

# 1 Peter 2: Aliens and Strangers

## Hook (20%)

1. Christians against the government (treason)
2. Inside the Christian Right Dominionist Movement That's Undermining Democracy
3. So How Come Jesus Preached Democracy, But the Religious Right Undermines It?
4. Christians as cannibals
5. An argument of why Christians are cannibals (and possibly vampires) from Christianity's own perspective
6. Christian Cannibalism - Certainly the creepiest thing about the Christian religion is the practice of ritual cannibalism.
7. 29 Sept 2011 - Birom Christians eat Roasted flesh of Muslims they Killed in Jos, Nigeria

Who we are	<h1>Living as Aliens and Strangers in the World</h1>	What we do – think differently
What we do – act differently		Why we do it – the glory of God

**Book** – 1 Peter 2:9-17

## Look (50%) – Living as Aliens and Strangers in the World

### Who we are

**Background** – This letter was written by the Apostle Peter (1:1), probably around 62 AD, at the onset of the first great persecution of Christians in the Roman Empire, that of Nero (54-68 AD, persecution 62-64). The Empire had suffered during the famine under Claudius (41-54 AD), and the Christians, like most impoverished people throughout history, suffered the worst. The fever in Palestine was rising, with the great Jewish rebellion against Rome only four years away (66 AD), Nero had begun his descent into madness which would lead to his suicide in 68 AD. Assuming that Babylon is a code name for Rome, Peter wrote this epistle from Rome and faced the same persecution as his readers (1 Peter 5:13). Christian tradition holds that he was crucified in Rome just a few years later.

Accusations of secular Romans against early Christians

Burning Rome - Roman historian Tacitus - Annals

"Therefore, to stop the rumor [that he had set Rome on fire], he [Emperor Nero] falsely charged with guilt, and punished with the most fearful tortures, the persons commonly called Christians, who were [generally] hated for their enormities. Christus, the founder of that name, was put to death as a criminal by Pontius Pilate, procurator of Judea, in the reign of Tiberius, but the pernicious superstition - repressed for a time, broke out yet again, not only through Judea, - where the mischief originated, but through the city of Rome also, whither all things horrible and disgraceful flow from all quarters, as to a common receptacle, and where they are encouraged. Accordingly first those were arrested who confessed they were Christians; next on their information, a vast multitude were convicted, not so much on the charge of burning the city, as of "hating the human race."

In their very deaths they were made the subjects of sport: for they were covered with the hides of wild beasts, and worried to death by dogs, or nailed to crosses, or set fire to, and when the day waned, burned to serve for the evening lights. Nero offered his own garden players for the spectacle, and exhibited a Circensian game, indiscriminately mingling with the common people in the dress of a charioteer, or else standing in his chariot. For

this cause a feeling of compassion arose towards the sufferers, though guilty and deserving of exemplary capital punishment, because they seemed not to be cut off for the public good, but were victims of the ferocity of one man."

1. Atheism – Christians did not use idols or worship the emperor (Acts 15:29)
2. Cannibalism – eating the “flesh and blood of Christ” during the Eucharist
3. Immorality – the “love feasts”
4. Damaging economic well being and stirring up riots – Acts 16:16-23, Acts 19:23-41

**VV 9-10** – The hatred against Christians increased as their numbers grew, and Peter knew that his readers needed encouragement as well as instruction. Referring back to the Old Testament, he reminded them of their high position in Christ.

Title	OT Reference	Meaning
A chosen race	Isaiah 43:20, Deuteronomy 10:15	God brought His people to Himself. He chose them, not them Him.
A royal priesthood	Exodus 19:6 Isaiah 61:6, 66:21	A royal house suffused with great dignity and dedicated to His personal service. Such a priesthood also exercises rule (cf. 1 Corinthians 6:2-3, Revelation 5:9-10).
A holy nation	Exodus 19:6 Deuteronomy 7:6	A nation set apart to the Lord, distinct from all other peoples.
A people for God's possession	Exodus 19:5 Deuteronomy 4:20	A people owned in a special way by the Creator (cf. Hosea 1:9-10)

Notice that Peter is taking Old Testament promises directed towards God's covenant people, the Jews, and applying them promises to His new people, all who believe in Jesus Christ (which includes Jewish believers – see Romans 11). This was as thrilling to the Christians as it was appalling to the Jewish authorities, who thought that the Christians were teaching that God had rejected them.

The Church has been given these blessings so that it might communicate the greatness of God to all of the peoples of the world. We were in the darkness of confusion and wickedness just like everyone else, but God, for no reason other than His goodness, called us into the light of truth. We neither sought salvation nor deserved it in any way, but He granted it to us. We had not been given mercy, but now we have (cf. Hosea 2:23). Therefore we are to use our lives proclaiming His excellencies throughout the earth.

### What we do – think differently

**V11** – The exalted status given to the Church means that its members are not like other people on the earth. Christians are not at home in this world because they are seeking a better world; one were the Lord is (Hebrews 11:14-16). Therefore, believers in Christ are aliens and foreigners in this world. We are literally in the world but not of this world (John 18:36).

People who do not have Christ, without a future home to anticipate, have their eyes fixed on this world. Their happiness, their dreams, and their successes, must come in this world if they are to come at all. The desires (*ἐπιθυμία epithymia - lusts*) and thoughts of this world crowd out desires and thoughts of God and His kingdom (Mark 4:19). The human soul was made for eternal communion with God, the One who Created and Loves each of us. For a person to focus on this world and not focus on the Lord violates His plan and the way we have been made. Our sinful nature would separate us from God and our nature as creatures draws us to Him. These forces war in our members.

Since Jesus' followers are not of this world, we are not to live like people who are of this world. Our hopes and dreams are focused on God's work now and spending eternity with Him in our real home. Our time horizons are not limited to 70 or 80 years but span throughout eternity and therefore we weight our priorities accordingly. The lusts of the world would have us “get all we can while we can”; whether that

means pleasure, sex, money, fame, power, excitement, or whatever. This mindset makes perfect sense if in just a few decades we cease to exist and there is nothing else. This mindset makes no sense if we truly live forever. If believers never truly die (but only “sleep”), we have plenty of time to enjoy ourselves in the hereafter; now is the time to get as many others as possible out of eternal separation from God and into His kingdom. The reward can wait; we have important work to do.

### What we do – act differently

**V12** – And how do we do the important work of making disciples that God has for us? We do it by keeping our behavior excellent at all times, both around our brethren and around those who do not know Him. Because Christians are “aliens and strangers” in this world, those who are of this world will neither understand nor like them. Followers of Christ will seem like evildoers and will be the victims of slander and persecution.

The antidote to this is to live consistently excellent lives, performing such good deeds that even the heathen (at least the reasonable ones) must admire. As a result of seeing the virtues of Christ lived out in the lives of His people (and seeing their love for one another – John 13:34-35), nonbelievers will glorify God and some day He will visit them with salvation. God’s “Visitation” in the Bible either refers to His judgment or His blessing, but in the New Testament it speaks of His blessing (Luke 1:68, 7:16, 19:44).

**VV 13-14** - As Peter’s audience, the Christians in Asia Minor noted in 1:1, are soon to face persecution, they will need to know how to respond to the authorities who will be persecuting them. This is an important part of living lives that will cause others to glorify God and lead them to Him.

In James 4:7 Christians are told to submit (ὑποτάσσω *hypotassō*) to God. In verse 13 we are to submit to the authorities over them, knowing that the authority that these people possess was given to them by God (cf. John 19:11, Romans 13:1-4). Submit carries a military connotation, with the idea of soldiers lining up in their proper order under their commander. Thus as believers take their proper position in the body of Christ they also take their proper position in society and serve for its benefit. In so doing, they will be serving God.

Keep in mind that the Bible does not specify how people get power; some receive it because of their birth, some because of money, some because of power (such as leading an army), and some are democratically elected. However they received their position, however, the Bible teaches that God ultimately placed them in that position and intends that they will use it to serve Him (cf. Isaiah 45:1-7, Daniel 4:34-35).

“Authorities” (κτίσις *ktisis* - *ordinance*) include national authorities such as kings, regional authorities such as governors, and other human institutional authorities. In our times these would include judges, teachers, police officers, and others. This only applies, however, when they act in the course of their lawful duties and when they do not disagree with God’s commands (cf. Acts 5:29).

Believers are to obey authorities for the Lord’s sake. As noted before, one of the main objections to early Christianity was that it opposed lawful government and was even treasonous. Jesus, however, never wanted political considerations to get in the way of His mission of providing eternal salvation to rebellious humanity. Therefore, except in cases of direct opposition to the will of God, believers were to obey authorities and live in peace with those around them. This is the same as the command God gave to the Jews living in Babylon after the destruction of Jerusalem (Jeremiah 29:1-14).

Some may object that this passage is unrealistic because many governments reward evildoers and punish the righteous. This is undeniable. However, no government can systematically promote chaos and evil throughout its dominion and survive as a government or as a society. Even the worst governments in history have practiced justice for a certain percentage of their population; just enough to keep them in power.

Many would consider the governments of Nazi Germany, Stalinist Russia, and Maoist China to be the worst governments of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. They were sources of unspeakable evil in the Holocaust, the pogroms and purges, and the Cultural Revolution. Still, even these had to enforce traffic laws, honor contracts, and maintain a modicum of societal stability, if nothing else to ensure their own survival. Nero, Saddam Hussein and Idi Amin had to perform the basic requirements of government, at least for a large enough group to stay in power.

**V15** – Words are cheap, and they surround us in noise and confusion. The chattering classes, the “talking heads” of the media and the dinner party, have an uncanny ability to muddle every argument and distort every truth. Their ability is enhanced by our modern predisposition to frenzied activity without coherent thought. It is also enhanced by our modern predisposition to isolate belief from action. We may say that we believe something, but such “belief” does not change how we live. Therefore it never becomes deeply ingrained as a belief and we become “driven and tossed by the wind...double-minded men, unstable in all our ways.”

When was the last time that we carefully considered both sides of a question, pondered the deeper implications thereof, chose which to believe, and changed our behavior because of our change in belief?

However, a thousand arguments cannot eliminate the power of a godly life. By living in the midst of God’s will, consistently and joyfully, Christians will eventually silence the attacks of the ignorant. Only the most foolish of men can maintain a lie in the face of overwhelming truth. Our Lord intends our lives to provide overwhelming truth of His work in us, so that others will know Him.

**V16** – Christians are to act as free men because they are, more than anyone else, truly free. The fact of immortality in Christ frees us from the “70 year time frame” and therefore frees us from slavery to our lusts. To truly apprehend eternal life is to be free from the fear of death and from every other fear and lust that derives from it. Think about it; if this life is merely a shadow of the next, and if we live forever in the new earth in perfect communion with Christ,

1. Why would we want to accumulate money, power, or fame?
2. Why would we fear what man can do to us, since he can only kill the body (Psalm 118:6, Matthew 10:28), and death is only the gateway to real life?
3. Why would we compete with one another? What could we possibly gain from it, since all believers share the same promises now and will share the same paradise in the future?
4. Why would we be impatient? God gives us enough time to accomplish His will in this world, and gives us time everlasting in the future world.

Thus Christians were freer than other men, slaves to sin in their fear of death, could ever be. They are therefore to act like free men and use their freedom as servants of God. In light of our eternal lives, the only activities that make sense on this earth are giving glory to God by loving Him, enjoying Him, and serving Him in every way. Whether through career, relationships, recreation, church, or anything else, He is our focus.

Freedom must never be used as a veneer for sin. Indeed, sin robs us of our freedom in Christ (Romans 6:1-2).

**V17** – As slaves of God, we will honor (τιμάω *timaō* - recognize the God-given value of) men, love (ἀγαπάω *agapaō* - show godly, self-denying affection for) the brotherhood of Christians, fear (φοβέω *phobeō* - treat with reverence, be struck with amazement) God, and honor the king.

Why we do it – the glory of God

**Took** (30%) –

Who we are	<h1>Living as Aliens and Strangers in the World</h1>	What we do – think differently
What we do – act differently		Why we do it – the glory of God

**Verdict – What do you want them to DO as a result of the truths they have just received?**

**Closing Prayer**