

Through The Bible  
Session #58 – 1<sup>st</sup> & 2<sup>nd</sup> Peter  
March 1, 2006

Peter's writings have appeared in sermons, Sunday School lessons, etc. but how many of us can actually recall something they know about Peter's letters? Not many of us.

Note that in 1<sup>st</sup> Peter Jesus is presented as the crucified, risen, and moral / ethical Jesus. Jesus is presented as one who lived a lifetime of model behavior.

In 1<sup>st</sup> Peter we have the use of the word, "Christian." This is one of only 3 places where this expression is used. The three being: 1<sup>st</sup> Peter 4.16; Acts 11.26; Acts 26.28.

What kind of literature is 1<sup>st</sup> & 2<sup>nd</sup> Peter?

We are dealing with letters here. Remember the form: (a) identification of the writer; (b) person or persons addressed; (c) greeting to the recipients; (d) a word of praise or thanksgiving; (e) the message; (f) the closing and farewell.

The letters are both public and private at the same time. They are public in the sense that they were to be read in the churches in the 5 places listed. They are private in the sense that they were addressed to a particular kind of person – one who is a Christian.

Who wrote the letters?

The writer is identified as Peter (1.1). We should note that the writing is quite polished and good. People have wondered for centuries how a poor Galilean fisherman could have written in such a way?

Most biblical scholars now don't spend a lot of time arguing the authorship question here. Some have noted the differences between 1<sup>st</sup> and 2<sup>nd</sup> Peter and say they could not be written by the same person.

To whom was the letter written?

The addressees are "exiles of the Dispersion" (1.1). The places were on the eastern end of the Roman empire. We don't know who brought the Gospel to these places. We don't know how large the churches were. Historian Ramsey MacMullen has estimated that the Roman Empire contained about 70 million people at this time...and about 40,000 were Christians...so Christianity is still quite small.

The Christians were certainly being persecuted...though it probably wasn't an official persecution. That didn't begin in the Roman Empire 'officially' until the reign of Decius (AD 249-251). Until Decius, the persecution was more 'unofficial.' Nero's violence against Christians (AD 64-68) was confined to Rome, Christians were killed under Domitian (AD 81-96) and tortured under Trajan (AD 98-117) but the official persecution didn't happen until Decius.

The call from Peter is to endure this mistreatment.

What purpose was the letter written?

Certainly, the letter was written to call the Christians of Asia Minor to have confidence in the power of God. They needed to stay together in mutual support.

Repeatedly, the hearers are reminded they are pilgrims, exiles, aliens in the world, but in the household of God they have a new family, a new home.

How does the church respond to a society that makes life tough for Christians? How are believers to maintain connection with a culture that can often be very 'unChristian' yet still present a Gospel that is appealing?

#### Gregg's Comments on 1<sup>st</sup> Peter

Note the word "discipline" in 1.13. What is discipline? It's training for growth.

1.16 we are to be holy people...as God is holy.

2.3 Is there question as to whether the people are saved?

2.9 One of the major verses in Scripture that points us to the Priesthood of all believers is this verse.

The audience was probably Jewish Christians because of 2.12 & also language like "...exiles of the dispersion..." (1.1). This is Jewish language.

3.1-7 One of most talked about passages in 1<sup>st</sup> Peter.

There's a strong connection in 1<sup>st</sup> Peter between suffering as exiles and the suffering of Christ.

4.7 Note again this writer's expectation of the return of Jesus. This expectation is very much like that of Paul.

4.8 Love covers a multitude of sins....the familiar expression.

4.12 The fiery ordeal is probably their persecution.

The emphasis on persevering amid suffering seems to suggest that there was a temptation to return evil for evil. That would make sense because we're all prone to return evil for evil. See 4.19.

5.5 There must have been some younger people / leaders in this group of Christians.

5.7 Cast your anxiety on him, because he cares for you. This verse has provided comfort for many people.

5.8 Were the persecuted people being put in the arena with lions for sport?

#### Gregg's Comments on 2<sup>nd</sup> Peter

1.14 The death of the writer is close at hand.

1.16 The claim to first-hand knowledge of Christ is support for Peter the apostle's authorship.

3.8 God's timing is not our own. Another verse here that's often quoted.