

Wheelersburg Baptist Church 8/12/09 Wednesday evening

New Testament Survey—1 Peter

The New Testament begins with four gospel accounts that present the life of Jesus. Then we read the history of the early church and find out how the Lord established the first church, then built His church during the thirty years following His return to heaven. Then comes a series of letters or "epistles," first the Pauline epistles (from Romans to Philemon), then the "general" epistles (Hebrews through Jude). The NT ends with the prophetic book of the Revelation that looks ahead to the end of the world with a message designed to encourage believers to persevere in the present.

This evening we'll be looking at another of the epistles, in this case 1 Peter.

Discuss: Why is it significant that so many of the NT books were actually in the first place individual *letters* written by apostles (or apostolic associates) to churches and/or individual Christians?

To do: Scan the book and find as many terms as you can that Peter uses to depict Christians.

1:1 God's elect, strangers, those chosen according to the foreknowledge of God

1:14 Children

1:17 Strangers

2:2 Newborn babies

2:5 Living stones, a spiritual house, a holy priesthood

2:9 A chosen people, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people belonging to God

2:10 The people of God

2:11 Dear friends, aliens and strangers in the world

4:12 Dear friends

4:16 Christian

5:2 God's flock

Another option: Circle the words "suffering" (and related terms) and "grace" in the letter.

- **Who wrote the book?**

--Peter (1:1)

He was a well-known character in the NT (mentioned 210 times; Paul's name is recorded 162 times, and the combined names of all the other apostles add up to only 142).

Discuss: What do we know about Peter from the gospels and Acts?

--a former fisherman whom Jesus called to be a disciple

--commissioned by Jesus as an apostle

--a key leader in the early church in Jerusalem (but fades out of the picture in the second half of Acts)

--later ministered outside of Jerusalem (to Antioch, to Rome, to Babylon); Gromacki observes (348), "Little is known about his activity in his later years, but he apparently traveled much with his wife (1 Cor. 9:5), probably visiting such areas as the provinces of Asia Minor (1:1) and Babylon (5:13).

How does tradition say Peter died? Crucified upside down in Rome about A.D. 67-68, although some place his martyrdom as early as A.D. 64.

See: In 2 Peter 3:1, Peter refers to a previous letter, possibly 1 Peter.

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Extra-biblical support of the authority of 1 Peter:

--1 Clement (A.D. 95) seems to be familiar with 1 Peter

--Polycarp, a disciple of John, makes use of 1 Peter in his letter to the Philippians

--The author of "The Gospel of Truth" (140-150) was acquainted with it.

--Irenaeus (140-203), Tertullian (150-222), Clement of Alexandria (155-215), and Origen (185-253) ascribed this letter to Peter.

Confusion about Peter's authorship: (NIVsb)

Discuss: What factor has caused some to question whether Peter wrote this book? The book contains very good literary Greek. Why would that cast a doubt on Peter's authorship? Though Peter could speak Greek (as well as Aramaic and Hebrew), since he was unschooled, some question he could have written such polished Greek. What's more, 2 Peter exhibits rough Greek.

How can we explain this? A clue: see 5:12. Someone helped Peter write this letter. Who? Silas. Literally Peter says he wrote "through" (by means of) Silas. Silas was the intermediate agent in writing. As the *NIVsb* states, "It is known that a secretary in those days often composed documents in good Greek for those who did not have the language facility to do so (p. 1886)."

• **When was the book written?**

--Early 60's

Discuss: What was the setting? What was happening to the recipients that warranted this book? See the following...

1:1 "Strangers...scattered throughout Pontius, Galatia, etc. [Asia Minor]

1:6 "Though now for a little while you may have to suffer grief..."

2:10 "Once you were not a people, but now...the people of God"

2:13 indicates they were receiving harsh treatment from whom? The authorities

4:12 "Dear friends, do not be surprised at the painful trial you are suffering..."

5:10 "...after you have suffered a while..."

So this letter was written to believers (Jewish and Gentile) facing hardship in the Roman Empire, namely Asia Minor.

- **Why was the book written?**

Key Verse--Peter tells us himself in 5:12, "I have written you briefly, encouraging you and testifying that this is the true grace of God. Stand fast in it."

Discuss: What does mean? What was Peter's purpose for writing?

--To explain the relationship of trials to God's purposes in salvation (Gromacki; the word "suffering" appears 16 times in the letter)

- **What is the outline of the book?**

(adapted from Gromacki, 354)

- I. The Destiny of the Christian (1:1-2:10)
 - A. Plan of Salvation (1:2-12)
 - B. Products of Salvation (1:13-25)
 - C. Purpose of Salvation (2:1-10)
- II. The Duty of the Christian (2:11-3:12)
 - A. Subjection in the state (2:11-17)
 - B. Subjection in the household (2:18-25)
 - C. Subjection in the family (3:1-12)
- III. The Discipline of the Christian (3:13-5:14)
 - A. Suffering as a citizen (3:13-4:6)
 - B. Suffering as a Christian (4:7-19)
 - C. Suffering as a shepherd (5:1-4)
 - D. Suffering as a soldier (5:5-11)

- **What is the message of the book in one sentence?**

1 Peter encourages Christians to keep on keeping on, knowing it will be worth it all when we see Jesus!

- **What contribution does the book make to biblical theology (that is, how does this book relate to the rest of the Bible)?**

1. *1 Peter teaches us about the theme of suffering.*

See: 1:3-12

Q: What's true of trials? See verses 6-7

Q: What purpose do trials have in God's plan? V 7

Q: What motivates us in trials? V 8

Q: On what do we base this hope? Look back at verses 3-5

Discuss: What would happen if a Christian did not know this truth about trials?

2. *1 Peter warns helps us understand the nature of Satan's threat.*

See: 5:8-9

Q: What is Satan doing now? Seeking to devour

Q: What specific weapon was he using in Peter's day to seek to harm the Christians? The hostility of non-Christians (verse 9).

Note: What are some other destructive tools in Satan's arsenal by which he seeks to harm churches/Christians? See 2 Cor 2:10-11 (an unwillingness to forgive), Eph 4:26-27 (Unresolved, unjustified anger)

Discuss: In what ways can Satan devour a Christian? How can we as believers protect ourselves from his attack (see verses 8-9)?

3. *1 Peter gives us important teaching on several key issues.*

a. How to live as a Christian in a non-Christian world (chs. 2-4)

b. How to have a marriage that honors God (ch. 3)

c. The role of the elder/pastor (ch. 5)

d. Our identity as Christians

Discuss: Why do the epistles address such "practical" subjects? What's the point? Theology must lead to application. Application that is not grounded in sound theology will lack the power for long term effect. But theology that doesn't lead to application quickly becomes pharisaical, heady, and leads to pride. What lessons can we who teach the Word of God learn from this?

