

BEING BORN AGAIN
PREACHING THROUGH THE BIBLE: I PETER
I Peter 1:3-5

I. INTRODUCTION

A. BRIEF DESCRIPTION

By the middle of the first century, the church had experienced isolated opposition, first by Jews, then by Gentiles. Soon the situation would become much worse as Christians were about to face even more widespread and intense persecution sanctioned by the Roman government. With this in mind, Peter encourages Christians facing persecution to remember and draw strength from their heritage of salvation, to live as holy and worthy examples of Christlike submission, and to stand firm with Christ in His suffering as they minister and witness to others.

B. TITLE

- *Petrou A*—‘FIRST OF PETER’
- TAKEN FROM FIRST WORDS OF LETTER—*Πετρος αποστολος Ιησου Χριστου*

C. PLACE IN BIBLE

- THIRD OF EIGHT NON-PAULINE EPISTLES
- POPULARLY [BUT INACCURATELY] KNOWN AS ‘CATHOLIC EPISTLES’
 - Because James, I Peter, and II and III John were sent to specific addressees

D. AUTHORSHIP

1. THE APOSTLE PETER—FROM **1:1**
2. AFFIRMATION OF PETRINE AUTHORSHIP
 - a. Universally attested by Early Church
 - b. Internal evidence
 1. Similarities in phraseology
 - a. Wording similar to Peter’s sermons in Acts
 1. Foreknowledge
 - I Pe 1:20**—God foreknew Christ before the foundation of the world
 - Acts 2:23**—Christ was delivered up according to God’s fore-ordained plan
 2. Judgment
 - I Pe 4:5**—Christ is ready to judge the living and the dead

Acts 10:42—God has appointed Christ as Judge of the living and the dead

3. The cross

Unique word—‘tree’—**ξύλον**—used in **Acts 5:30; 10:39** and **I Pe 2:24**

b. Suffering

1. Peter mentions Christ’s suffering—**1:11; 2:21-23; 3:18; 4:1; 5:1**
2. Peter calls us to suffer with/for Christ—**2:19; 3:14, 17; 4:13, 15, 19; 5:9-10**
3. Related to Peter’s apostolic role—as witness to Christ’s suffering—**5:1**

3. QUESTIONS RAISED ABOUT PETRINE AUTHORSHIP

a. Style of Greek language

1. Argument

- Elevated style in this letter is not typical of an uncultured fisherman

2. Response

- It could be the style of Peter’s secretary—Sylvanus/Silas—through whom Peter wrote—see **5:12**

b. Persecution

1. Argument: Asia Minor Christians—**1:2**—did not experience persecution until later

- a. Nero’s persecution—**64 AD**—was local—around Rome
- b. First widespread Roman persecution was not until long after Peter’s death
 - ▲ Domitian—**96 AD**
 - ▲ Decius Trajan—**111 AD**

2. Response

- This is a false assumption
- Christians were persecuted long before it was officially sanctioned by Rome

c. ‘Babylon’

1. Argument

- a. Peter closes with—**5:13**—*She who is in Babylon . . . sends you greetings*
- b. This is from ‘she’—the church—in Rome—i.e. Babylon
- c. But Christians probably did not refer to Rome as Babylon until after 70 AD
 - ▲ When Titus destroyed Jerusalem and the Temple

▲ Like Babylon had done in 587 BC

2. Response

- Possibly Christians already referred to Rome this way because it was the capital of most of the pagan world—as Babylon had been earlier

E. PETER THE AUTHOR

1. FAMILY BACKGROUND

- Born—son of Jonah—Bethsaida, Galilee
- Brother—Andrew
- Married—settled in Capernaum
- Fisherman—Sea of Galilee—partnered with James and John

2. DISCIPLESHIP WITH JESUS

- Met Jesus—through brother Andrew, a follower of John the Baptist—Jn 1:40-41
- Jesus added to his name—Peter—Jn 1:42
- Jesus called him and Andrew—while fishing—Mk 1:16-18
- Jesus healed his mother-in-law—Mk 1:29-31
- Jesus' miracle—huge draught of fish—Lk 5:4-7
- Called as one of Twelve Apostles—Mk 3:13-16
- Tried to walk on water to Jesus—Mt 14:22-33
- Confessed Jesus as Christ at Caesarea—Mt 16:16
- Rebuked Jesus for predicting His death—Mk 8:31-33
- Found tribute money in the fish—Mt 17:24-27
- Asked Jesus—how many times to forgive a brother—Mt 18:21
- Declared to Jesus—they had left everything to follow Him—Mk 10:28
- Pointed out withered fig tree to Jesus—Mk 11:21
- Jesus predicted Peter's denials—Jesus prayed for him—Mk 14:29-31; Lk 22:31-34
- Tried to stop Jesus washing his feet at Lord's Supper—Jn 13:5-11
- Cut off Malchus's ear when Jesus was arrested—Jn 18:10
- Denied Jesus three times—Mk 14:66-72
- Witnessed empty tomb with John—Jn 20:1-10
- Second huge catch of fish—Jn 21:4-11
- Confessed love for Jesus—three times—Jn 21:15-17
- Jesus predicted kind of death Peter would experience—Jn 21:18-19
- Inner circle—Peter, James and John
 - Witnessed raising of Jairus's daughter—Mk 5:37-43
 - Witnessed Transfiguration—Mk 9:2-8
 - Received end-time prophecy with Philip—Mk 13
 - Only Peter and John prepared Lord's Supper—Lk 22:7-13
 - In Gethsemane—went further with Jesus—Mk 14:33

3. APOSTOLIC MINISTRY

- Peter the Apostolic leader
 - Led Apostles in election of Matthias—Acts 1:15-26
 - One of the pillars of the church—with James and John—Gal 2:9
 - Key speech at Jerusalem Council—Acts 15:7-11
- Peter the Preacher
 - Preached Pentecost sermon—Acts 2:14-36
 - Preached second sermon—Acts 3:11-26
 - Preached to Cornelius—Acts 10
- Peter the Miracle worker-healer
 - Healed lame man at Gate Beautiful—with John—Acts 3:1-10
 - Performed miracles at Solomon’s Porch and in streets—Acts 5:12-16
 - Healed bedridden Aeneas—in Lydda—Acts 9:32-34
 - Raised Dorcas/Tabitha from the dead—in Joppa—Acts 9:36-41
- Peter the apologist-witness
 - Arrested and gave account before Sanhedrin—with John—Acts 4:1-22
 - Imprisoned and beaten with other Apostles—Acts 5:17-42
 - Arrested by Herod—and escaped—Acts 12:1-19
- Peter the confronter—and confronted
 - Confronted Ananias and Sapphira—Acts 5:1-11
 - Confronted Simon Magus—Acts 8:18-24
 - In Antioch—confronted by Paul for Judaizing—Gal 2:11-14
- Peter the missionary evangelist
 - Many turned to the Lord in Lydda—Acts 9:35
 - Many believed in the Lord in Joppa—Acts 9:41
- Peter the Apostle to the Jews—Gal 2:7
 - Focused his ministry on the ‘circumcised’
 - Contrasted with Paul’s mission to the ‘uncircumcised’
- Peter the advocate for spreading the Gospel beyond Judaism
 - Confirmed presence of Holy Spirit in Samaria—with John—Acts 8:14-17
 - Reported on Cornelius’s conversion to Jerusalem leaders—Acts 11:1-18
 - Gave testimony at Council of Jerusalem—Acts 15:6-11
- Possibly evangelized in Asia Minor
 - *I Peter* addressed to Pontus, Galatia, Cappadocia, Asia, and Bithynia
- In Rome near end of life
 - *I Peter* sent from ‘Babylon’
- Church tradition
 - First bishop of Antioch
 - Planted a church in Corinth
 - Mark wrote his Gospel in Rome—from material presented by Peter
 - Martyred upside-down on cross by Nero (c. 64 AD)—[at same time as Paul]

F. BACKGROUND

1. SETTING—RISING PERSECUTION

- a. First persecution—mid-to-late 30s
 - Jewish leaders in Jerusalem forced Hellenistic Jewish Christians to disperse
- b. Diaspora Jews instigated popular opposition—40s
 - Paul and Barnabas expelled from Pisidian Antioch and Iconium during first missionary journey
- c. Persecution by Jews and Gentiles—50s
 - Jews continued to oppose Apostles in Thessalonica and Corinth (c. 50-52)
 - Gentiles opposed Paul in Philippi (c. 50) and Ephesus (c. 57).
- d. Persecution by Roman government
 - Local persecution near Rome—by Nero—after burning of Rome—64 AD

2. DATE AND LOCATION

- a. Traditional view—from Rome—about 64 AD
- b. ‘Babylon’—**5:13**—is probably symbolic for Rome
- c. Mark—was with Peter—**5:13**
 - Mark had been with Paul **in Rome** during his first imprisonment—**Col 4:10**

3. RECIPIENTS

a. Christians in Asia Minor

1. Covers all regions of modern Turkey—**1:1**

- Pontus
- Galatia
- Cappadocia
- Asia
- Bithynia

2. Some of them had heard the Gospel firsthand at Pentecost

- **Acts 2:9** = Cappadocia, Pontus, Asia

b. *who reside as aliens scattered*—**1:1**

1. **Possibly** Jewish Christians living as aliens in Asia Minor

- a. Non-native ‘strangers’ **παρεπιδημος**—of the ‘dispersion’ **διασπορα**
- b. Whom Peter tells them as *aliens and strangers*

2:11—*Keep your behavior excellent among the Gentiles*

- c. Peter cites the Old Testament and draws parallels with God’s covenant with Israel

2. **More likely**—Gentile converts—now like aliens in their own land
 - **2:9**—called out of darkness into His marvelous light
 - **2:10**—once not a people, but now a people of God
 - **1:18**—formerly with a futile way of life inherited from their forefathers
 - **4:3-4**—formerly with the debased lifestyle of Gentiles

G. STYLE

1. TRADITIONAL EPISTOLARY FORMAT WITH NARRATIVE STYLE

- Greeting—**1:1-2**
- Content—**1:3-5:11**
- Closing—**5:12-14**

2. EXHORTATION

- a. Compassionate encouragement—facing persecution
- b. Reassurance of salvation
- c. Call to action
 - Sanctification—obedience—submission—humble service
 - 34 imperatives—beginning with **1:13**

3. THEOLOGICAL INSTRUCTION

- Salvation—God’s redemptive plan—and Christ’s atonement
- The roles and functions of gospel ministers

H. THEMES

1. SUFFERING

- How to stand firm and persevere
- Identifying with Christ
- As a witness to others

2. HOLINESS

- As a characteristic of God’s people
- As a witness to others

3. THIS LIFE IS A [TEMPORARY] PILGRIMAGE

- Our [permanent] destiny is God’s glory

4. URGENCY

- The end of all things is near—so—live holy lives that will glorify God
- I. OUTLINE**

1:1-1:2 GREETING

1:3-1:12 GOD'S SALVATION

Future Hope—**1:3-4**

Present Trials—**1:5-9**

Past Expectancy—**1:10-12**

1:13-3:12 SANCTIFIED LIVING

Be Holy—**1:13-21**

Love One Another—**1:22-25**

Know the Word—**2:1-3**

Build the House—**2:4-8**

Witness to Others—**2:9-10**

Behave Excellently—**2:11-12**

Humbly Submit—**2:13-3:12**

To Authorities

To Masters

Christ the Example

In Marriage

Summary

3:13-4:19 PERSEVERANCE IN SUFFERING

Behave and Speak as an Example for Christ—**3:13-17**

Christ the Example—**3:18-4:6**

Behave as the End Is Near—**4:7-11**

Suffer with Christ in Facing Persecution—**4:12-19**

5:1-11 HUMBLE SERVICE

As Gospel Ministers—**5:1-5**

Everyone Submit to God—**5:6-11**

5:12-14 CLOSING

II. BIBLICAL TEXT

I Pe 1:3-5—3 *Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who according to His great mercy has caused us to be born again to a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, 4 to obtain an inheritance which is imperishable and undefiled and will not fade away,*

reserved in heaven for you, 5 who are protected by the power of God through faith for a salvation ready to be revealed in the last time.

III. EXPOSITION

A. TRINITARIAN FUNCTIONAL PREFACE—v2

1. WE ARE CHOSEN [εκλεκτος]
 - a. God the Father—in line with His foreknowledge
 - b. The [Holy] Spirit—by His sanctifying work
 - c. Jesus Christ—His atonement—sprinkled with His blood
2. CHOSEN FOR TWO THINGS
 - a. To obey—Jesus Christ
 - b. To be blessed—by being filled with
 - Grace
 - Peace

B. EULOGY TO GOD—v3a

1. WE WHO ARE BLESSED—PRAISE GOD—THE SOURCE OF OUR BLESSING
 - a. Blessed—εὐλογητός = worthy of a good word—eulogy
 - b. Identical to Paul's opening—in **II Cor 1:3**—and **Eph 1:3**
 - c. One of the earliest doxologies
2. THE LETTER IS HIGHLY THEOCENTRIC
 - a. Christ is prominent in I Peter—mentioned 21 times
 - b. But the **focus** is on God the Father—God/Father mentioned 42 times
 - c. We know God—**as** the Father of Jesus Christ—**v3a**
 - d. Through Christ—we know the Father—as the Life-Giver
 1. Originating all life—begetting
 2. Resurrecting to new life—re-begetting—re-birthing

C. SUMMARY AND OUTLINE OF PASSAGE

1. SUMMARY

Out of God's mercy—He rebirths us—to give us three things: a living hope, a perfect and preserved inheritance, and an imminent salvation. These are contrasted with the previous

state of things: hopelessness—dead hope; no legacy—but a perishable existence; and uncertainty of rescue—a sense of doom. The results of rebirth are eschatological promises based on God’s certain ability to deliver—our hope is based on the resurrection; the security of our inheritance is based God’s power and our faith; the certainty of salvation is based on God’s approaching revelation.

2. OUTLINE

Instigation—God’s great mercy

Action—We are born again

This produces **three results**

Hope
Inheritance
Salvation

εἰς→ **Aspiration**—to a living **hope**
Type and Status—living hope
Reason—through the resurrection from the dead

εἰς→ **Promise**—to obtain an **inheritance**
Type—imperishable
Type—undefiled
Type—unfading
Status—reserved for you who are protected
Reason—by God’s power through faith

εἰς→ **Product**—[for] a **salvation**
Status—ready
Reason—to be revealed in the last time [God will reveal it]

D. THE NEW BIRTH

1. DEFINED—ἀναγεννάω = RE-BEGETTING

- a. Focus on—act of **generating** life again—*resulting* in being re-born
- b. Emphasis on—new and unique **origin** of life
 - Not current human living—but divine source

2. RARE USAGE

- Only here and in **1:23**—which describes the source of new birth

3. INITIATED BY GOD

- a. Comes from above
 1. Jesus said

Jn 3—3 *Truly, truly, I say to you, unless one is born again he cannot see the kingdom of God. . . . 7 Do not be amazed that I said to you, ‘You must be born again.’*

2. Literal meaning = ‘be born from **above**’
- b. Originates in God’s mercy—His compassion
 - We are saved by grace—His gift
 - This gift—is produced by His mercy
4. THE SPECIFIC DIVINE SOURCE

I Pe 1:23—*for you have been born again not of seed which is perishable but imperishable, that is, through the living and enduring word of God.*

5. THIS NEW BIRTH—GIVES US ‘LIVING’ HOPE

E. LIVING HOPE

1. DEFINED— *ἐλπίδα ζωσαν*
 - a. Not just a futile claim in face of despair—but genuine hope
 - b. Not dead hope—not an empty wish—but hope that is alive
2. BASED ON—CERTAINTY OF CHRIST’S RESURRECTION

❖ Which gives us four dimensions of hope

- Its **metaphysical** purpose—His triumph over death
 - Its **soteriological** purpose—His rescuing and raising us to new life
 - Its **theocratic** purpose—His current and future reign as King
 - Its **eschatological** purpose—His promised return
3. EMBODIED BY THESE ‘LIVING’ PURPOSES
 - a. We become ‘living stones’—building His spiritual house—**2:4-5**
 - b. We die to selves—and ‘live’ unto righteousness—**2:24**
 - c. We might ‘live’ in the spirit—according to the will of God—**4:6**

F. PERFECT AND PRESERVED INHERITANCE

1. DEFINITION—*κληρονομία*
 - a. Promised and inherited possession—legacy—heirship
 - b. That comes from a Father—to His children
 - c. That identifies persons as His children

d. That is shared between all His children—including His Son

Rom 8:16-17—*The Spirit Himself testifies with our spirit that we are children of God, and if children, heirs also, heirs of God and fellow heirs with Christ, if indeed we suffer with him so that we may also be glorified with Him.*

2. ESCHATOLOGICAL NATURE OF THIS INHERITANCE

❖ It is now and forever—based on God’s being—nature of the godhead

a. *Imperishable*

- We will never die
- God’s very nature is eternal—undying Being

b. *Undefiled*

- We will not suffer decay—this corruption will put on incorruption
- Christ’s person did not suffer corruption and priesthood is perfect

c. *Unfading*

- We will stand forever—this mortal will put on immortality
- God’s power is forever strong—never diminishing

3. A DOUBLE-KEPT LEGACY

a. ‘*Reserved*’ in heaven

- **τετερημένην** = **preserved—kept**—in God’s citadel
- **Jn 14:2**—*In my Father’s house there are many mansions . . . I go to prepare a place for you*

b. ‘*Protected*’ by the power of God

1. **Φρουρουμένουσ** = **guarded—kept**

2. As by— **a military sentinel**

3. Passive verb

➤ Not guarding it ourselves—but guarded by God’s power

4. So our trust—is in Him—not ourselves

➤ Our *faith*—appropriates God’s invisible power—and makes it a visible reality

G. IMMINENT SALVATION

1. DEFINITION—**σωτηρίαν**—deliverance—preservation—safety

2. THE ULTIMATE GOAL—PRODUCT

- Not just—a synonym for hope
- Not just—a description of the content of inheritance
- But ultimate rescue—permanent existential transformation—state of being

3. THE OUTCOME OF FAITH—A SOURCE OF GREAT JOY

I Pe 1:8-9—*though you do not see Him now, but believe in Him, you greatly rejoice with joy inexpressible and full of glory, obtaining as the outcome of your faith the salvation of your souls.*

4. NOT FAR OFF—BUT RAPIDLY APPROACHING

a. *ready to be revealed*

1. It is already ‘prepared’—[ready]
2. Though hidden—it is ‘apocalyptic’—*αποκλυπτω*—about to be uncovered

b. Great sense of urgency—is a key theme of this letter

I Pe 4:7—*The end of all things is near; therefore, be of sound judgment and sober spirit for the purpose of prayer*

5. OUR CONFIDENCE IN THIS SALVATION

- Not only has God prepared it—and preserved
- He also has promised to reveal it—soon
- And God always keeps His promise!