory. The Christian’s hope is in Him.

Learning Cycle

►STEP 1—Motivate

Spotlight on Scripture: *1 Peter 1:3–9*

Key Concept for Spiritual Growth: God has begotten the Christian to a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead. This hope includes an inheritance in heaven that can never perish, spoil, or fade. It is preserved for us who are shielded through faith by God’s power until the coming of the salvation that will be revealed at the return of Christ. We praise God with joy because of this hope of salvation, and our conduct is transformed by the anticipation of the glories to be revealed in us. We love Jesus, and we love one another. We endure trials with patient endurance. We trust God and His Word, and, finally, we receive the goal of our faith, the salvation of our souls.

Just for Teachers: Jesus transformed Peter’s life. Peter was naturally bold and brash, impetuous and outspoken. He often spoke before giving careful thought to his words. As a result, he made promises he couldn’t keep and ended up denying his Lord. However, unlike Judas, instead of losing hope and giving up, Peter repented and sought a new experience with Christ, becoming one of His most ardent followers and advocates. Peter was perhaps the most prominent leader in the early church, at least until Paul became prominent as an apostle to the Gentiles. Paul considered Peter to be one of the main “pillars” of the church (*Gal. 2:9, NKJV*). Peter knew who Jesus was and the power of Jesus in the life. It is not surprising that his epistle is filled with passages that speak of the importance of Jesus in the life of the believer.

Opening Activity and Discussion: Ask the class to read together 1 Peter 1:3–9, 18–21. Invite members to identify the various elements of the salvation process that are mentioned in these passages and their connection to the life and work of Jesus.

►STEP 2—Explore

Just for Teachers: The life and work of Jesus permeate Peter’s first epistle. But the central focus of Jesus’ life and work is found in 1 Peter 3:18, namely, the substitutionary death of Jesus for our sins and His subsequent resurrection to life in the Spirit. There are ten

explicit references to the suffering and death of Jesus in the epistle (*1 Pet. 1:2, 11, 19; 2:21, 23, 24; 3:18; 4:1, 13; 5:1*), with at least one reference in each chapter. And there are four explicit references to His resurrection (*1 Pet. 1:3, 21; 3:18, 21*). In addition, there is one reference to His ascension (*1 Pet. 3:22*), and five to His second coming (*1 Pet. 1:5, 7, 13; 5:1, 4*).

Bible Commentary

I. The Suffering and Death of Jesus (*Review together 1 Peter 1:18, 19; 2:24; 3:18.*)

The majority of the references to the life and work of Jesus refer to His suffering and death. His suffering is mentioned the most, largely as an example for those who also are suffering (*1 Pet. 1:11, 12; 2:21–23; 4:1, 13–16*), but the death of Jesus as a sacrifice for our sins is theologically more significant for our eternal salvation (*1 Pet. 1:18, 19; 2:24; 3:18*). These passages teach a substitutionary atonement to pay the redemption price for our sins. Apart from the substitutionary sacrifice of Jesus, there would be no provision for our salvation. This arrangement is the only way we can approach God (*1 Pet. 3:18; John 14:6; Acts 4:10–12; Heb. 9:27, 28; 10:19–22*).

Consider This: How much time daily or weekly do I spend in contemplation of the suffering and death of Jesus?

II. The Resurrection of Jesus (*Review 1 Peter 1:3, 21; 3:18, 21 with your class.*)

As important as the death of Jesus was for our salvation, it would have been ineffective apart from His resurrection (*1 Pet. 1:3; 3:21; 1 Cor. 15:14, 17–19*). We have hope of eternal life because He is not dead but is risen (*Matt. 28:5, 6; Luke 24:5, 6*), and He has become “the firstfruits of those who have fallen asleep” (*1 Cor. 15:20, NIV*). It is in His resurrection that we have the assurance of the potential for our resurrection to eternal life. Peter clearly understands this principle and holds it up before his readers as the basis for their hope—no matter the suffering, or even death, they may undergo in this life.

Consider This: In Romans 6:4 Paul makes the resurrection of Jesus not only our hope of eternal life hereafter but also a type of our new spiritual life in the present. What is the hope of our eternal life founded upon?

III. Christ's Ascension and Return (Review together 1 Peter 1:5, 7, 13; 3:22; 5:1, 4.)

In addition to the suffering, death, and resurrection of Jesus, Peter points to a couple of other important events in Jesus' life and work. In 1 Peter 3:22, he refers to Jesus' ascension, and even hints at His high priestly ministry, when he states that He "is at God's right hand" (*NIV*; compare with *Acts 5:31; Heb. 8:1; 9:24; and 10:11, 12*). Then he refers five times to Christ's second coming, which he speaks of as His revelation in glory at the last time (*1 Pet. 1:5, 7, 13; 5:1*), or His appearing (*1 Pet. 5:4*). This appearing in glory is the culmination of all of the hopes of the Christian (*Titus 2:13*). It will be the blessed inheritance that has been reserved in heaven for us, and it is that which we have been looking for and to which we were called (*1 Pet. 1:4, 3:9*).

Consider This: Jesus generally was known as Jesus Christ (*Christos*, the Anointed One, the Messiah). Thus, Peter repeatedly proclaims that Jesus is the promised Messiah of Old Testament prophecy, and he explicitly points it out in 1 Peter 1:10–12. In what ways is Jesus the promised Messiah—with all that this designation connotes—for me?

Discussion Questions:

- ❶ What role does Peter's reference to the Old Testament prophets and their predictions in 1 Peter 1:10–12 play in his focus on Jesus and His life and ministry?
- ❷ In pointing to Jesus' sufferings and death as a primary focus of his epistle, why does Peter also take the opportunity, in 1 Peter 3:15, to enjoin his readers to "revere Christ as Lord" in their hearts (*NIV*)?

►STEP 3—Apply

Just for Teachers: We often find it easier to focus on doctrinal issues than on relational issues. This week's lesson focuses on both, looking at some events in the life of Jesus that are important for our salvation, and also at Peter's personal relationship with Jesus that was transformative for his own life and ministry. In teaching this lesson, make sure that the relational issues are not overlooked in favor of the texts that point to the doctrinal issues for salvation. Find opportunity to discuss Peter's relationship with Jesus, which led him to keep Jesus central in his epistle. Do not neglect to personalize Peter's relationship with Jesus. In what ways have we set apart Christ as Lord in our hearts?

Thought Questions:

① What were the critical factors in Peter's conversion that made him the spiritual leader that he turned out to be, with Jesus at the center of his teaching and his hope?

② Having set apart Jesus as Christ and Lord in the heart, we must strive for a meaningful relationship with Him. If we have not done so, what can we do to enter into a living hope in Jesus?

Activity: Have the class read together 1 Peter 4:1, 2, 7, 8; 5:6–10. Discuss the ways in which the example of Jesus should have a transformative influence in our lives as it did in the life of Peter. How will our community view our relationships with Jesus, based on what they observe of our lives? What changes do we need to make?

►STEP 4—Create

Just for Teachers: Peter begins his epistle by pointing to the changes that God wants to make in our lives. God has chosen us, through the sanctifying work of the Spirit, for obedience to Jesus Christ and sprinkling (metaphorical cleansing) by His blood (*1 Pet. 1:2*). “In his great mercy he has given us new birth into a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, and into an inheritance that can never perish, spoil or fade” (*1 Pet. 1:3, 4, NIV*). After describing how these changes are to take place in our lives and how we can lay claim to that living hope, Peter closes his epistle by assuring his readers that the God of all grace “will himself restore you and make you strong, firm and steadfast” (*1 Pet. 5:10, NIV*). “This [restoration],” he assures his readers in 1 Peter 5:12, “is the true grace of God. Stand fast in it” (*NIV*).

Activity: Develop with the class a strategy by which the true grace of God—as revealed through the life and ministry of Jesus Christ—can be proclaimed to your church's community, offering them a new birth to a living hope and an inheritance that will not perish or fade with time. How can the message of 1 Peter play a role in that strategy?