

# 1 PETER 2:11-12

TOBY SUMPTER

TRINITY REFORMED CHURCH - MOSCOW, ID

A.D. OCTOBER 18, 2009

## INTRODUCTION

These two verses serve to summarize the ground we have covered to this point and introduce what follows. If the first half of 1 Peter is about God's people from the inside, the later half is concerned with God's people from the outside. And when we say God's people, we mean God's house.

## BELOVED SOJOURNERS AND PILGRIMS

Peter addresses his audience as "beloved," as those who are loved. This fits with the family theme we've already noted, but it's also the title that God the Father gives to Jesus (Mt. 3:17, 17:5, cf. 1 Pet. 1:3, 17). Given the covenantal context, we should recognize that Peter means they are loved by God (e.g. 2:9-10). Again, we find Peter addressing his audience with these "transitory" terms. We saw this in 1:1 and again in 1:17. It's also been assumed in all the Exodus imagery. They are the covenant people of God somewhere between redemption from Egypt (1:18-19) and the established house of God in the land (2:4-10). But remember that Israel is the army of Yahweh, and therefore these "sojourners" are to wage war against the "fleshly lusts" (2:11). Many in Peter's audience were probably literal refugees from Jerusalem (Acts 8:1, 4, 11:19), and this relates to the revelation/visitation language we see throughout the book along with the expectation of immanent judgment (1:7, 1:13, 2:12, 4:5, 4:7, 12, 17, 5:1).

## DAY OF VISITATION

Peter urges them to have their conduct be honorable such that those who accuse them falsely may turn and glorify God in the "day of visitation" (2:12). There are two keys to understanding Peter's exhortation. First, we are dealing with the scattered Jews and believing gentiles who have joined them, and we know from Acts that some of the most intense persecutions were being instigated by the Jews (e.g. Acts 9:23, 13:50, 14:2, 19, 17:5, 21:27, 23:12, 24:5). Based on this evidence, the pattern is fairly clear that the unbelieving Jews frequently stirred up crowds and political authorities against the Christians. This is most likely what Peter is responding to particularly in light of his reference to the "day of visitation" which only occurs with similar meaning in Luke 19:44. There Jesus is describing the destruction of Jerusalem, and He is most likely alluding to a prophecy in Jeremiah 6 which is likewise foretelling the coming destruction of Jerusalem in 586 B.C. (cf. Is. 10:3). The message in both Luke and Jeremiah is to flee the city of Jerusalem (Jer. 6:1, Lk. 21:20-21). We should also note that the theme of "visitations" in the OT frequently refers to God's blessing (e.g. Ex. 4:31, Ruth 1:6, 1 Sam. 2:21, Lk. 1:68).

## PUTTING IT TOGETHER

Looking back, we can see other parts of Peter's argument falling into place. Christians have been given that which is indestructible (1:4), it's better than gold and withstands fire (1:7), and those who have come to Jesus are the elect, covenant people of God (1:1, 2:4, 9). They are the new Israel, the new house of God, the tabernacle/temple of the Spirit which is better than a building that can be surrounded by armies and burned to the ground. Unlike Jerusalem, they may be tested "by fire" (1:6-7, cf. 4:12, 17), but they will be delivered

through the fire and proven to be God's people by their faithfulness. To put it plainly, the Jewish zealots who are falsely accusing the Christians will be exposed as the real revolutionaries in the Jewish rebellion, and the gentiles will glorify God for Christian obedience. The day of visitation will be for their blessing and God's glory.

#### CONCLUSION & APPLICATION

Notice that Peter addresses the "beloved" as those who must resist "fleshly lusts" which war against the soul. This means that God's favorite people are not above the fray; they are smack dab in the middle of it. This all goes back to faith in God and His grace and mercy toward us in Jesus Christ (1:4-9, 20-21, 2:9-10).

Although Peter was writing to a specific historical context, the principles remain the same for us. Jesus is in heaven, and He visits us. He visits us through judgments in history; He visits us in Lord's Day worship. And when He visits, He exalts the humble and weak, and He puts down the proud and mighty. Therefore we are called upon to wage war faithfully, trusting that God will display His grace that the world might see and glorify Him.

Finally, we must not forget that there will be a great and final visitation of the Lord Jesus, and we are rushing forward to meet it. Our lives are short, and we do not know the day or the hour in which Jesus will visit us and take us from this life. And one day every one of us will stand before the throne of the King.



*PUBLISHED BY:* CANON PRESS ? P.O. BOX 8729 ? 205 E. 5TH ST. ? MOSCOW, ID 83843  
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