

A STUDY OF 1 PETER

The Greeting (1 Peter 1:1,2)

The book of 1 Peter is the first of two letters penned by the Apostle Peter and addressed to Christians in Pontus, Galatia, Cappadocia, Asia, and Bithynia. The letter was written about the year AD 65.¹

Peter address his readers as “*elect exiles of the dispersion.*”² The word “exile” is sometimes translated as sojourner and literally means “one who lives alongside of.”³

1. In what way are Christians exiles or sojourners? (See also 1 Peter 2:11; Hebrew 11:13; Ephesians 2:19; and Philippians 3:20)



<http://www.bible-history.com/maps/maps/>

The word “*elect*” tells us that they were God’s chosen people. Just as the Israelites in the Old Testament were God’s chosen people, now Christians are God’s elect. God has *foreknowledge* of those who will come to salvation. This does not mean that God predetermines who *can* come to Him, but He knows the ones who *will* obey Him by their own free will. 1 Corinthians 8:3 says, “*But if anyone loves God, he is known by God.*” (Compare Acts 2:23 and John 10:17-18 where we learn that Jesus died according to the foreknowledge and plan of God while Jesus says he lays down his life by his own accord.)

2. Describe the hope that would have come to Peter’s readers when he says to them that even though they are exiles, they are the “*elect.*”

Those who are God’s elect are sanctified by the Spirit. This simply means that the Holy Spirit “sets apart” Christians for obedience to Christ. Acts 2:38 teaches that all who are baptised into Christ receive both the forgiveness of sins AND the gift of the Holy Spirit who dwells within the Christian. Christians are sprinkled with the blood of Christ setting them apart to his service.

3. What is meant by the terms “*grace*” and “*peace*” in verse 2 and how would this help a scattered and persecuted people?

¹ Smith, James E. *Teacher’s Commentary: General Epistles*. Lulu.com, 2010. p. 9.

² All Scripture references unless otherwise noted are taken from the English Standard Version.

³ Smith, Ibid.

The Christian's Hope (1 Peter 1:3-12)

It is important that Christians understand the greatness of what we have in Christ. One can sense the joy of the Apostle Peter as he writes in verses 3-10. He was writing to a persecuted church, but in Christ they had tremendous hope.

4. What is the meaning of the word “mercy” in verse 3 and how is mercy different from grace?

The mercy of which Peter writes is called “great.” The Greek word used here is “*polus*” and means “abundant, plenteous, much; hence: great, strong, intense, large.”⁴ Peter wants these suffering Christians to know the incredible greatness of the mercy of our Father.

The Christian's hope comes through being born again. This new birth takes place in baptism (Titus 3:5; John 3:5) and brings hope.

5. What is the meaning of the word “hope” as it is used in the New Testament? Why is this hope described as “living” in verse 3?



Our hope is grounded in the reality of the resurrection. Because God is merciful, and we have been born again, our hope in the one who was raised from the dead anticipates a great inheritance. Were it not for the resurrection our faith would be in vain (1 Corinthians 15:12-18). The resurrection of Christ is of first importance (1 Corinthians 1:3).

6. What four words or phrases are used to describe the Christian's inheritance in verse 4?

- a.
- b.
- c.
- d.

In the Old Testament God promised an inheritance to Abraham (Genesis 12:7). For the Israelite in the Old Testament, the promised inheritance was land, for the Christian it is a home in heaven. While we eagerly await a future inheritance we are currently guarded (or shielded) by God's power through our faith. God will not allow us to lose our inheritance so long as we continue to remain faithful.

The tense of the word guarded in the original language indicates “the need for our continual protection in the unending struggle of our soul.”⁵ (In the Old Testament, God is often referred

⁴ Oberst, Bruce. *Letters from Peter* in the Bible Study Textbook Series. College Press: Joplin, MO, 1962.

⁵ Smith, *ibid.*, p. 18.

to as a shield. See Genesis 15:1; Deuteronomy 33:29; Psalm 3:3; 7:10; 18:2; 115:9-11). The word “guarded” is a military term which indicates the vigilant efforts of a protector.

7. What do we learn about salvation in verse 5?

8. List the facts we learn about the Christian’s present trials in verse 6? Compare 1 Peter 1:6 with James 1:2; Romans 5:3; and Matthew 5:11-12.

Trials may not be pleasant, but they prove the genuineness of our faith. Just as gold is refined in fire, so the trials we face, refine us and prove whether or not our faith is genuine.

Trials also prepare the Christian for the coming of the Lord. Those whose faith is proved to be genuine will result in praise, glory, and honour when Jesus Christ comes again.



These trials do not refer to illness or the common struggles that all people endure, but rather trials that come as a direct result of a commitment to Jesus Christ. They may refer to direct persecution or the “struggles of Christian service.”⁶ (See 2 Corinthians 11:23-29; James 1:2-3).

9. Read verse 8. How is it possible to love one that you have never seen?

10. Why does verse 8 describe the Christian’s joy as inexpressible?

11. What is the ultimate goal of our faith (verse 9)?

The Old Testament prophets prophesied about the salvation that Christians enjoy. In Matthew 13:17 Jesus said, “For truly, I say to you, many prophets and righteous people longed to see what you see, and did not see it, and to hear what you hear, and did not hear it.”

The prophets did not completely understand their prophecies and did not know when Jesus would come and when he would die. Furthermore, they were told that they were prophesying of something they would not see in their lifetimes. It is only in the Christian age that their prophecies found fulfillment.

12. Describe what the angels want in verse 12.

⁶ Davids, Peter H.; Arnold, Clinton E. ed. *Zondervan Illustrated Bible Background Commentary*. Zondervan: Grand Rapids, 2002, p. 128.

Peter's first readers were undergoing severe persecution and must be encouraged by these words of hope. God promises an inheritance to the faithful and that even the trials result in praise, glory, and honour. Surely Christians today need to know, believe, and understand these words as we live as strangers in our world.

2 Corinthians 4:16-18 teaches, *"So we do not lose heart. Though our outer self is wasting away, our inner self is being renewed day by day. For this light momentary affliction is preparing for us an eternal weight of glory beyond all comparison, as we look not to the things that are seen but to the things that are unseen. For the things that are seen are transient, but the things that are unseen are eternal."*

13. What if any questions arise in your mind from 1 Peter 1:1-12?

14. How will the words of this passage help you as you live for Christ?