

Introduction

Back in 2001 or so, I began to sense God was calling me into vocational ministry. I asked the elders of our church at that time to pray about this, to help discern if God were, in fact, calling me. A few months went by and I heard nothing until one day one of them approached me. He said the elders had been praying and they were convinced God was calling me to serve him vocationally. I was excited! I asked what this meant. In what capacity? What sort of ministry? His response was simple: “We didn’t ask that”.

Shortly after this one of the elders asked me to lunch. Jim’s daughter had been in the middle school class Dawnae and I led for several years. She was autistic and the environment met her right where she was. I assumed he wanted to talk about that. Nope. For about 40 minutes this man told me the story of his father-in-law planting that church some 35 years before.

The story was essentially this: it was a terrible experience filled with drama and problems and inter-personal conflict, including among the elders. When I say “conflict” among the elders, this actually included fist-fights. I was struck by this. I realized partway through this man had reached out to me, a young guy still in his 20s, so he could have a shoulder to cry on. Why else would he be telling me? Why *me* and not someone else?

This was the church his wife had grown up in, and the church her father had planted. Who else could he share this with!? Surely some of those men or at least their grown children, were still in the church! So I dutifully listened to this man share his father-in-law’s struggles to serve the Lord by planting and then pastoring a church.

After 40 minutes or so, he paused and said to me, “J-T, I think God is calling you to plant a church”. My immediate thought was, “This man is an absolutely, in all ways, *terrible* salesman!” Imagine a car salesman telling you that if you buy *this* car, you’ll either be at the gas station all the time because of its terrible gas mileage, or you’ll be stuck on the side of the road waiting for a tow truck because of how unreliable it is. But hey! *At least it’s overpriced!*

I was intrigued, however. Something stirred within me. A couple weeks later the worship pastor at this church had us over for lunch and he suggested I should plant a church. “Did you talk to Jim?” It seemed strange that two men would say essentially the same thing in such a short time. No, he hadn’t. He didn’t know Jim had told me the same thing. Here we are, 24 years later. Clearly this was God’s plan both for me and for New City Church, all because of a terrible—if honest—“sales” approach.

Now imagine you were an apostle—one of the Twelve. You hear about a group of churches in a sparsely populated area in the Roman empire, and you hear they are struggling on account of being socially ostracized. They weren’t being physically harmed, but they were being cut off from business contacts and social networks. They were being rejected on a personal level for not bowing to the same idols as the culture. In response to this you decide

to write them a letter in which you say, “Hey, it’s gonna be bad, and it’s gonna get worse. Take heart, though! They wouldn’t have liked Jesus, either!”

That feels like a platitude, a cheap statement meant to deflect rather than help. There is something profound in this, however, despite what seems to be a terrible sales pitch. To be in Christ is to be united with Christ—not only in his life, but in his suffering and death! Rather than simply being an acknowledgment that, you know, *life is hard*, Peter tells these believers there is a purpose in their suffering, and that purpose makes the suffering worthwhile. It doesn’t lessen the suffering or make it not hurt, but it gives them the means to endure in spite of it. It gives them reason to rejoice in the midst of it. It gives them the motivation needed to faithfully follow Jesus.

So we begin Peter’s first letter this morning.

¹ Pet 1:1 Peter, an apostle of Jesus Christ,

To those who are elect exiles of the Dispersion in Pontus, Galatia, Cappadocia, Asia, and Bithynia, ² according to the foreknowledge of God the Father, in the sanctification of the Spirit, for obedience to Jesus Christ and for sprinkling with his blood:

May grace and peace be multiplied to you.

1 Peter 1:1–2

Recipients

Last week we focused on Peter, the author of this letter. Surely every time Peter wrote that he was “an apostle of Jesus Christ”, he remembered Jesus asking him three times if he loved him, and three times telling him in response to feed his sheep. This was Jesus’ restoration of Peter as his follower and his apostle after Peter denied him three times.

This week we take a look at his recipients. He identifies them as elect exiles of the Dispersion in five Roman provinces: Pontus, Galatia, Cappadocia, Asia, and Bithynia. These five provinces are in what is modern-day Turkey. They’re located just north of the land of Israel.

They were sparsely populated in the first century. In 47BC Julius Caesar conquered the region of Pontus and after a lightning fast battle that lasted just four hours he made his famous declaration: “I came; I saw; I conquered”. A hundred years later the entire region was under Roman control and still sparsely populated. In AD41 Roman emperor Claudius began a thirteen-year program of moving settlers there, so as to colonize the area. If you boost the population, you boost economic activity. If you boost economic activity, you boost taxes.

At some point numerous churches were planted. These were *not* planted by the apostle Paul. Paul did plant in Galatia, but not in *northern* Galatia, that is, where these provinces are. Paul planted in southern Galatia. So these are not *Pauline* churches. The book of Acts is very clear about this:

^{Acts 16:6} And they went through the region of Phrygia and Galatia, having been forbidden by the Holy Spirit to speak the word in Asia. ⁷ And when they

had come up to Mysia, they attempted to go into Bithynia, but the Spirit of Jesus did not allow them.

Acts 16:6–7

We simply don't know how these churches came to be. Jews from Pontus and Asia were present in Jerusalem on the day of Pentecost. It's likely they returned home and churches began to spring up. We're unaware of any direct missionary activity there. It's possible that Paul's churches to the south sent missionaries north. We simply don't know.

Many earlier interpreters believed these churches were filled with primarily Jewish Christians, given the Old Covenant language Peter uses to describe them. They're elect. That is, God chose them. They're "of the Dispersion". First century Jews who lived outside of Israel claimed to be part of the Diaspora. He calls them a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation. These terms were used to describe old-covenant Israel. However, he also speaks of them in verse 18 of chapter 1 as those who "were ransomed from the futile ways inherited from your forefathers". He would never speak of *Jewish* forefathers in that way. They received the law of God! To them the prophets were sent. He says in chapter 2 once they were not a people but now they are God's people. He wouldn't say that to a primarily Jewish audience.

This means Peter is writing to a primarily Gentile audience—they're from *the nations*—which likely included Jewish Christians as well. They, the followers of Jesus despite their ethnic background, were given the new covenant and all its rich heritage, regardless of their DNA.

Whatever their origin, Peter calls them "elect exiles of the Dispersion". They were chosen by God. They were his elect. Paul often used this language to describe God's people. The Ephesians were chosen in Christ before the foundation of the world. In love God predestined them for adoption to himself. In his second letter to Timothy he says, "I endure everything for the sake of the *elect*, that they also may obtain the salvation that is in Christ Jesus" (2 Timothy 2:10).

He told Titus he was an apostle "for the sake of the faith of God's elect and their knowledge of the truth" (Titus 1:1). In Romans he said Israel failed to obtain salvation and then said, "The *elect* obtained it, but the rest were hardened". Some of us were taught to avoid such language but if you cannot use the language Scripture uses, the problem isn't with the words of Scripture.

Peter tells his recipients they were chosen by God. They are his elect. He's writing to them about suffering. Even if the world hates them and commits the ultimate act of hatred and kills them, God loves them. That's not a platitude. God chose them. He claimed them as his own even if the world rejects them. If no one else recognizes it, their lives matter to God for they are his *elect*.

They're also exiles. That is, they are in a foreign land—even if they are citizens of these various regions. The present world is not their true home. When Paul wrote to the Philippians he wrote to a church that was in a Roman colony. Those who lived there thought of themselves as *Romans*, as if Philippi were a suburb of the city of Rome, though they were hundreds of miles apart. A significant percentage of them were citizens of Rome. Citizenship was held by a minority of the population of the empire, yet Paul said this to these Roman citizens in Philippi who followed Jesus:

Phil 3:20 But our citizenship is in heaven, and from it we await a Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ,
Philippians 3:20

Paul was also a Roman citizen and though they were citizens, Paul says their true citizenship lies elsewhere, and their lord is not Caesar, but Jesus. This is the idea Peter is getting at. Though they are, in fact, residents of Pontus and Galatia and Cappadocia and Asia and Bithynia, they've been rejected by the world and are therefore strangers in their own homes, so to speak.

Trinitarian Salvation

The leading claim here is they are elect exiles of the Dispersion. In Galatians Paul wrote that all who share the faith of Abraham are heirs of Abraham—the very heirs promised by God. In Romans 4 Paul says Abraham's promise wasn't for the tiny strip of land known as Israel. Instead, "the promise to Abraham and his offspring [was] that he would be heir of the *world*" (Romans 4:13). How does Abraham inherit the world? His offspring are in every nation on earth today! Peter's recipients are elect exiles *of the Dispersion*. They, too, are Abraham's offspring and are dispersed all over the world.

Peter then gives three clarifying statements. They are chosen in Christ "according to the foreknowledge of God the Father". Foreknowledge is often misunderstood. Believers are often taught to react to words like foreknowledge and election and predestination. Foreknowledge is often explained away by claiming God can see the future and then decides to act based on that knowledge.

God's foreknowledge does not, it *cannot*, originate outside himself. If it did, God would not know all things and therefore would be capable of learning and then reacting to new knowledge. This is not the nature of God. Consider Peter's own words in chapter 1, speaking of the Lord Jesus:

1 Pet 1:20 He was foreknown before the foundation of the world but was made manifest in the last times for the sake of you...

1 Peter 1:20

If "foreknowledge" means God knows ahead of time what will happen and then acts in a manner so as to bring that about, Peter would be indicating that God looked into the future, saw the coming of Christ and the death and resurrection of Christ, and then, based on this knowledge, determined to send Christ. No, he is not saying this. God knows the future because God *controls* the future. The sovereign God is working out his *eternal purpose in Christ*. This means his foreknowledge of Jesus is outside of time, as is his foreknowledge of your salvation and my salvation.

God is outside of time. He does not experience time like we do. As Jesus put it, before Abraham was, Jesus *is*. That is, right now, 2,000 years after Jesus walked the earth, he still *is* before Abraham. Time means nothing to God other than the order of events he has decreed. These elect exiles have been chosen according to the foreknowledge of God. That is, God has known each and every one of them intimately since he chose them in Christ *before the foundation of the world*.

It was not only the Father at work, however. They were chosen “in the sanctification of the Spirit”. The Greek word for “in” here means by the means of the Spirit’s work in sanctification. As we saw in our discipleship series, the Holy Spirit is actively at work in us to make us holy—to make us more like Jesus. When the Spirit granted us faith and repentance, the Spirit began making us holy. The Spirit began the work of sanctification. The Spirit continues the work of sanctification. The Spirit will complete the work of sanctification. This is a significant means of our salvation. God chose to save and the Spirit did the work in us to bring us to faith and repentance, to begin transforming us.

There is another Person in God at work. Peter says they are chosen in Christ “for obedience to Jesus Christ and for sprinkling with his blood”. “For obedience” and “for sprinkling with his blood” are a hendiadys. That comes from the Greek words “one through two”. That is, one concept comes through two words. It’s a technical way to indicate that two words are connected to form a *single idea*. The two nouns essentially replace an adjective and a noun. The ancient writer Virgil wrote, “We drink from cups and gold”. He simply means *golden cups*, not that we drink from two distinct things. If you drink coffee that is “nice and hot”, you’re suggesting the coffee is *nicely hot*, not that it would be nice even if it weren’t hot.

Peter gives us a hendiadys. They are chosen for obedience to Jesus and for sprinkling with his blood. Obedience and sprinkling are a hendiadys. They refer, essentially, to one concept. In this new covenant brought into being by the once-for-all sacrifice of Jesus—his blood—the new covenant promise is the Spirit of God causes them to obey, for they have his law written on their hearts. From God’s perspective, the sprinkling of his blood and their obedience are directly connected. He saves his people from sin. That is so much more than the *consequence* of their sin. He saves from their actual sin. In God’s mind these are directly related. To sprinkle them with his blood is to cause their obedience.

This is why the notion that one can have real, genuine faith but not follow Jesus in any discernible way is a fool’s errand. It goes against everything God in Trinity is doing in salvation. Obedience to Jesus is inextricably linked to their sprinkling with blood.

On one level this sprinkling is the fulfillment of Old Testament sprinkling. In Exodus 24 in response to Israel’s promise to obey the Lord, Moses threw blood against that altar, causing it to splash everywhere. In the Greek version of Numbers 19—that’s the version the apostles used—the same word for sprinkling is used for the cleansing of the priests. Peter later says these elect exiles are a royal priesthood. They’ve been sprinkled by his blood to wash them for their priestly service.

Notice how he directly connects their salvation to their transformation, to their *holiness*. In their present circumstances in which they are being rejected and despised by men, God has chosen them and has sanctified them and has washed them clean for their obedience. New Testament scholar Karen Jobes explains.

Peter grounds his readers’ identity in terms of their relationship to God by defining the role of the Father, Holy Spirit, and Jesus Christ in their conversion and inclusion as people of the covenant. In the very opening sentence of his letter, Peter introduces a concept of Christian identity that is based first on relationship to God and then on relationship to the world.

Karen H. Jobes, BECNT

God's Love

Peter writes this letter to Christians in exile. That is, they are not in a place that is truly their home, a place that gladly welcomes them with open arms. They are suffering in a variety of ways. Throughout the letter he's going to remind them their suffering and difficulty is not unexpected. It isn't a strange addition to the Christian life, but an essential part of it. Again, Karen Jobes is helpful.

Peter's readers were experiencing various kinds of trials that were causing them varying degrees of grief and suffering. Their Christian faith was being slandered and maligned. Their social status, family relationships, and possibly even their livelihood were threatened. When one's Christian faith is criticized and even mocked, it is natural that one may begin to doubt the truth of the gospel of Jesus Christ. It is, after all, extraordinary to believe that the body of a dead man was raised to some kind of new eternal state of being. Ancient people no less than modern might understandably find that claim outrageous. And yet for Peter, the resurrection is the central point of the Christian faith by which God has extended his mercy and has given new birth to a living hope.

Karen H. Jobes, BECNT

The gospel is a *living* hope, not merely a hope for the future. The gospel impacts the present in a profound way for through the gospel the fundamental identity of the believers in these five regions has been changed. To understand how, we first have to understand what is happening in the gospel itself.

At the time of the Reformation, people from an overtly Christian culture were wrestling with how to win and keep God's favor. They understood salvation was of the Lord but they struggled with the idea of maintaining God's love and God's grace and God's mercy. Martin Luther came along in 1517 and began applying the gospel to his particular context.

When he emphasized salvation by faith alone, he was emphasizing that God's grace is *unconditioned*. That is, God's grace is not given to those who are worthy in some way. There are no required conditions *in us*. In the ancient world a gift was given in proportion to worth. If a gift were given that were out of proportion to worth, it would seem arbitrary and unfair. If a young man is walking down the street and sees an elderly person trying to cross the street, he may stop and help that person. A "gift" that is proportional might be a hearty "thank you" to such a person. That was an act of kindness and gratitude is a sufficient gift in return. Giving him the Presidential Medal of Freedom would seem like extreme overkill.

The opposite is true. In the ancient world if a military officer had led his small group of men against overwhelming odds, losing half his men to the cause, and was able to hold off the advancing army that threatened to completely destroy a city until the king and his army arrived, a simple "thank you" would be highly inappropriate. Such bravery and sacrifice deserves far more than a thumbs-up. Gifts must match worth in the recipient.

In the New Testament era notions of worth were rooted in one's ethnic background, religious background, cultural background, and economic status. Paul wrote this to the Colossians:

Col 3:11 Here there is not Greek and Jew, circumcised and uncircumcised, barbarian, Scythian, slave, free; but Christ is all, and in all.

Colossians 3:11

None of those things, not their ethnic background (being Greek or Jew), not their religious background (being circumcised or uncircumcised), not their cultural background (being barbarian or Scythian), and not their economic status (being slave or free), had anything to do with their status in Christ. Christ is all, and Christ is in all, regardless of what status one has in the world.

The gospel preached by the apostles was extraordinary: God's grace, his gift, was not given to those who were his friends. He gave his grace to those who had been his enemies. God's gift of salvation was not given to those who were righteous, but to those who were unrighteous. God's grace is *unconditioned*. It was not given based on a condition found worthy in the recipients of that grace. Rather, God's grace *creates* worth in its recipients.

So in Philippians when Paul is boasting about his status, claiming he was circumcised on the eighth day and was of the people of Israel, from the tribe of Benjamin, a Hebrew of Hebrews, he wasn't bragging about something he himself had accomplished. These were markers that indicated he was *worthy*. In the ancient world these had value. These things conferred dignity and meaning and worth. Then Paul said that in the context of the gospel of Jesus in which God's grace is given regardless of these markers, he counts such bragging points as worthless.

Martin Luther comes along into a culture in which culturally Christian people were struggling with meaning and purpose, with whether they were worthy of God's grace. Their notions of worth weren't rooted in ethnicity and religious background. Their notions of worth were rooted in their morality and ability to be good, in their performance of good works. They struggled to do the right things at all the right times so they might be worthy of God's grace. Luther's message was, in essence, God's grace is this wonderful and incongruent thing! It isn't rooted in a person's worth, whether that worth was demonstrated by good works or by moral purity or any other marker. God's grace is given freely in a way that it *creates* worth in the one receiving it.

Luther explained this truth in his Heidelberg Disputation, Thesis 28:

The love of God does not find, but creates, that which is pleasing to it. The love of man comes into being through that which is pleasing to it.

Martin Luther, Heidelberg Disputation, Thesis 28

He says humans love because they find something attractive in the thing they love. I love tacos because they contain, you know, *tacos*. I love my wife because she is an amazing woman that I'm absolutely crazy about, even as she sometimes drives me crazy. There is something in her that draws me to her, again and again. This is not how God loves. Paul points to this difference in his letter to the Romans.

Rom 5:6 For while we were still weak, at the right time Christ died for the ungodly. ⁷ For one will scarcely die for a righteous person—though perhaps for a good person one would dare even to die—⁸ but God shows his love for us in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us.

Romans 5:6–8

One may die for a righteous person, he says. Maybe. God's love doesn't see his people and find something in them he desires or needs. God does not love because he finds worth. Instead, his love creates something of worth in us, and that has nothing to do with us and everything to do with him. Man's love is rooted in the thing loved; God's love is rooted entirely in God.

Identity

This is the good news Peter writes to his readers in the midst of their suffering. He acknowledges things are bad and indicates things will get worse. He doesn't respond merely by saying, "Hey, you'll get through this, champ!". Rather than offer them mere platitudes to make them feel better, he does something far more profound. He shows them how their identity has been changed. Their circumstances cannot be an indicator of their worth. Remember that Karen Jobes quote from earlier:

In the very opening sentence of his letter, Peter introduces a concept of Christian identity that is based first on relationship to God and then on relationship to the world.

Karen H. Jobes, BECNT

She doesn't say our identity is based first on relationship to God *and also* on relationship to the world. First there is the relationship to God. That is first and primary. The identity of God's people is rooted in this relationship. When you consider relationship to the world, if that identity from the world contradicts the identity found in Christ, that identity is a false identity. The only one that truly matters is the identity given us in Christ. It simply doesn't matter what others may think.

Our identity, that is, who we are and what gives us meaning and purpose and worth, is our relationship to God, first and foremost. God calls them elect exiles. They are chosen in Christ before the foundation of the world. Their true identity is rooted in Christ, who loves them and who claims them as his own. Because God cannot change, our identity in him cannot change. We didn't create it, therefore we cannot undo it.

Think of Peter's own experience of denying Jesus. Surely he was still wracked with guilt and shame. The resurrection itself didn't undo that. It was when Jesus walked with him on the shore of Galilee and three times expressed forgiveness and a call back to apostolic ministry that he finally understood that his righteousness was not something he offered to God, but something he received from God. Jesus was telling him, in essence, his salvation is rooted in Jesus' own faithfulness on that night he was arrested, not in Peter's "faithfulness" as seen in his denial of Jesus.

When our identity is rooted in Christ, it cannot be shaken, for Christ cannot be shaken. When our identity is rooted in Christ, then our identity cannot be shaken even when the world around us is being shaken. Jesus endured the worst this world could throw at him and was then taken down from the cross and buried. But, on the third day, the stone was rolled away. Not even death could shake Jesus. When our identity is rooted in him, that identity cannot be taken from us, even if our relationship to the world changes.

Peter is not in any way trying to boost their self esteem, or their sense of self-worth. He's not trying to give them a pep talk, to tell them to dig deeper, to find some sort of inner strength to endure the hardship they were facing. Peter tells them to look outside themselves, to look to the Lord Jesus, to look to God in Trinity for their identity and their meaning and their purpose and their strength. Indian scholar Chris Gnanakan put it well:

Peter assures them that they are not worthless! They are *God's elect*, that is, those who have been *chosen* by the Father. This honour originally belonged only to the Israelites and brings with it a promise of God's care and protection. Their being chosen involved *the sanctifying work of the Spirit*, who drew them towards holiness, so that they came to be *obedient to Jesus Christ* and were purified by *being sprinkled with his blood*. This last is a reference to the way the Israelites were brought into a covenant with God and indicates the believers' inclusion in the new covenant. In their suffering, they must not lose sight of the truth about who they are before God.

Chris Gnanakan, South Asia Bible Commentary

Nowhere in this letter does Peter try to sugarcoat following Jesus. There will be pain and suffering. It's part of life in this fallen world and it's a significant part of following the Lord Jesus—the crucified and risen Lord Jesus, the very one who suffered for his people. Peter begins this letter by showing them their true identity is found in God the Father, God the Son, and God the Spirit—three Persons, one God.

I joked earlier about that elder who gave me the worst sales pitch ever. He wasn't trying to recruit me to church planting with glitz and glamour and promises of wild success. He believed God was calling me to plant a church and he wanted me to be prepared for it. (And no, I've never had a fistfight with an elder.)

A significant theme in 1–2 Peter is mission to the world. Peter is writing these believers to instruct them how to be witnesses to Jesus by being faithfully present in a foreign land. He's being truthful about what will come. It's like that TV ad for some medicine. “Hey, this medicine will make you feel better, but you may experience diarrhea, gout, loss of taste and smell, hives, irritability, nervousness, internal bleeding, mouth sores, excessive flatulence, muscle and joint aches, severe cramping, sleeplessness, headaches, blurred vision, numbness in your fingers and toes, hair loss, and likely death, but if you want to feel better, just ask your doctor for a prescription!”

My wife recently came across a church website that listed all the benefits of *attending* that particular church. A full coffee bar where you can get a double-shot Pumpkin Spice Latte right before the worship service, with a freshly baked scone. There is the full buffet of choices for Bible study—139 different groups, based on some shared interest. They were all studying the book of Joshua, but one group was for fans of “The Chosen” TV show. The Bible study isn't about the show, but for fans of the show. There's another for Moms of High School students. There's a Bible study group for those who like to knit. One for sports fans. Yet another for makers in the church—those who like making things whether out of wood or metal or maybe a 3d printer. Of course the Bible study is available in print, digital, and audio formats.

It saddens me when some churches—not most, but some—think that offering temporary pleasures and nice amenities are what attract people to be part of God's elect exiles. To be

fair, with 139 groups, it's clear many people have been attracted to this particular church. You can grow a church numerically that way. I'm not sure a double-shot Pumpkin Spice Latte is what will get you through that difficult situation at work or the rejection of your entire family. I'm not sure reading Joshua with a bunch of other guys who love watching Monday Night Football will enable you to rejoice in the midst of the sorrow of losing a child.

Peter's goal in this letter is to cause his readers to remember the living hope of the gospel. It is a living hope. Eternal life is not some future experience we have to wait for and to wait we have merely endure this life. Eternal life begins *now*, and by remaining faithfully present in Pontus and Galatia and Cappadocia and Asia and Bithynia, by seeking to be involved in their communities as faithful witnesses, they will participate with God in his mission for this world.

Yes, they will suffer. Yes, they will face hardship. Having out-of-this-world facilities and a buffet of niche groups with which to study Scripture and fancy coffee bars are not going to remind them over and over again of the faithfulness of God in Trinity, of God's election, of the Spirit's sanctification, of the sprinkling of Jesus' blood. Going to "Holy Yoga" on Tuesday nights isn't going to get them through the storms of this life.

Peter tells his readers right up front exactly how they will be faithfully present in a world that is hostile to them: God in Trinity is actively working out his purposes in them and has granted them an identity that has its basis in God himself and though the world is ever changing and shifting, this identity in God is unchangeable. These churches, despite their suffering, will be faithful through it all and God will use them for his glory for as they live faithfully. These churches have everything they need to offer a watching world for they have the Triune God.

He ends his greeting in a profound way. Chris Gnanakan explains.

Peter's prayer for those to whom he writes is that they will enjoy the full extent of two divine gifts: *grace* and *peace*. He wants them to know that through God's grace they have been rescued from the past, positioned to receive an inheritance in the future, and given significance in the present. Their joyful response to this grace will give them peace, despite suffering.

Chris Gnanakan, South Asia Bible Commentary