

## INTRODUCTION 引言

Creatures from outer-space is a common plot in Sci-Fi movies. There are various outcomes when they come in contact with humans. The classic series “Alien” features some vicious organisms trying to destroy humans. People must fight back for their survival. The movie was so successful that it led to sequels and copycats. But not all lifeforms from another planet are depicted as hostile animals. “Coneheads” is actually a comedy. An alien couple crashed their spaceship near Manhattan. They try to hide their identity. The husband finds a job as an appliance repairman and later as a cab-driver. The immigration soon chases after him because he is an illegal migrant who is not supposed to work. Eventually, the alien saves one of the officers from his home planet. To show his appreciation, the agent grants green cards to the alien family. Christians can behave like those two kinds of aliens. Some people think Christians are bullies who try to force their values onto others. But other Christians prefer to blend in and live like non-believers. When Jesus saves us, He also calls us to follow Him in our daily life. We are like people from another planet being sent to earth. There will be a culture shock. Apostle Peter wrote to some Christians who were facing a similar situation. They lived in a society that worshipped many gods. They faced challenges from non-believers and temptations from idolatry. Peter encouraged them to live for God. Our message today will focus on 1 Peter 2:9. It reads: **But you are a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people for his own possession, that you may proclaim the excellencies of him who called you out of darkness into his marvelous light.** Just like those Christians, we have received a new status from God as His children. Therefore, we must live like permanent residents of God’s Kingdom during our brief stay in this world.

## EXPLANATION 解釋

## 1. Noble Titles 尊貴的頭銜

Peter uses four noble titles to describe Christians in this verse. First, we are **a chosen race**. The Bible clearly says that God chose us. We do not choose Him. God chose us even before He created the universe! You can look up **Ephesians 1:4-5**. I said it before and I will say it again: if the doctrine of predestination does not humble us, nothing will. If we are being honest of ourselves, we know what kind of people we really are. I will ask the Lord when I get to heaven: “Lord, based on what did you choose me?” We can be saved only because of God’s grace. We should forever be thankful to Him. Being “chosen” also means that God has a unique plan for each of us. We will miss a lot of opportunities to know God and to serve Him if we stay idled and wait to go to heaven. We will talk more about God’s will for us later. Second, we are **a royal priesthood**. In the Old Testament, God appointed the descendants of Aaron as priests. They represented their peers to burn offerings on the altar to atone for people’s sins. No one else could get near to God. But when Jesus died on the cross, the veil in the temple was torn into halves. That piece of cloth blocked the entry into the Most Holy Place. That small room is where God revealed Himself. Since then Jesus opened the doorway. Anyone can come to God through Jesus. In essence, every believer is now a priest. What kind of sacrifice do we offer to God? We present our praise, thanks, requests and confession through prayer. We can do that anywhere at any time.

We can sing and pray to God when driving or working, walking in a park or even lying on the bed. Third, we are also **a holy nation**. Jesus made us holy by forgiving our sins. But He also put us together like a nation. The concept of a nation makes us think of a head of state, governance and a territory. God is our King and we are His ambassadors in this world. He sends us into a campus, office and neighborhood. Since we represent a holy nation, we should be holy in our speech and conducts. There will definitely be conflicts between God's standard and the world's standard. A major theme in Peter's letter is suffering. What do you suffer for God today? People may take advantage of you because you are honest. They may give you a hard time if they know what you believe. But God will give us enough grace to go through suffering. What we face is nothing compared to what our Lord and Christians throughout history suffered. Fourth, we are **a people for his own possession**. God saved us to make us His possession. God transferred us from the kingdom of darkness into His Kingdom of light. We pledge our allegiance to our New King. Some countries like the U.S. allow dual citizenship. Foreign-born people who become U.S. citizens can enjoy benefits from both countries. But God will not tolerate a 50% believer. He asks for our total commitment. Paul describes that Christians are a temple of the Holy Spirit. We have become a mobile temple. There are certain places we will not go and things we dare not to do if we are aware that God is with us 24/7. On the positive side, we should glorify God through what we do. A story was told about a seminary student who worked a summer job as a lumberjack. He was among some tough guys who used a different language. When school resumed, some classmates asked how the man survived in such an adverse environment. He replied: "That's easy! I didn't tell them that I'm a Christian." We can play safe like this man did to avoid frictions with non-believers. But where else can people see God's holiness and righteousness if we stay passive and timid? God does not recruit us as secret agents. He drafts us as His soldiers. God sends us into a battleground, not a playground. We should be prepared to suffer hurts and insults. Some people may not like us because they hate what we believe. God is the light. He sends us into a dark world. We are like gemstones. A diamond shines brighter only when you put it against a black cloth. Likewise, the world needs to see God's beauty in us.

## 2. Noble Tasks 尊貴的義務

God gives us four noble titles. But how should those noble titles affect our life? God assigns us some noble tasks. Peter uses the conjunction "that" to connect to the second half of the verse: **that you may proclaim the excellencies of him who called you out of darkness into his marvelous light**. God asks us to proclaim His name. The word "excellencies" here means "virtues." In other words, God sends us to promote His characters to attract people to Him. What are the practical things we can do to proclaim God's virtues? First, we should model God's love among believers. Peter says in 1:22 that we must show: **... a sincere brotherly love, love one another earnestly from a pure heart**. It is easy to love people who share your views, personality and interests. However, you will meet people who are different from you. They may not change to suit your taste. But you can change your mindset. Ask God for more love so that you can treat people with a sincere love. In what ways can we display love to others? In chapter 4, Peter encourages us to serve brothers and sisters using God's Word and our talents. God equips us with different gifts. We complement each other by our differences. A jigsaw puzzle is incomplete if a few pieces are missing. Some of you are good at fixing things, others have patience to teach younger kids or creativity for artwork. Talk to any Council member or ask me if you do not know where you can serve. Besides declaring God's virtues in a faith community, we must also witness God to the

unbelieving world. Peter introduces the subject of submission beginning from the second half of chapter 2. There will be struggles when Christians interact with non-believers. Peter gives us a few examples. In **2:13** he tells believers to submit to their king. That means the Caesar who did not believe in God. They should submit to that ruthless king for the Lord's sake. Similarly, in general we should listen to our government and abide by the laws. For those who work, Peter's advice in **2:18** is for slaves to submit to their masters even if they were treated harshly. Your boss may deal with you like his best friend, or he may lead like a dictator. Of course, nowadays you can resign and look for another job. But no matter where you work, God puts you there to proclaim His virtues. Show God's grace and patience in your work place. Next, Peter focuses on family. He tells sisters in **3:1** to submit to their husband, even if those men were unbelievers. In the context, Peter describes how Jesus submitted to the authority. Wives should submit to their husbands just like how Jesus reacted to those who put Him on the cross. Some sisters may protest: "Come live in our house and you will know what kind of husband I have!" Peter's encouragement comes with a purpose. God can use a wife's good behavior to change her non-believing husband. We may suffer as a result when we submit to others. But some people may take notice of our godly manner. That will open a discussion about the gospel. When that happens, Peter encourages us in **3:15** – ... **always being prepared to make a defense to anyone who asks you for a reason for the hope that is in you; yet do it with gentleness and respect.** Some people may question why we are willing to submit to an unreasonable boss, why we continue to work hard when the supervisor takes off early and why we stay honest, humble and polite. That will be an opportunity to share your testimony and the gospel. The world may think that Biblical principles are outdated, and Christians are naïve and dumb. But the fact is, many people are longing for the truth. Politics expose people's pride and greed. Education cannot elevate their moral standard. Experts do not make them better spouses, parents or children. God's Word is our only hope because it is a timeless truth that comes from the Almighty God.

## CONCLUSION 結論

We must live like permanent residents of God's Kingdom during our brief stay in this world. The Bible sounds like a foreign language and Christians may look like strangers because the gospel is out of this world. It comes from the Lord. Jesus came into our world to bring us salvation. Jesus passes us the baton to go out and tell people that He is the one and only God. Last December, some brothers and sisters and I went to a homeless shelter to share God's love with some people. It is a Christian ministry. I had little concern about infection. My mind was filled with images of a rundown building, people in smelly and rugged clothes who are addicted to alcohol and drugs. Yes, I am biased. But the Lord completely changed my views. The facility was just opened weeks ago. It is well-furnished and well-managed. All the residents have to show proofs of vaccination. They actually take shower and do laundry daily too. Even the neighborhood looks clean and safe. Those underprivileged people may find it odd to see some oriental faces to tell them about Jesus. But we represent God's Kingdom. We only stayed for an hour to sing some songs and read some Bible passages about Christmas. We found joy to serve them. Sometimes God sends us to different places. At other times, God brings new friends to our church. No matter where we go or who we meet, we tell people the same message. Jesus is our Savior and Lord.

## 1 Peter 彼得前書 2:9

## INTRODUCTION 引言

來自外太空的生物是科幻電影中常見的情節。當它們與人類接觸時會產生各種結果。經典系列「異形」描述一些試圖摧毀人類的邪惡生物。人們必須為生存而反擊。這部電影非常成功，其後出現了續集和別人的模仿。但並非所有來自另一個星球的生物都是與人類敵對的。「尖頭外星族」實際上是一部喜劇。一對外星夫婦的飛船在曼哈頓附近墜毀。他們設法隱藏自己的身份。那一位丈夫找到了一份修理電器的工作，後來他又做了出租車司機。移民局很快就追蹤他，因為他是一個不允許工作的非法移民。最終，外星人從他家鄉的星球上拯救了其中一名官員。為了表示感謝，他給外星人家庭批准了綠卡。基督徒的表現有時候會像這兩種外星人。有些人認為基督徒強迫別人接受他們的價值觀。但另一些基督徒卻喜歡融入在人群中，過著非信徒一樣的生活。當耶穌拯救我們時，祂呼召我們在日常生活中跟隨祂。我們就像來自另一個星球的人被送到地球。我們會碰到文化的衝擊。使徒彼得寫信給一些面對類似情況的基督徒。他們生活在一個敬拜多神的地方。他們面臨來自非信徒的挑戰和來自偶像崇拜的誘惑。彼得鼓勵他們為神而活。我們今天的信息將集中看彼得前書 2:9。經文說：**惟有你們是被揀選的族類，是有君尊的祭司，是聖潔的國度，是屬神的子民，要叫你們宣揚那召你們出黑暗入奇妙光明者的美德。**就像那些基督徒一樣，我們從神那裡得到了新的地位，成為祂的兒女。因此，我們必須以天國永久居民的型態，在這個世界短暫停留。

## EXPLANATION 解釋

## 1. Noble Titles 尊貴的頭銜

彼得在這節經文中用了四個尊貴的頭銜來形容基督徒。首先，我們是**被揀選的族類**。聖經清楚地說是神揀選我們，而不是我們不揀選神。神甚至在創造宇宙之前就揀選了我們！你可以查閱**以弗所書 1:4-5**。我以前說過，我現在再說一遍：如果預定這個教義不能讓我們謙卑下來，那麼就沒有其他因素能使我們謙卑。如果我們對自己誠實，我們就知道自己到底是什麼樣的人。到天堂時，我會問主：「主啊，祢是根據什麼揀選我的？」我們唯有靠著神的恩典才能得救。我們應該永遠感謝祂。被揀選也意味著神對我們每個人都有一個獨特的計劃。如果我們無所事事地等著上天堂，我們就會錯過很多認識神和事奉祂的機會。稍後我們會更多地討論神對我們的旨意。其次，我們是**有君尊的祭司**。在舊約中，神任命亞倫的後裔為祭司。他們代表同胞在祭壇上焚燒祭物，為人們贖罪。其他人都不能靠近神。但是當耶穌死在十字架上時，聖殿的幔子裂開成兩半。那塊布簾擋住了進入至聖所的入口。那個小房間是神顯現的地方。從此耶穌打開了大門。任何人都可以通過耶穌來到神面前。在本質上，每個信徒現在都是祭司。我們向神獻上什麼祭物呢？我們通過禱告表達我們的讚美、感謝、請求和認罪。

我們隨時隨地都可以向神禱告。我們可以在開車或工作、在公園散步、甚至躺在床上時唱詩歌和禱告。第三，我們也是**聖潔的國度**。耶穌赦免我們的罪，使我們成為聖潔。祂也把我們像一個國家一樣聚在一起。國家這個概念使我們想到元首、治理和領土。神是我們的君王，我們是祂在這個世界中的大使。祂把我們差派到校園、辦公室和社區。既然我們代表一個聖潔的國家，我們的言行就必須聖潔。神的標準和世界的標準肯定會有衝突。彼得書信的一個主題是受苦。你今天如何為神的緣故受苦？人們或許會因為你的誠實佔你的便宜。如果人們知道你的信仰，他們也可能會找你的麻煩。但是神會賜給我們足夠的恩典來渡過苦難。和我們的主和歷史上的基督徒所遭遇的相比，我們所受的苦實在是微不足道。第四，我們是**屬神的子民**。神拯救了我們，使我們成為祂的產業。神把我們從黑暗的國度遷移到祂的光明國度。我們向我們新的王宣誓效忠。美國和某些國家允許雙重國籍。成為美國公民的外國人便可以享受兩個國家的福利。但是神不會容忍一個百分之五十的信徒。祂要求我們全人的委身。保羅形容基督徒是聖靈的殿。我們彷彿變成了一座流動的殿。如果我們知道神一直與我們同在，有些地方我們便不會去，有些事情我們也不敢做。從正面來看，我們應該通過我們所做的來榮耀神。有一個故事是關於一個神學院的學生，他在暑期當伐木工人。他和一些使用不同語言的硬漢相處。開學後，有同學問他是如何在如此惡劣的環境中生存下來的。他回答說：「很簡單！我根本沒有告訴他們我是基督徒。」我們可以像這個人一樣小心行事，以避免與非信徒發生摩擦。但是如果我們保持被動和膽怯，人們還能在哪裡看到神的聖潔和公義呢？神不是招募我們成為臥底特工，祂乃是徵召我們成為祂的士兵。神把我們送到戰場，而不是遊樂場。我們應該準備好遭受傷害和羞辱。有些人可能不喜歡我們，因為他們討厭我們所相信的。神是光，祂把我們差到一個黑暗的世界。我們就像寶石。只有將鑽石放在黑布上時，它才會顯得更閃亮。同樣，世界需要從我們身上看到神的美善。

## 2. Noble Tasks 尊貴的義務

神給了我們四個尊貴的頭銜。但是那些尊貴的頭銜應該如何影響我們的生活呢？神分配給我們一些尊貴的義務。彼得用「要叫」這個詞來連接這節經文的後半部分：**要叫你們宣揚那召你們出黑暗入奇妙光明者的美德**。神要我們宣揚祂的名。宣揚神的美德就是要去宣傳祂的品格，以吸引人們歸向祂。我們可以做哪些實際的事情來宣揚神的美德？首先，我們必須在信徒中效法神的愛。彼得在 1:22 中說，我們必須：**…愛弟兄沒有虛假，就當從心裡彼此切實相愛**。愛那些和你觀點、個性和興趣相同的人是很容易的。但是，你肯定會遇到和你不一樣的人。他們可能不會改變自己來迎合你的口味。但是你可以改變你的心態。你可以向神祈求更多的愛，使你能用真誠的愛對待別人。我們可以通過哪些方式向他人表達愛？在第 4 章，彼得鼓勵我們用神的話語和我們的恩賜服侍弟兄弟姐妹。神用不同的恩賜裝備我們。我們通過我們的差異互相補充。一幅拼圖如果缺少了幾片便是不完整的。我們中間一些人擅長修理東西，其他人則有耐心教導小孩或弄藝術創作。如果你不知道可以參與什麼服事，歡迎與任何同工會成員或我交談。除了在信仰群體中宣揚神的美德之外，我們還必須向不信的世代見證神。彼得從第 2 章的後半部份引入順服這個主題。當基督徒與非信徒接觸時，很可能

會碰到挑戰。彼得列出幾個例子。在 2:13 他告訴信徒要順服他們的君王，那就是指不相信神的凱撒。他們應該為主的緣故順服那個無情的王。同樣，一般來說，我們應該聽政府的話，遵守法律。對於那些上班的人，彼得在 2:18 中建議，即使他們受到嚴厲的對待，他們也要順服他們的主人。你的老闆可能會把你看為好朋友，或者他可能會像獨裁者一樣領導。當然，你可以辭職並尋找另一份工作。但無論你在哪里工作，神都要求你在那裡宣揚祂的美德。你要在工作場所表現出神的恩典和耐心。接下來，彼得把重點轉到家庭。他在 3:1 告訴姐妹們要順服丈夫，即使那些男人是非信徒。在上下文中，彼得描述耶穌如何順服掌權者。妻子應該順服她們的丈夫，就像耶穌順服那些把祂釘十字架的人一樣。有些姐妹可能會抗議：「來我們家住你就知道我老公那副德性！」彼得的鼓勵是有用意的。神可以使用妻子的美好行為來改變不信的丈夫。當我們順服別人時，我們可能會因此而受苦。但有些人可能會注意到我們敬虔的態度。這將引發關於福音的討論。在這種情況下，彼得在 3:15 的鼓勵是：…有人問你們心中盼望的緣由，就要常作準備，以溫柔、敬畏的心回答各人。有人可能會質疑，為什麼我們願意順服一個不講道理的老闆，為什麼我們在主管提早下班後仍然努力工作，為什麼我們會保持誠實、謙虛和有禮貌。那將是一個分享你的見證和福音的機會。世人可能認為聖經的原則已經過時，而基督徒是天真和愚昧的。但其實很多人都渴慕認識真理。政治暴露出人性的驕傲和貪婪。教育無法提高人的道德標準。專家不會讓人成為更好的配偶、父母或孩子。神的話語是我們唯一的盼望，因為它是來自全能神的永恆真理。

## CONCLUSION 結論

我們必須以天國永久居民的型態，在這個世界短暫停留。聖經聽起來像一門外語，基督徒可能看起來像陌生人，因為福音不是來自這個世界的。它來自於主。耶穌來到我們的世界為我們帶來救恩。耶穌把接力棒交給我們，要我們出去告訴人們祂是獨一的神。去年 12 月，我和一些兄弟姐妹在一個收容所向一些流浪漢分享神的愛。那是一個基督徒的事工。我不擔心被感染。但我想像到的是一棟破舊的建築物，一些穿著臭氣熏天的破衣服的人，他們酗酒和吸毒。是的，我有偏見。但主徹底改變了我的看法。那裡的設施在幾週前才剛剛開放。一切佈置得很好，管理也很完善。所有居民都必須證明打過疫苗。他們甚至每天洗澡和洗衣服。連周圍的環境看起來也很乾淨和安全。那些弱勢群體可能會覺得奇怪地看到一些東方面孔向他們講述耶穌。但我們是代表神的國。我們只停留了一個多小時，唱幾首詩歌，和讀了一些關於聖誕節的經文。我們很高興為他們服務。有時神把我們送到不同的地方。在其他時候，神會為帶新朋友到我們的教會來。無論我們去哪里或遇到誰，我們都傳達相同的信息。耶穌是我們的救主和生命的主。