



# First Peter

## Chapter I

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***Relational***  
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## A. Introduction

**1 Peter 1:1** *Peter, an apostle of Jesus Christ, To those who reside as aliens, scattered throughout Pontus, Galatia, Cappadocia, Asia, and Bithynia, who are chosen*



Peter begins with his name Πέτρος (Peter), which is not his birth name. His birth name was Σίμων Ἰωάννου, *Simon of* (meaning *son of*) *John* – John 21:15). The name Peter was assigned to him by Jesus in Matthew 16:18. In John 1:42, Jesus addresses him as *Cephas*, which is the Aramaic word for the Greek Πέτρος (Peter). Interestingly, he is the only person in New Testament called Peter.

Until recent times, there have been no significant arguments against the claim that the letter comes from Peter. For example, letters from Polycarp, Clement, and Irenaeus show that the early church unquestionably accepted the authenticity of I Peter. The recent criticism is centered on the fact that Peter was basically an uneducated fisherman (Acts 4:13), and I Peter is an artistic piece of Greek literature. The answer to this accusation is simple. Peter did not have a higher education like Luke and the Apostle Paul. But he was not illiterate, simple, or unwise. Peter led the early church to its first outreach and taught regularly. As to its literary style, the letter of I Peter was written with the help of Silas as his secretary (I Peter 5:12). Silas, though a Jerusalem Christian, was a Roman citizen (Acts 16:36-37), accomplished in the Greek language.

The name Peter means *rock*, and Jesus goes on to say *upon this rock I will build my church*. But the word for *rock* in this church statement is πέτρα, which indicates more of a bedrock or rock layer, whereas Peter's name is more like a large individual rock, like maybe a boulder. Just before this, Jesus asked Simon Peter who he thought Jesus was. Peter answered: *You are the Christ, the Son of the living God*. It seems that Jesus was referring to that statement as the bedrock (πέτρα) upon which the church would be built. But Peter (Πέτρος) would be an individually significant rock in the beginning of that church. So Peter begins with his assigned name.

Next, he calls himself *an apostle of Jesus Christ*. [He also calls himself a *fellow elder* in 5:1.] So Peter addresses the church as one of the 12 apostles, one of those originally sent by Christ with the Gospel.

The next word in the Greek text is ἐκλεκτοῖς, *to those who are chosen*, but he doesn't continue that thought until verse two, so we shall discuss it there also.

Next, Peter identifies his readers. He is not writing to any one specific church. The word for *church* does not occur in any form in either 1 or 2 Peter. Peter is writing to individual believers who have been scattered throughout what is today northern Turkey. It is the area outlined in blue on the map. Specifically, Peter mentions five regions: the Roman provinces of *Pontus, Galatia, Cappadocia, Asia, and Bithynia*.



He refers to his readers as (παρεπιδήμοις) *resident aliens*. This word introduces us to **the subject of the book**. The **subject of First Peter is:**

## **Living for God in a Spiritually Hostile World**

The word is a combination word. The first part (*para*, from which we get parachruch, paramedical, etc.) means *along side of* or *apart from*. The second half is the word for *home* (literally in-a-domicile) or *country*. The point is, Peter's readers were citizens of heaven not anywhere on earth.

***1 Peter 1:2 according to the foreknowledge of God the Father, by the sanctifying work of the Spirit, to obey Jesus Christ and be sprinkled with His blood: May grace and peace be yours in the fullest measure.***

Now Peter explains what he means by his word ἐκλεκτοίς, *to those who are chosen* (in verse one). It means the believers he is writing to, and all believers for that matter, are *chosen, according to the foreknowledge of God the Father*. So there are two separate but related doctrines: foreknowledge and predestination. God foreknew who would be saved, and God predetermined who would be saved.

- Foreknowledge is prior knowledge of future events.
- Predestination is the prior planning of future events.

Peter involves the whole Trinity when he says believers have become the chosen of God:

- *According to the knowledge of God the Father* – The predestination of our salvation
- *By the sanctifying work of the Spirit* – The means of our salvation
- *To obey Jesus Christ* – The purpose of our salvation
- *[To] be sprinkled with His blood* – The provision for our salvation

All this Peter gives his readers before he greets them with: *grace and peace, in the fullest measure*. The phrase *grace and peace be yours in the fullest measure* is also used in 2 Peter 1:2. God's grace was significant to Peter. He referred to it 10 times in this epistle (1 Peter 1:2, 10, 13; 2:19-20; 3:7; 4:10; 5:5, 10, 12).

## THOUGHTS AND APPLICATIONS

- The most glaring application of this epistle is it is written to people like we are. Peter writes to *those who reside as aliens, scattered throughout* what is today northern Turkey. This is not written to any group but to individual believers scattered about in an area hostile to the Gospel. These people are not living under the Roman or Jewish persecution but are generally outcasts in a society which considers them somewhere between foolish and dangerous. We are, or soon will be, living in just such a world.
- Peter's readers resided in these areas as aliens. For application, that is a very significant perspective. It changes how we look at our involvement in government, social issues, economics, and interpersonal relationships. One of the basic transitions of the spiritual life is to not see ourselves as citizens of the earth, the city, the community, the neighborhood, the school system, the clubs, organizations, or sports activities surrounding us. We are part of them because we come from the world and we reside here. But we reside as aliens. So the significance we give these activities must always be limited.

- Foreknowledge and predestination are always a significant part of our salvation, and they lead Peter to a discussion of the security of our salvation. We are usually quick to balance this out with free will (which is what we should do), but our free will discussions should never weaken the concept of the foreknowledge and predestination of God. We who are saved are chosen to be saved from eternity past. That, not our faith, is the beginning point of our salvation. Living as aliens in a hostile world begins with the knowledge of the predetermination of our salvation.

After this introduction, chapter one has 4 main paragraphs:

- A. Verses 1-2 Introduction
- B. Verses 3-12 The Security of Our Inheritance
- C. Verses 13-16 The Need for Holiness
- D. Verses 17-21 The Need for Fear
- E. Verses 22-25 The Need for Love



## B. The Security of Our Inheritance – 1:3-12

**1 Peter 1:3 *Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who according to His great mercy has caused us to be born again to a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead***

Peter begins his letter with salvation theology. First, he blesses God. The word for *Blessed* is Εὐλογητὸς, *to say good words about*. It is the word used for prayer when, for example, Jesus blessed the bread before He ate. It is not the word for blessed in the Sermon on the Mount, where Jesus said: *blessed are the poor*, etc. That word means *happy*.

Here he blesses God with four basic and significant theological concepts surrounding our salvation:

1. [It is] *according to His great **mercy***. Mercy is the *unmerited compassion* of God by which He does not give us the punishment we deserve. [Grace is unmerited favor. Mercy is unmerited compassion, or unmerited non-punishment.]
2. [God] *has caused us to be **born again***. Both Jesus (John 3:3, 7) and Peter (1 Peter 1:3, 23) used the concept of being “born again” to express salvation. The Greek expressions are not identical in John and Peter, though both are based on the root word γενναω, to be *born* or *begotten*. Jesus said: *unless one is born again he cannot see the kingdom of God*.

3. [We are saved] *To a living **hope***. Hope is the *expectation of a desired outcome*. Here Peter calls it a *living hope*. For him, theology is a living thing. Peter used the word *living* six times (1:3, 23; 2:4-5; 4:5-6).
  
4. [It was accomplished] *through the **resurrection** of Jesus Christ from the dead*. So the basis and proof of our salvation is the resurrection of Christ from the dead. As Paul said: *if Christ has not been raised, your faith is worthless; you are still in your sins* (1 Corinthians 15:17).



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Before we leave verse 3, we should notice that God the Father is said to be both *the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ*. This identical phrase is used by Paul in 2 Corinthians 1:3. It indicates that Jesus was deity because God was His Father. But Jesus is also eternally in submission to the Father because Jesus’ Father is also His God (1 Corinthians 15:28).

**1 Peter 1:4 to obtain an inheritance which is imperishable and undefiled and will not fade away, reserved in heaven for you**

In verse 4, Peter describes the results of our salvation as an inheritance. The idea is not one of present possession but of future benefit. This word for *inheritance* is used in the Septuagint to refer to Israel's promised possession of the land (Numbers 26:54, 56; 34:2; Joshua 11:23). But the believer's inheritance cannot be destroyed by earthly enemies, or even by their own actions, as was the case with Israel. Christian inheritance is described with three words and a phrase. He says their inheritance is:

- *Imperishable*—the word can also mean *immortal* or *incorruptible*
- *Undefiled*—the word is used for *pure and untainted religion* in James 1:27
- *Un-fade-able*—this is all one Greek word, like a colored garment that will not fade in sunlight
- *Reserved in heaven for you*—the word *reserved* also means *kept* or *guarded*

The salvation Peter refers to is not for this life. It is not now but reserved in heaven. It is completely secure. It cannot be lost or diminished in any way. But it is not something believers have, it is something believers will have. The next verse emphasizes that idea.

***I Peter 1:5 who are protected by the power of God through faith for a salvation ready to be revealed in the last time.***

The first word *who* is a masculine plural, so it seems to say the people of God are protected, not just their inherence. The word *protected* is a present tense of the word φρουρεω, meaning *to guard, keep or set a garrison*. The idea is that God, by His own power, is setting, or keeps on setting, a garrison of protection around the believer. This a military term, used to refer to a garrison guarding a city. Paul also uses this word in Philippians 4:7 when he says: ... *the peace of God, which surpasses all comprehension, will **guard** your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus.*

But how does He do that? Peter says He does that διὰ πίστεως, *through faith*. So here is the difference between the **security** of salvation and the **assurance** of salvation. Salvation is eternally secure for those who are saved. But one can only have assurance that they are saved if they continue to be faithful. That's because God is protecting the faith of those who will inherit salvation. Can we say that we are saved now? In a sense, there is a past, present, and future aspect to salvation:

- Salvation was accomplished on the cross – in the **past**.
- I am saved in that I am a new creature in Christ when I receive Him – in the **present**.
- But Peter speaks of salvation as an inheritance – in the **future**.

**1 Peter 1:6 *In this you greatly rejoice, even though now for a little while, if necessary, you have been distressed by various trials***

This begins a four-verse-long sentence which tells us that, because of the previously stated theology, we can *greatly rejoice*. The point is, rejoicing is based on theological truth, not our circumstances, acceptance by others, or earthly trials. Hence verse 6 says we rejoice even though we are *distressed by various trials*.

**1 Peter 1:7 *so that the proof of your faith, being more precious than gold which is perishable, even though tested by fire, may be found to result in praise and glory and honor at the revelation of Jesus Christ***

Notice that Peter says the distress of verse 6 and the testing by fire of verse 7 proves your faith. He does not say those things establish or strengthen your faith. What generates faith is the revelation from God about the doctrines of the previous verses.

***1 Peter 1:8 and though you have not seen Him, you love Him, and though you do not see Him now, but believe in Him, you greatly rejoice with joy inexpressible and full of glory***

Peter then says what he and the apostle saw was unusual. They saw Jesus, lived with Jesus, walked with Jesus and heard Him teach. The rest of the church does not, and will not, see Christ during our life on earth. We are in the position of loving Him and believing in Him without ever seeing Him.



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We are reminded of Jesus' words to Thomas: *Because you have seen Me, have you believed? Blessed are they who did not see, and yet believed (John 20:29).*



***1 Peter 1:9 obtaining as the outcome of your faith the salvation of your souls.***

Faith results in salvation. But notice:

- The object of saving faith is the historical biblical Jesus.
- The substance of faith is a rational decision, not an irrational leap.
- The reason for faith is ultimately a profit motive, to obtain the salvation of our souls.

**1 Peter 1:10-12** *As to this salvation, the prophets who prophesied of the grace that would come to you made careful searches and inquiries, seeking to know what person or time the Spirit of Christ within them was indicating as He predicted the sufferings of Christ and the glories to follow. It was revealed to them that they were not serving themselves, but you, in these things which now have been announced to you through those who preached the gospel to you by the Holy Spirit sent from heaven—things into which angels long to look.*

Peter has one more point to make before leaving this section. This salvation he is talking about was prophesied by the Old Testament prophets. The prophets predicted both the suffering of the Messiah (Isaiah 53) and the glory of the Messiah (Isaiah 11). But Peter says the prophets, being moved by the Holy Spirit (*the Spirit of Christ within them*), *made careful searches and inquiries*. We think of prophets as receiving revelation from God then writing it down for us to read. But Peter tells us they also searched, apparently their own revelation and that of other prophets, to know *what person* the Messiah would be and *what time* the Messiah would come.




The Old Testament prophets never figured out that there would be a church age because God never revealed it to them (Ephesians 3:3-9; Colossians 1:26-27). But what they did figure out was that they were writing to believers, like the church, who were on the other side of the suffering of the cross of Christ. Peter says the prophets *were not serving themselves, but you*. That is, they understood the things they revealed about the coming Messiah would not be fulfilled in their day but in the future for a people on the other side of the suffering of Christ.

## THOUGHTS AND APPLICATIONS

- Peter describes salvation by saying believers will *obtain an inheritance ... reserved in heaven*. In that sense, we are actually not saved now/yet. We still suffer, get disease, get old, and die. Salvation is, among other things, deliverance from the consequences of sin. We don't yet have that. We still suffer the consequences of sin—ours, others', and Adam's and Eve's. We are not yet saved from that. We have a future inheritance, but presently, we only have a promise of that inheritance, faith in that inheritance, and a hope for that inheritance. It is as if I were a poor child living in an orphanage. Then I hear I have been left a huge inheritance which I cannot claim until I'm 21. Do I have an inheritance? Well, yes? Well, no? Well, I don't have it now, but it is laid up for me in the future.

- Peter says our salvation is *protected by the power of God through faith*. Faith is a free will decision we make to receive what God has said (John 1:12). But just exactly what kind of a decision is that? The liberal secular view of faith, which is depicted in the movies, the media, and the academy, is a leap from the rational into the irrational. As one old joke goes: “Faith is the power to believe what you know ain’t so.”

But never accept that definition of faith when dealing with biblical truth. In the Bible, faith is a rational decision to go beyond what you can see, not a leap into irrational mysticism. It is going out on a limb, but in the direction of the limb, not contrary to it. The prophets and apostles were not mystics calling on us to believe in irrational nonsense. They called upon the people of God to accept the supernatural as logical, rational, historical, and just as real as the natural. Miracles are not mystical. A miracle is not an irrational act. It’s the rational act of a superior being. When Peter calls upon his readers to believe in the miracles and resurrection of Christ, it is because he and others actually witnessed these events as real history. The faith was necessary, not because they were irrational events but because we did not see them ourselves.

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- Peter says trials prove your faith. But he does not say trials strengthen your faith. Many evangelicals teach that trials strengthen your faith. Not so. There is nothing in the Bible which teaches that trials generate or strengthen our faith. Revelation is the only thing which generates faith and strengthens faith. For Peter, that was his personal contact with Christ. For us, it's reading the revelation of God in the Scripture. As Paul said: *So faith comes from hearing, and hearing by the word of Christ* (Romans 10:17).

## C. The Need for Holiness – 1:13-16

**1 Peter 1:13-16** Peter gives five commands which prepare the way for the main point of holiness:

1. ***Therefore, prepare your minds for action***, literally, *gird up the loins of your mind*.
2. ***Keep sober in spirit***, literally, *be self controlled* (one word).
3. ***Fix your hope completely*** (or *perfectly hope*) ***on the grace to be brought to you at the revelation of Jesus Christ***. This is the fourth time Peter has spoken of Christ's return and accompanying salvation (vv. 5, 7, 9, 13).
4. ***As obedient children, do not be conformed to the former lusts*** (or *desires*) ***which were yours in your ignorance***.
5. ***But like the Holy One who called you, be holy yourselves also in all your behavior*** (way of life or lifestyle) ***because it is written, "You shall be holy for I am holy."***

In the Greek text, the first, second, and fourth commands are participles. The third “have hope” and the fifth “be holy” are verbs. Participles either support the main verb or they take on the force of the verb. In the first case, it would read: *While preparing your minds and keeping sober, have hope.* And: *While being obedient, be holy.*

In this paragraph, the context is all about holiness. So I would suspect all five are to be taken as separate commands but all in the context of supporting the main point *You shall be holy for I am holy.* [For a similar construction, see Matthew 28:18-20, where *Go* and *baptize* are participles and *make disciples* is a command. As here, in Matthew 28 the participles *Go* and *baptize* serve as supportive commands, which serve the main verb *make disciples.*]

# THOUGHTS AND APPLICATIONS

- Peter tells us to be holy in all our behavior. What's the difference between being good and being holy? Holiness always indicates a separation. So the difference between being good and being holy is that holiness means goodness separated from evil. God is good. But He is also holy. And He says we are to be like He is in this respect.

What most of us do is we try to be good and do good but we do it while not separating ourselves from evil. For example:

- We might give to missions but we also watch pornography on the Internet.
- We might serve at church, but we also gossip about others.
- We might share the Gospel, but we also treat our spouse with disrespect.

We do good, but we are not separated from evil. Holiness is not just doing or being good, it is also separation from evil.

## D. The Need for Fear – 1:17-21

**1 Peter 1:17-19** *If you address as Father the One who impartially judges according to each one's work, conduct yourselves in fear during the time of your stay on earth knowing that you were not redeemed with perishable things like silver or gold from your futile way of life inherited from your forefathers, but with precious blood, as of a lamb unblemished and spotless, the blood of Christ.*

The main idea in this paragraph is to fear God. And Peter gives us two reasons why we should conduct ourselves in fear:

1. [God] *impartially judges according to each one's work.*
2. *you were ... redeemed ... with ... the blood of Christ.*

The word φόβω is a dative of the common word for fear. It transliterates *phobeo*, from which comes the English word “phobia,” which is a fear of something. So there is no reason to assume that this fear is to be restricted to a sense of awe, respect, or worship. This is fear in the sense of being afraid of God. And because God is your judge and provided for your salvation, you are to *conduct yourselves in fear during the time of your stay on earth.*

A few other things should be noted before we leave this sentence.

- Peter seems to declare God the Father as the Judge. Jesus said: *For not even the Father judges anyone, but He has given all judgment to the Son* (John 5:22). Paul writes: ... *we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ, so that each one may be recompensed for his deeds in the body, according to what he has done, whether good or bad* (2 Corinthians 5:10). So it seems everybody who has ever lived will one day face

Christ as the One who will actually carry out his or her eternal judgment (Revelation 20:11-15). Peter is speaking of the Father as the Judge because judgment is an attribute of God. The Father is the author of judgment, it is just that He has delegated the specific act of carrying out judgment to the Son, the one we know as Jesus.



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- This is one of the basic passages describing the doctrine of redemption. The word Peter uses is ἐλυτρώθητε, an aorest passive (completed action accomplished by someone else) from ἕλυτροω. This is an interesting word. It means *to release by paying a ransom* (Strong's). It has the same foundation as the word ἐλεύθεροι for freedom (in 1 Peter 2:16). There are three words for redemption used to describe our salvation in the New Testament (ἐξαγοράζω in Galatians 3:13 – *to purchase out of*; αγοράζω in 2 Peter 2:1 – *to purchase in*; and λύτρον in Matthew 20:28 which has the same root word used here – *ransom or purchase to set free*). All three words have to do with a purchase, but this word would be used of a slave whose freedom had been purchased but was now free to choose to be independent or become a voluntary slave.
- Peter says we are redeemed *with precious blood, as of a lamb unblemished and spotless, the blood of Christ*. Notice – there is no access to God without a blood sacrifice. From Cain and Abel, through Noah, Abraham and Moses, up to Christ, there is absolutely no access to God without a blood sacrifice. But we have the perfect *unblemished and spotless blood of Christ*. In this sentence Peter eliminates all other religions. Rabbinical Judaism, Islam, Buddhism, and Hinduism do not have a blood sacrifice.

**1 Peter 1:20-21** *For He was foreknown before the foundation of the world, but has appeared in these last times for the sake of you who through Him are believers in God, who raised Him from the dead and gave Him glory, so that your faith and hope are in God.*

Notice:


- The word προεγνωσμένου *foreknown* is the same root word translated foreknowledge in 1:3. Peter's point is that Christ was eternally known by the Father.
- Peter says that the one who was known in eternity past has appeared in *these last times*. What the apostles always mean when they refer to these times, as being the *last times*, is that there are no other ages, no other *times*, after *these times*, before the judgment of God upon the earth.
- The appearance of Christ as a man on earth was for those who would become believers. Christ did not come to make the world a better place to live or to minister to unrepentant sinners. He came *for the sake of you who through Him are believers in God*.
- Peter repeats two things God did for Christ: *raised Him from the dead, and gave Him glory*. Then, surprisingly, Peter does not say that our faith and hope are in Christ (which would also be true). Peter says ultimately *your faith and hope are in God*. So be careful about statements like: "I like Jesus but I don't like the God of the Old Testament." The reality is, many people have created a post-modern, nice-guy Jesus, but they don't like the God of the Bible.

# THOUGHTS AND APPLICATIONS

- The fear of God cannot be reduced to awe and respect or even reverence. Awe, respect, and reverence are things which we define and we control. I might respect a teacher, a coach, or a mentor. But that is always on my terms. If I fear someone or something, it is on their terms. To reverence God means I determine what that means. If I fear God, He determines what that means.
- The word Peter used for redemption is a purchase which sets us free. We are free to serve God or serve ourselves. Redemption does not automatically mean we begin serving God or maturing or start on the path of holiness. It only means we are free to choose to do that. But that freedom also means we are free to choose to not do that.



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This, it seems, destroys the concept of “Lordship Salvation,” at least concerning redemption. Salvation is separated from lordship in the sense that:

- Salvation frees us to make a decision to make Christ lord of our lives, but does not necessarily include that lordship decision.
- Salvation is a commitment to what Christ has done for us in the past (on the cross). Lordship is a commitment to following Christ in the future.
- Salvation is a point in time. Lordship is a process.

Somewhere, apart from salvation, we must make a decision to follow Christ as lord.

**1 Peter 1:23-25** *for you have been born again not of seed which is perishable but imperishable, that is, through the living and enduring word of God. “For, all flesh is like grass, and all its glory like the flower of grass, the grass withers, and the flower falls off, but the word of the Lord endures forever.” And this is the word which was preached to you.*

This last comment serves to conclude chapter one and introduce chapter two. It would be legitimate to include it as an introduction to chapter two. But the last sentence seems to tell us Peter intended it as concluding chapter one.



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Here Peter quotes Isaiah 40:6ff to tell his readers that their salvation is *through the living and enduring word of God*. Once again, that surprises us. We would expect Peter to say that our salvation is through Christ (which it is). But his conclusion is that we are *born again* (1 Peter 1:3; John 3:3,7) through the Word of God. This is clearly a reference to the written revelation of God through the apostles and prophets of the Old and New Testaments. Peter says *this is the word which was preached to you*.

Peter's point is, we know this promise is true, we know this imperishable inheritance is real, we know we are born again, and we know all that because it is part of the Word of God. Because *the word of the Lord endures forever*. And God said: *I am watching over My word to perform it* (Jeremiah 1:12).



## THOUGHTS AND APPLICATIONS

- Remember, there are always two aspects to love—giving and choosing. We are to give to everyone as God did in John 3:16 when He gave his Son to whosoever believes in Him. But we are not to choose everyone. God also said *Jacob I loved, but Esau I hated* (Malachi 1:2; Romans 9:13). We are to choose *a sincere love of the brethren*. Love without choice isn't love at all. For example, suppose a man tells his wife: "I love you, ... but I love all women." I doubt she would consider that to be love.
- Peter ends this chapter by saying we are saved *through the living and enduring word of God*. If you follow the Bible, there will always be some mystic saying you are worshiping the Bible instead of God. We worship God, and our salvation comes from God through the blood of Jesus His Son. But the world is full of different gods, and the religions of the world are full of different salvations. So how do you know you have it right?

What is the basis of your salvation?

Jesus?

What Jesus?

A Jesus from your religious tradition, your mystical encounters, your experience? The Bible is the only undeniable, irrefutable, reasonable, real, rational, historical source telling us what really happened in the real world, and what effects our eternal souls. And that reliable source tells us about a real God and a real Jesus and a real salvation.