

Peter and His Epistles

Lesson #9: 1 Peter

I. Background

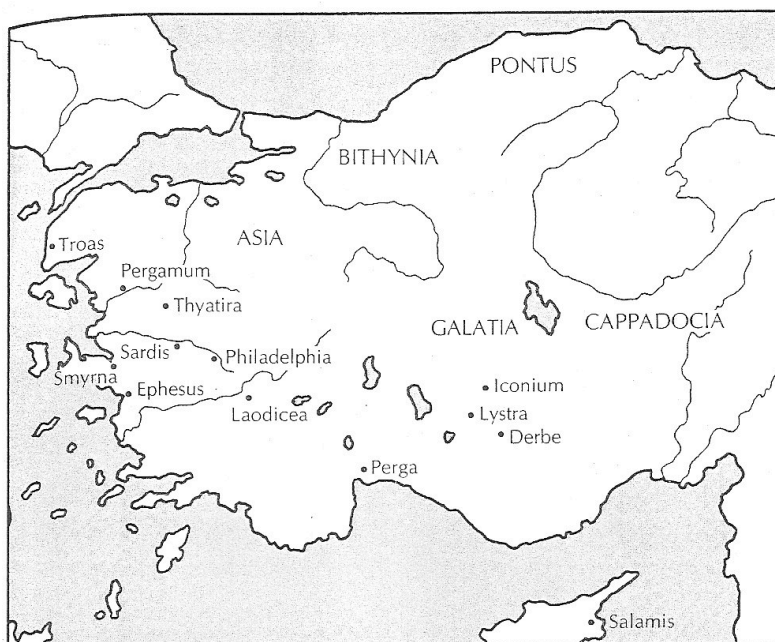
- A. Historical situation – Nero (Roman Emperor) was persecuting the church. Rome was burned in AD 64. Nero committed suicide in AD 68. Likely this letter was written from Rome (“Babylon”) some time between those two dates.
- B. It was a time of great suffering for all believers. “In the most of all their discouragement, the sovereign God will keep them and enable them by faith to have joy. Jesus Christ by his patient suffering and glorious future destiny has given them the pattern to follow and also a living hope. Life in a pagan society is difficult and requires humility and submission.” (Expositor’s Bible Commentary, Vol. 12, p. 213)
- C. Peter focuses on “godly behavior in suffering.”
 - 1. Way of life/behavior: mentioned six times
 - 2. Suffering: mentioned twelve times
- D. This book was one of the first books accepted into the canon of scripture

II. The Author and his authority (1:1)

- A. Apostle: one who had known Jesus during His earthly ministry – was an eyewitness. Peter was the obvious leader of the original twelve. Particularly an apostle to the Jews (Gal. 2:8-9).
- B. Accomplished his work with the help of Silas (Acts 15:22, 1 Thes. 1:1)

III. The Audience

- A. “Strangers” – sojourners in a foreign land or strange place
- B. “Scattered” (1:1) throughout modern Turkey



1. Pontus – situated along the Black Sea. Aquila came from here (Acts 18:2).
 2. Galatia – a central area addressed by Paul in his letter to the Galatians.
 3. Cappadocia – East of Galatia – a frontier Roman province. Jews from Cappadocia were in Jerusalem on the day of Pentecost.
 4. Asia – its capital was Ephesus. The seven churches in Rev. 2-3 were all in Asia.
 5. Bithynia – also along the Black Sea – Paul and Silas tried to visit on his second missionary journey (Acts 16:7).
- C. “Elect” (1:2)
1. According to the foreknowledge of God the Father – God knew who they were and where they were from.
 2. Through the sanctification of the Spirit – the Spirit “implants in us the divine nature, nurtures us, nourishes us, teaches us the potential of our life in Christ, and gives us the power to live that life.” (Exploring the Epistles of Peter, p. 31)
 3. According to the sprinkling of the Blood of Jesus Christ - mentioned also in Heb. 12:12-24. Peter has in mind the Day of Atonement (Lev. 16) where the high priest went through some 36 steps in order to secure a ritual cleansing of the Hebrew people. Christ accomplished it “once for all.” (Heb. 10:10)
- D. Jews or Gentiles
1. Greek fathers thought he was addressing Jews. Latin (Roman) fathers thought he was speaking to Gentiles
 2. Pagan converts – mostly the fruit of Paul’s ministry (See 1:4, 18, 2:9, 4:2-4)

IV. Peter's First Topic: God's plan of salvation (1:3-8)

"Soteria" (1:5, 1:9-10, 2:2): means deliverance, preservation or salvation

- A. He has given us a new birth (1:3)
- B. We have a living or expectant hope (1:3)
 - 1. Based on Christ's resurrection: we live because He lives
 - 2. Focused on our entrance into glory (heaven)
 - An inheritance that can never:
 - a. Perish/ decay – it is enduring
 - b. Spoil / be defiled – can not be stained by sin
 - c. Fade / be defaulted – its delight will never lessen or grow stale
- C. This side of glory, we are being shielded/guarded (1:5) – this is a military term. See Ps. 34:7
- D. This anticipation (based on a spiritual birth, energized by hope and guarded by His Spirit). Does not preclude some brief trials (He did not use the terms for persecutions or tribulations. (See James 1:2)
 - 1. These trials are:
 - a. Brief
 - b. Necessary
 - 2. The end result: our faith is proved genuine
- E. Our salvation is by faith (1:8)

These believers had not seen Christ in the flesh (neither have we!). But by faith (Heb. 11:6) we love him. And the result is "inexpressible and glorious joy."

V. So what?

- A. Don't miss the "punch line" to Peter's salutation. In the midst of their great trials he asserts, "Grace and peace be yours in abundance."
- B. Grace and peace be multiplied to you!

Discussion Questions

1. Why do you think Peter refers to Jesus as "Jesus Christ" four times in this first section of this letter? Consider Matthew 16:16.
2. Are there any similarities to Peter's world and ours? What are they?

3. Where (or when) is the focus of Peter's discussion of salvation? Is it "now" or "then?" Why do you think he focuses on the inheritance aspect of salvation?

