

The Letters of Peter – an introduction

How Peter's background relates to letters. 1 **A full-time ministry**

We have only 2 letters written by Peter in the New Testament. Why did he write only 2 letters ? He might be described as having a more practical background than an academic one like Paul's, who wrote from inside prison !

His 2nd letter was written just before he was crucified in Rome sometime after AD 64.

How Peter's background relates to letters. 2

Bible taught

He was a Jewish fisherman who had been taught in the scriptures and well instructed during his time with Jesus.

Mark 1:16-18 As Jesus walked beside the Sea of Galilee, he saw Simon and his brother Andrew casting a net into the lake, for they were fishermen. "Come, follow me," Jesus said, "and I will make you fishers of men."

At once they left their nets and followed him.

How Peter's background relates to letters. 3

Leadership gifts

A natural leader – he is always named first in the list of the 12 apostles that Jesus called.

Jesus gave Simon the name 'Cephas' = Peter - 'Rocky', as a promise of what he would make him.

Matthew 16:17-19 Jesus replied, "Blessed are you, Simon son of Jonah, for this was not revealed to you by flesh and blood, but by my Father in heaven. And I tell you that you are Peter, and on this rock I will build my church, and the gates of Hades will not overcome it. I will give you (Peter) the keys of the kingdom of heaven; whatever you bind on earth will be bound in heaven, and whatever you loose on earth will be loosed in heaven."

How Peter's background relates to letters. 4

Experience

In order for Peter to become a good leader, he had to go through the sometimes painful process of learning to follow the Master.

He learnt the basic principal that growth generally comes through trials. Just as fellow leader James wrote ...

James 1:2-4 Consider it pure joy, my brothers and sisters, whenever you face trials of many kinds, because you know that the testing of your faith produces perseverance. Let perseverance finish its work so that you may be mature and complete, not lacking anything.

How Peter's background relates to letters. 5

An exalted view of Jesus

He was among the inner circle of three disciples to see Jesus on the mount of transfiguration. This was an experience that made a deep impression on him and which he refers to in his second letter.

Matthew 17:1-3 After six days Jesus took with him Peter, James and John the brother of James, and led them up a high mountain by themselves. There he was transfigured before them. His face shone like the sun, and his clothes became as white as the light. Just then there appeared before them Moses and Elijah, talking with Jesus.

How Peter's background relates to letters. 6

His spiritual C.V.

He was the first preacher of the gospel on the day of Pentecost (Acts 2).

He was the first to admit gentiles into the Church when he preached the gospel to Cornelius and his household and friends, and after the Holy Spirit filled them, he baptised them. (Acts 10)

Acts 10:47-48 "Surely no one can stand in the way of their being baptized with water. They have received the Holy Spirit just as we have." So he ordered that they be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ.

How Peter's background relates to letters. 6

Although he led the mission to the first gentiles, he saw his primary role was to preach Jesus the Messiah to the Jews.

Galatians 2:7-9 *The leaders* recognized that I (*Paul*) had been entrusted with the task of preaching the gospel to the uncircumcised, just as Peter had been to the circumcised. For God, who was at work in Peter as an apostle to the circumcised, was also at work in me as an apostle to the Gentiles. James, Cephas and John, those esteemed as pillars, gave me and Barnabas the right hand of fellowship when they recognized the grace given to me. They agreed that we should go to the Gentiles, and they to the circumcised.

Destination

However, in his first letter he writes to believers not in Israel, but in what is present-day northern Turkey. This would be a substantially gentile area. We assume he must have at some point ministered there. There is no record of this other than his letter, since the later part of Acts deals with Paul's movements.



This work in the area that Peter writes to may offer some explanation of the passage in Acts 16

Acts 16:6-8 Paul and his companions travelled throughout the region of Phrygia and Galatia, having been kept by the Holy Spirit from preaching the word in the province of Asia. When they came to the border of Mysia, they tried to enter Bithynia, but the Spirit of Jesus would not allow them to. So they passed by Mysia and went down to Troas.

It would seem that the Lord had reserved that work for Peter.

Location

We assume the letters were written from Rome which he refers to as 'Babylon'.

1 Peter 5:13 She who is in Babylon, chosen together with you, sends you her greetings,

The use of the name 'Babylon' for Rome was a reference to its role in the Old Testament as a world power and the centre of persecution of God's people.

Jeremiah 51:8-9 Babylon will suddenly fall and be broken. Wail over her! .. 'We would have healed Babylon, but she cannot be healed; let us leave her and each go to our own land, for her judgment reaches to the skies, it rises as high as the heavens.'

Fellow workers

Peter sends his greetings in association with Silas & Mark (both associates also of Paul held in Rome).

1 Peter 5:12-13 With the help of Silas, whom I regard as a faithful brother, I have written to you briefly, encouraging you and testifying that this is the true grace of God. Stand fast in it. She who is in Babylon, chosen together with you, sends you her greetings, and so does my son Mark.

Mark collaborated with Peter to write his gospel. Silas was Peter's 'secretary' and probably was the reason that the first letter has a different style to the second that Peter wrote by himself.

Why was Peter in Rome ?

Some have suggested that he was there to help with the Jew/Gentile issue that the church in Rome was experiencing (cf. Paul's letter to the Romans).

Both Paul and Peter were martyred under Nero's persecution of Christians that started in AD64.



Why did he write his letters ?

1 Peter is a commentary on the 'forgotten' beatitude

Matthew 5:10-12 Blessed are those who are persecuted because of righteousness, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven. "Blessed are you when people insult you, persecute you and falsely say all kinds of evil against you because of me. Rejoice and be glad, because great is your reward in heaven, for in the same way they persecuted the prophets who were before you.

Why did he write his letters ?

Persecution was starting:

So he writes to warn and strengthen believers for the present/coming storm



To whom did he write ?

To the eastern churches: There was already a culture conflict, and bigger trouble would be coming to his personal patch. Trouble travels !



What is his Theme ?

– trouble for the believer is an integral part of the N.T. believer's experience in this present world.

(cf. Paul in Acts 14:21-22)

Then they returned to Lystra, Iconium and Antioch, strengthening the disciples and encouraging them to remain true to the faith. "We must go through many hardships to enter the kingdom of God," they said.

They must stand together under the trials against

1 – pressure from **outside** – the culture etc.

2 – rot on the **inside** – false teaching undermining faith

Peter's use of Jewish terms for gentile believers

Peter, an apostle of Jesus Christ, To God's **elect**, **strangers** in the world, **scattered** throughout Pontus, Galatia, Cappadocia, Asia and Bithynia, who have been **chosen** according to the foreknowledge of God the Father, through the **sanctifying** work of the Spirit, for **obedience** to Jesus Christ and **sprinkling by his blood**.. **Grace and peace be yours in abundance**.

Just like Paul, Peter sees gentile believers in Jesus the Messiah as grafted into Israel and heirs of the promises.

Peter, an apostle of Jesus Christ,

A humble but accurate introduction

What was special about the Twelve ?

2 Corinthians 12:12 I persevered in demonstrating among you the marks of a true apostle, including signs, wonders and miracles.

To God`s elect, strangers in the world, scattered throughout Pontus, Galatia, Cappadocia, Asia and Bithynia,

These are descriptions that could be applied to the Jews. However 1 Peter 1:14 says:-

As obedient children, do not conform to the evil desires you had when you lived in ignorance.

1 Peter 4:3 For you have spent enough time in the past doing what pagans choose to do--living in debauchery, and detestable idolatry.

This is a clear indication that Peter is addressing gentile believers

To God`s elect, strangers in the world, scattered throughout Pontus, Galatia, Cappadocia, Asia and Bithynia,

This world is not our home. We are aliens !
We belong to another world and kingdom.

Ephesians 2:19 Consequently, you are no longer foreigners and strangers, but fellow citizens with God's people and also members of his household,

who have been chosen according to the foreknowledge
of God the Father,

The role of the Father in the Trinity

We are in the “Plan”

through the sanctifying work of the Spirit,

The role of the Holy Spirit

Drawing us to Jesus

John 12:32 And I, when I am lifted up from the earth, will draw all people to myself."

for obedience to Jesus Christ
and sprinkling by his blood..

The role of the Son

He is the LORD of our lives

And
Our SAVIOUR

Grace and peace be yours in abundance.

A priestly blessing !

For God's favour

And peace in all
circumstances

You can have more or less !

We need to be sure of our foundation when troubles come as followers of the Lord Jesus

Nehemiah 8:9-10 Then Nehemiah the governor, Ezra the priest and teacher of the Law, and the Levites who were instructing the people said to them all, "This day is holy to the LORD your God. Do not mourn or weep." For all the people had been weeping as they listened to the words of the Law. Nehemiah said, "Go and enjoy choice food and sweet drinks, and send some to those who have nothing prepared. This day is holy to our Lord. Do not grieve, for the joy of the LORD is your strength."