

1 Peter 1:17-25

“The Messiah Foreknown Before the Foundation of the World”

“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 Messiah. 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. Since you have in obedience to the truth purified your souls for a sincere love of the brethren, fervently love one another from the heart, 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’ [Isaiah 40:6-8]. **And this is the word which was preached to you.**”

The Believers to whom the Apostle Peter is writing are regarded as sojourners on Planet Earth, who need to be conscious of their behavior, before a Father God who will issue fair judgment (1 Peter 1:17). Peter emphasizes the great value of the redemption that has been provided to them in Yeshua the Messiah, saying, “You know that you were ransomed from the futile ways inherited from your ancestors, not with perishable things like silver or gold” (1 Peter 1:18, NRSV). Likely referring to the sacrifice of the Passover, Peter testifies, “on the contrary, it was the costly bloody sacrificial death of the Messiah, as of a lamb without defect or spot” (1 Peter 1:19, CJB/CJSB). Surely, if born again Believers have been redeemed via the sacrifice of Yeshua of Nazareth, who is likened unto the Passover lamb, then it behooves them to live a holy life—for which they will surely be evaluated at some point in the future Kingdom of God.

The work of Yeshua is considered by Peter to be something that has extra-dimensional origins: “having been foreknown – before [the] foundation of [the] world yet~having been manifested in [the] last of the times for you” (1 Peter 1:20, Brown and Comfort),²³ *proegnōsmenou men pro katabolēs kosmou phanerōthentos de ep’ eschatou tōn chronōn di’ humas* (προεγνωσμένου μὲν πρὸ καταβολῆς κόσμου φανερωθέντος δὲ ἐπ’ ἐσχάτου τῶν χρόνων δι’ ὑμᾶς). Yeshua’s sacrificial death for human sin, while surely having elements of tragedy to it, was not something haphazard; it was something that was part of a foreordained cosmic plan. Kelly is right to stress, “the writer wishes to impress on his readers that the redemption in which they now share...is part of a plan which God has been preparing from all eternity with them in view.”²⁴ In his message delivered at *Shavuot*/Pentecost, Peter had previously declared of Yeshua, that He was “delivered over by the predetermined plan and foreknowledge of God, [but] you nailed to a cross by the hands of godless men and put *Him* to death” (Acts 2:23). Similarly, it was narrated in Mark 8:31, “And He began to teach them that the Son of Man must suffer many things and be rejected by the elders and the chief priests and the scribes, and be killed, and after three days rise again.”

All readers of 1 Peter 1:20, “He was destined before the foundation of the world, but was revealed at the end of the ages for your sake” (NRSV), recognize that this speaks to the arrival of Yeshua on the scene of history to be sacrificed for human sin. But is there anything that can be deduced about the nature of Yeshua from Peter’s statement here? Some might take Yeshua being “chosen before the creation of the world” (NIV), as an indication of His pre-existence, and

²³ Brown and Comfort, 809.

²⁴ Kelly, pp 75-76.

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thus supportive of His Divinity. But whether one is a Calvinist or Arminian in soteriology, being “foreknown” (NASB/NASU; *proegnōsmenou*) is something that is true of humans as created beings, who did not pre-exist this universe. Whether the pre-existence of Yeshua is spoken of in 1 Peter 1:20, instead involves how to approach *phanerōthentos*: “has appeared,” “made manifest” (RSV), or “revealed” (NIV).

Various commentators have widely concluded that 1 Peter 1:20 does speak to Yeshua’s pre-existence. Yeshua was known *before the foundation of the world*, and *now He has appeared or been revealed at the end of the ages*. With these two concepts held together, Yeshua’s revealing to the world, is predicated on His having been foreknown before the foundation of the world. Witherington indicates, “In **1 Peter 1:20** the concept of the preexistence of Christ is implied not by the term ‘foreknown’ (God foreknows believers as well, but it does not make them preexistent) but in the phrase ‘but revealed...,’ implying that he existed before his incarnation (which is surely referred to here).”²⁵ Davids further elaborates,

“That Christ was *revealed* implies that he preexisted, as the hymn in 2 Tim. 3:16 indicates (cf. Heb. 9:26; 1 John 1:2; 3:5), just as he continues to exist before his final revelation at the close of time (Col. 3:4; 1 Pet. 5:4; 1 John 3:2). The period began by his first appearance and closed by his final appearance is the end of the ages, or, as Peter puts it, ‘the end of the times’ (Acts 2:16-21; 1 Cor. 10:11; Heb. 9:26). Christians stand, as it were, on the brink: the last age of the world has already dawned and God’s chosen ones expect...its close in the imminent future with the final manifestation of their King and Christ.”²⁶

Yeshua’s arrival onto the scene of history is telic, having a significant purpose. The final stages of human history began with the Messiah’s incarnation, sacrifice, and resurrection (Acts 2:16-17; Hebrews 1:1; 9:26), although His Second Coming and the total defeat of His enemies still await. Yeshua’s work on the tree is the cause of Believers’ spiritual regeneration (1 Peter 1:21, 23), and their required love for one another (1 Peter 1:24). The good news or gospel message, which was declared to Peter’s audience, is to be considered a steadfast and reliable word (1 Peter 1:24-25).

1 Peter 3:8-22

“Sanctifying Messiah as Lord”

“To sum up, all of you be harmonious, sympathetic, brotherly, kindhearted, and humble in spirit; not returning evil for evil or insult for insult, but giving a blessing instead; for you were called for the very purpose that you might inherit a blessing. For, ‘THE ONE WHO DESIRES LIFE, TO LOVE AND SEE GOOD DAYS, MUST KEEP HIS TONGUE FROM EVIL AND HIS LIPS FROM SPEAKING DECEIT. HE MUST TURN AWAY FROM EVIL AND DO GOOD; HE MUST SEEK PEACE AND PURSUE IT. FOR THE EYES OF THE LORD ARE TOWARD THE RIGHTEOUS, AND HIS EARS ATTEND TO THEIR PRAYER, BUT THE FACE OF THE LORD IS AGAINST THOSE WHO DO EVIL’ [Psalm 34:12-16]. Who is there to harm you if you prove zealous for what is good? But even if you should suffer for the sake of righteousness, you are blessed. AND DO NOT FEAR THEIR INTIMIDATION, AND DO NOT BE TROUBLED [Isaiah 8:12-13], but sanctify Messiah as Lord in your hearts, always *being* ready to make a defense to everyone who asks you to give an account for the hope that is in you, yet with gentleness and reverence; and keep a good conscience so that in the thing in which you are slandered, those who revile your good behavior in Messiah will be put to shame. For it is better, if God should will it so, that you suffer for doing what is right rather than for doing what is wrong. For Messiah also died for sins once for all, *the* just for *the* unjust, so that He might bring us to God, having been put to death in the flesh, but made alive in the spirit; in which also He went and made proclamation to the spirits *now* in prison,

²⁵ Witherington, *1&2 Peter*, 107.

²⁶ Davids, *1 Peter*, 74.