

The First Letter of St Peter - *Encouraging words for our time.*

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*Simon Peter had a nickname so I am using mine.

Session Two: Shielded by God

Recap Session One

According to the First Letter of Peter, it was written by the apostle Simon Peter (1:1) with the assistance of Silas (Silvanus) who was a companion of Paul. (Acts 15:40 & 17:4) Silvanus also assisted Paul with some of his letters (1 Thess 1:1 and 2 Thess. 1:1). The letter was written to the people of what is now northern Turkey. (1:1) Pontus, Galatia, Cappadocia, Asia and Bithynia. An area Paul had little contact (Acts 16:6). And Paul certainly didn't like "to tread on others toes" (Romans 15:20 & 2 Corinthians 10:16). Peter appears to be writing from Rome, secret code word Babylon (5:13 see also Revelation 17:5 & 18:2). Church tradition states that Peter was crucified under Emperor Nero in 64AD following the Great Fire of Rome. The word "*suffering*" appears 16 times and Peter wishes to encourage the believers in their suffering. A possible key verse is "*Therefore since Christ suffered in the body, arm yourselves also with the same attitude ...*" (4:1) and the letter ends with the encouraging words: "*And the God of all grace, who called you to his eternal glory in Christ, after you have suffered a little while, will himself restore you and make you strong, firm and steadfast.*" (5:10)

Prayer

Almighty and everlasting God,
Who in your tender love towards the human race
Sent your Son our Saviour Jesus Christ
To take upon our flesh
And to suffer death upon the cross
Grant that we may follow the example of his patience and humility,
And also be made partakers of his resurrection,
Through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

Peter starts his letter by saying we are guarded or shielded by God. (1 Peter 1:5). Had he in mind that Jesus had prayed and guarded him in a time of trial?(John 17:6-12) In this session we will look at how his experience of Jesus may have influenced his teaching.

Questions

1. Was Peter influenced by his time with Jesus in the writing of this letter?

Some Key Events in the life of Peter.

The events of Peter's life are taken as far as possible from The Gospel of Mark, which tradition ascribes to Mark the companion of Peter (1 Peter 5:13) . Other gospels are indicated which throw additional light on the event.

Jesus calls Simon Peter: Mark 1:16-18

Jesus heals Peter's mother-in-law: Mark 1:29-31

NB. Peter's wife accompanied him. See 1 Corinthians 9:5

Simon nicknamed Rock by Jesus and made an Apostle: Mark 3:13-16

NB. It seems Jesus often gave nicknames to his followers. Simon he nicknamed Rock- *Cephas* in Aramaic, *Petra* in Greek. (More about rocks and stones in session 4.)

Walking on water: Mark 6:45-51 see also Matthew 14:22-33

Peter's Confession that Jesus is the Christ: Mark 8:27-30

Peter (Rock) becomes a stumbling rock/ block for Jesus: Mark 8:31-33

see also Matthew 16:21-23. (More about stumbling blocks in session 4.)

The Transfiguration: Mark 9:2-8

Jesus predicts Peter's denial: Mark 14:27-31

The Watch in the Garden of Gethsemane: Mark 14:32-42

Peter's knife crime: Mark 14:43-50 see also John 18:10-11

NB most translations say Peter had a sword? The NT Greek is *Machaira* from which we get machete. Literally a short sword or dagger. Peter probably had a knife for gutting fish, chopping wood and personal protection etc.

Peter denies Jesus: Mark 14:66-72

Peter a witness to the resurrection: see Luke 24:30-35 & 1 Corinthians 15:3-5

Jesus restores and reinstates Peter: see John 21:1-19

2. Can you find verses and passages from this letter which seem to link with the key events in Peter's life?

To get you started here are some verses which can be paired with the key events of Peter's life above. Can you make the connections?

1:1; 1:3; 1:6&7; 1:10&11

2:4; 2:8

3:7; 3:9; 3:15; 3:18;

4:7

5:2; 5:8

3. How has your life experience and encounter with Jesus influenced your faith?

Write a short letter to a friend or relative describing your experience and encounter with Jesus, end with one word of advice perhaps taken from the First Letter of Peter. (You don't actually need to send the letter. We will look at the many suggestions Peter makes in Session 5.)

The next session 3 will look at Peter's view of God and Jesus.