***Omega: BIB 109***

***1st Peter – Always Be Prepared***

***Introduction and Background***

***I. Introduction***

***A. Author***

1. 1st Peter 1:1… “Peter, an Apostle of Christ Jesus…”

A. Peter identifies himself as the author of this letter from the very beginning.

B. His Jewish name was Simon Bar-Jonah (Simon, son of Jonah)

C. John 1:42… “He brought him to Jesus. Jesus looked at him and said, "You are Simon the son of John; you shall be called Cephas" (which is translated Peter). NASB

D. After Peter confessed Jesus to be “the Christ, the Son of the living God” in Matthew 16:16, Jesus used word-play when he answered him, “You are Peter [a petros, a movable stone], and upon this rock [petra, bedrock]” –i.e., the contents of your confession – “I will build My church” (Matt. 16:18).[[1]](#footnote-1)

1. This reference to Peter as “the rock” is actually a compliment. Despite his flaws, he was basically a solid servant and witness to this Master, Jesus Christ. Peter was the “ROCK-MAN,” or “Rocky” for short![[2]](#footnote-2)

E. Paul frequently uses the name Cephas (Aramaic) for Simon

F. Peter’s name appears 176 times in the NT.

1. This compares to 202 appearance of Paul’s name and the rest of the apostles a combined 142 times.[[3]](#footnote-3)

G. Peter’s Background…

1. During the ministry of Jesus, Peter was the spokesman for the Twelve. He was one of the “inner circle” that was permitted to be with Jesus on very special occasions.

2. In a moment of weakness on the night of Jesus’ arrest Peter cursed and denied three times that he even knew his Master. After his resurrection, Jesus forgave Peter and reinstated him in his position of apostle (John 21:15-17).[[4]](#footnote-4)

3. According to early Christian tradition Peter died in  Rome. He requested to be crucified upside down because he did not feel worthy to die in the same manner as his Savior.[[5]](#footnote-5)

***B. Geography***

1. Important places of 1st Peter…

A. Pontus, Galatia, Cappadocia, Asia, and Bithynia.

1. REFERENCE MAP #1

2. These areas are Roman Provinces in what we call Turkey today. Pontus is mentioned 3 times. Paul’s friend Aquila came from Pontus (Acts 18:2).

3. There were some present from Pontus present on the day of Pentecost in Jerusalem (Acts 2:9).

4. Galatia is mentioned five times in the NT. Paul evangelized this area on his missionary journeys.

5. There were some present from Cappadocia in Jerusalem on the day of Pentecost as well.

6. The Roman province Asia is mentioned 19 times in the NT.

7. Paul was prevented by the spirit from preaching in Bithynia on his 2nd missionary journey. Peter may have pioneered the work in this area

B. “Babylon” 🡪 Rome

1. Peter records that he was writing from Babylon. (1st Peter 5:13)

2. Jews gave Rome this unflattering nickname because, like the Babylonians 600 years earlier, the Romans invaded and exploited the Jewish homeland.

A. The similarities grow in AD 70 when the Romans, like the Babylonians, destroy Jerusalem and level the temple.[[6]](#footnote-6)

***C. Audience***

1. This letter is written to the Churches of Asia Minor – Reference Aforementioned Roman Provinces). Many or most of these Churches had been founded by Paul. We assume that Peter had at one time or another visited these churches, though it is not stated.[[7]](#footnote-7)

2. Paul had written letters to these churches of which we have several: Galatians, Ephesians, and Colossians. (First Peter has some striking similarities to Ephesians) Later, John addressed the book of Revelation to some of the same churches to which Peter wrote in this letter.[[8]](#footnote-8)

3. Some think Peter is addressing Jewish-Christians specifically. It is more likely though, that he is addressing mostly Gentile Christians, for several reasons:

A. These were pagan areas (thought dispersed Jews did live there – Acts 2:9-10)

B. Peter uses his Greek name (Petros) not his Semitic name (the Aramaic Cephas), which suggests his audience was Gentile.

C. Paul is credited with evangelizing much of this area (Acts 19:26), turning many Gentiles away from their pagan idols.[[9]](#footnote-9)

4. For us, the main point is that the letter is ultimately addressed to all Christians, including those of us who are living today.[[10]](#footnote-10)

***D. History and Setting***

1. The Occasion…

A. The content indicates that Peter was writing in the midst of a terrible persecution. Most likely this was the persecution of Christians by the Emperor Nero. A date of about AD 65 is generally accepted as the time of writing. This was the same time frame as the writing of 2nd Timothy. The destruction of Jerusalem by the Romans was yet 5 years in the future.[[11]](#footnote-11)

1. REFERENCE CHARTS #1 and #2

B. It was a trying time. The Church as whole was about 35 years old. It has suffered persecutions in various places at the  hands of local authorities. But now imperial Rome, which had

thus far been indifferent – and even in some cases friendly – had accused the church of a terrible crime and was taking steps to punish it.[[12]](#footnote-12)

1. The persecution which began locally with Nero in Rome quickly spread throughout the Roman Empire.

E. Outline and Structure of the Epistle

1. Theme of 1st Peter is suffering for the faith. The epistle has three major divisions sandwiched between a brief introduction and conclusion.[[13]](#footnote-13)

* Introduction (1:1-2)
* Salvation of the Believer (1:3-2:12)
* Submission of the Believer (2:13-3:12)
* Suffering of the Believer (3:13-5:9)
* Conclusion (5:10-14)

1. Studies in First Peter – Jack Cottrell: Page 6 [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. Ibid, Page 6. [↑](#footnote-ref-2)
3. The New Testament Books Made Simple – James E. Smith: Page 144. [↑](#footnote-ref-3)
4. Ibid, Page 144-145. [↑](#footnote-ref-4)
5. Ibid, Page 145. [↑](#footnote-ref-5)
6. The Complete Guide to the Bible – Stephen M. Miller: Page 475. [↑](#footnote-ref-6)
7. Halley’s Bible Handbook – Henry Halley: Page 872. [↑](#footnote-ref-7)
8. Ibid, Page 873. [↑](#footnote-ref-8)
9. Studies in First Peter – Jack Cottrell: Page 7 [↑](#footnote-ref-9)
10. Ibid, Page 7. [↑](#footnote-ref-10)
11. The New Testament Books Made Simple – James E. Smith: Page 143-144. [↑](#footnote-ref-11)
12. Halley’s Bible Handbook – Henry Halley: Page 873. [↑](#footnote-ref-12)
13. The New Testament Books Made Simple – James E. Smith: Page 144. [↑](#footnote-ref-13)