

1 Peter

Lesson 1 Chapter 1:1-12

Leader Guide

Leader Guide Bible Studies
Leaderguidebiblestudies.com
David R. Steele

This lesson is a free download from Leader Guide Bible Studies and is not for resale.
Scripture quotations are from The Holy Bible, New International Version® NIV®
Copyright © 1973 1978 1984 2011 by Biblica, Inc.™
Used by permission. All rights reserved worldwide.

Lesson 1
1 Peter 1:1–12
Grace, Hope, and Peace to God’s Elect

To God’s elect, strangers in the world, who have been chosen according to the
foreknowledge of God the Father. 1 Peter 1:1,2a

Prayer

Introduction

Peter’s letters are a masterpiece of Christian thought and encouragement for living in Christ. The letter is so well written that some critics argue that a Galilean fisherman could not have written the letters in such literary Greek (the same argument is made about John). Nonetheless, Peter identifies himself as the author, but with the help of Silas (1 Peter 5:1).

Christ declared he would build his church on Simon Peter and gave him the name Peter, the Rock. The first twelve chapters of Acts record Peter’s leadership at Pentecost when the Holy Spirit established the church “among Jews of all nations” (Acts 2:5). During the following 20 years, Peter healed the sick, cast out demons, and raised the dead. Peter struggled with Jewish legalism early in his ministry and was confronted by Paul in Antioch (Galatians 2:11). God also confronted his legalism through a vision whereby God revealed to Peter that he should live free of Jewish dietary restrictions. At an event that was a “Pentecost” to the Gentiles, God sent Peter to Caesarea to baptize new Gentile believers when the Holy Spirit brought them to faith in Jesus Christ. The last reference to Peter in Acts is his address at the Council of Jerusalem in 49AD when he said that Gentile believers did not need to follow Jewish traditions to be Christians. God’s grace saved them through faith in Christ and rebirth by the Holy Spirit.

Little is known of the details surrounding the writing of Peter’s letters or his life and ministry after the Council of Jerusalem in 49AD. Peter closes his first letter with an enigmatic statement that he is in Babylon with Mark [and Silas]. Church tradition holds that Peter is writing from Rome, probably shortly before his crucifixion by Emperor Nero between 64 and 68 AD. Peter’s letter is full of wisdom and assurance while facing persecution and suffering, love for Christ and others, and encouragement to live with joy, hope, holiness, and the expectation of Christ’s return.

Read 1 Peter 1-12, Praise to God for a Living Hope

^{1Pe 1:1} Peter, an apostle of Jesus Christ,

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

^{1Pe 1:2} 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.

^{1Pe 1:3} Praise be to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ! In his great mercy he has given us new birth into a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead,

^{1Pe 1:4} and into an inheritance that can never perish, spoil or fade —kept in heaven for you,

^{1Pe 1:5} who through faith are shielded by God’s power until the coming of the salvation that is ready to be revealed in the last time.

^{1Pe 1:6} In this you greatly rejoice, though now for a little while you may have had to suffer grief in all kinds of trials.

^{1Pe 1:7} These have come so that your faith—of greater worth than gold, which perishes even though refined by fire —may be proved genuine and may result in praise, glory and honor when Jesus Christ is revealed.

^{1Pe 1:8} Though you have not seen him, you love him; and even though you do not see him now, you believe in him and are filled with an inexpressible and glorious joy,

^{1Pe 1:9} for you are receiving the goal of your faith, the salvation of your souls.

^{1Pe 1:10} Concerning this salvation, the prophets, who spoke of the grace that was to come to you, searched intently and with the greatest care,

^{1Pe 1:11} trying to find out the time and circumstances to which the Spirit of Christ in them was pointing when he predicted the sufferings of Christ and the glories that would follow.

^{1Pe 1:12} It was revealed to them that they were not serving themselves but you, when they spoke of the things that have now been told you by those who have preached the gospel to you by the Holy Spirit sent from heaven. Even angels long to look into these things.

Discuss

1. Peter’s letter is addressed to the churches scattered throughout modern-day Turkey. The churches in Turkey are frequently mentioned in scripture. Paul established many churches in Turkey during his missionary journeys and wrote to them in his letters: Galatians, Ephesians, and Colossians. Paul, John, and Timothy spent considerable time in Ephesus, and Jesus addressed seven churches in Revelation. What do we learn about the people Peter was writing to in his introduction, verses 1-2, and 8?



Roman provinces in the eastern Mediterranean and the Black Sea. Peter writes to the Pontus, Galatia, Cappadocia, Asia and Bithynia churches. Map from Wikimedia Commons.

They are believers, God's elect, living in present-day Turkey. They never met Christ, so their faith was revealed to them through the Holy Spirit and the work of missionaries.

2. Peter wrote his letter to the "elect," verse 1. The idea of God's election is often misunderstood but is synonymous with being chosen or called. The ideas of election and predestination go hand in hand. Read the following verses and explain what it means to be the elect and predestined.

[Jesus speaking] ^{Jn 15:16} **You did not choose me, but I chose you and appointed you to go and bear fruit —fruit that will last.**

[Jesus speaking] ^{Mt 24:22} **If those days [the last days] had not been cut short, no one would survive, but for the sake of the elect those days will be shortened.**

[Paul writing] ^{Eph 1:4} For he chose us in him before the creation of the world to be holy and blameless in his sight. In love ^{Eph 1:5} he predestined us to be adopted as his sons through Jesus Christ, in accordance with his pleasure and will— ^{Eph 1:6} to the praise of his glorious grace, which he has freely given us in the One he loves.

Being God's elect means to be chosen by God to be his child through faith in Jesus Christ. God chose us before the world's creation to be his - before we sinned, were obedient, or even born so that we might know we are his by his choice, not by our actions.

Predestination means God will bring us to faith to make our election sure. We are in his good, loving, and secure hands.

3. What is Peter's explanation in verse 2 of how each member of the triune God is active in our election and salvation?

^{1Pe 1:2} who [the elect] 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

- a. God – **God chose us to be his own. He made wonderful plans for our lives before creation.**
- b. Holy Spirit – **the Holy Spirit brings us to faith in Jesus Christ and gives us spiritual rebirth in Christ, sanctifying us – making us holy, as God's children**
- c. Christ – **Christ redeems us from sin so that we are holy in God's sight and can be his children. Love for Christ calls us to obedience.**

4. What does Peter say in verses 2-5, is God's purpose in calling the elect?

God calls the elect so they will be obedient to Christ, sanctified by the Holy Spirit into a new life, with the hope (and assurance) of eternal life.

5. Sometimes, we emphasize our faith and confession more than God's election of us. Which gives you more assurance? How do election, faith, and confession give us security in Christ?

- a. Faith:

^{Eph 2:8} For it is by grace you have been saved, through faith —and this not from yourselves, it is the gift of God— not by works, so that no one can boast. For we are God’s workmanship, created in Christ Jesus to do good works, which God prepared in advance for us to do. (Ephesians 2:8-10)

My faith gives me assurance that God has chosen me as his own. I could not come to faith in Christ through my own understanding unless the Holy Spirit revealed Christ to me.

b. Confession

That if you confess with your mouth, “Jesus is Lord,” and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved. For it is with your heart that you believe and are justified, and it is with your mouth that you confess and are saved. As the Scripture says, “Anyone who trusts in him will never be put to shame.” (Romans 10:9-11)

Confession and faith assure me of my salvation in Christ, a gift from God.

c. God’s sovereignty in election

In him we were also chosen, having been predestined according to the plan of him who works out everything in conformity with the purpose of his will, so that we, who were the first to hope in Christ, might be for the praise of his glory. And you also were included in Christ when you heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation. Having believed, you were marked in him with a seal, the promised Holy Spirit (Ephesians 1:11-13)

Far too often, my faith is tested by my own disobedience, and my confession is far too timid, but I am always secure in God’s love for me. He has given me his Son to forgive my sins and his Spirit to guide me, intercede for me, and overcome my weaknesses.

6. In verses 1:1, 17 and 2:11, Peter calls believers “strangers” and “aliens” in the world (NIV). Other translations refer to believers as exiles (ESV), sojourners (ESV, verse 2:11), or expatriates (Greek Interlinear Bible). What does Peter mean by saying we are strangers in the world?

^{1Pe 1:17} Since you call on a Father who judges each man’s work impartially, live your lives as **strangers** here in reverent fear.

^{1Pe 2:11} Dear friends, I urge you, as **aliens** and **strangers** in the world, to abstain from sinful desires, which war against your soul. ^{1Pe 2:12} Live such good lives among the pagans that, though they accuse you of doing wrong, they may see your good deeds and glorify God on the day he visits us.

^{Phil 3:20} But our **citizenship** is in heaven. And we eagerly await a Savior from there, the Lord Jesus Christ, ^{Phil 3:21} who, by the power that enables him to bring everything under his control, will transform our lowly bodies so that they will be like his glorious body.

^{Ro 12:2} **Do not conform any longer to the pattern of this world**, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind. Then you will be able to test and approve what God’s will is —his good, pleasing and perfect will.

^{1Co 2:12} **We have not received the spirit of the world** but the Spirit who is from God, that we may understand what God has freely given us.

There are two interpretations of Peter's reference to believers as strangers or aliens. The first is a literal interpretation that believers were dispersed from their homes by Jewish persecution following Jesus' resurrection or by Roman persecution during Nero's reign beginning in 64AD.

The second interpretation is symbolic; this world is not our true home. We are strangers passing through this broken and corrupted world to be Christ's disciples and to minister to others on our way to our perfect, eternal, heavenly home.

7. What is Peter's purpose for his letter, verses 1-12?

The tone of Peter's letter indicates his concern for the believers in Asia Minor because of the persecution they are facing. He wants to encourage them in their faith and give them practical instruction for their life in Christ.

8. What are some of the benefits of our new birth in Christ, verses 3-5?

Our new birth in Christ brings hope (assurance) of our resurrection and our eternal salvation. Hope in the Bible is not something that might happen. It is a certainty in God's hands, so we will never be disappointed.

9. Peter was writing at a time of trials in the early church. We don't know if these trials were from the Roman emperor, Jewish leaders, Gentile leaders, or natural disasters. What does Peter say is God's purpose for these trials, verses 6-9?

Peter said that trials strengthen and refine believers' faith to bring glory to Christ and salvation to the believer.

10. In verses 10-12, Peter describes how the prophets searched the scriptures to discern the time of Christ. During Jesus' time, people expectantly looked for the coming of the Messiah based on the prophecy found in Daniel 9:25:

Da 9:25 "Know and understand this: From the issuing of the decree to restore and rebuild Jerusalem until the Anointed One, the ruler, comes, there will be seven 'sevens,' and sixty-two 'sevens' [483 years].

The passing of 483 years in Daniel's prophecy would place the coming and suffering of the Messiah between 49BC and 39AD, depending on which Persian decree the prophecy relates to. Three Persian kings, Cyrus, Darius, and Artaxerxes, made decrees for the rebuilding of the temple and city walls of Jerusalem, approximately between 538 to 444 BC. If adjustments are made for the 360-day year in the Jewish calendar and if the prophecy is calculated from 444 BC, Daniel's prophecy was fulfilled in 33AD, the year of Christ's triumphant entry into Jerusalem, crucifixion, and resurrection!

In Peter's time, believers expectantly awaited Christ's second coming. What difference would it make in our lives if we truly lived with the expectation of Christ's second arrival?

If we truly lived with the expectation of Christ's imminent return, we would be more deliberate and urgent in his mission. We would quickly show our love for others and tell them of God's love and his plan for their salvation through Christ. We would be quick to be charitable, recognizing the futility of collecting wealth rather than the importance of sharing our abundant blessings. We would be mindful of our obedience, call on the Holy Spirit to resist sin and temptation, and be more devoted to prayer and the scriptures. Our lives would be filled with purpose, joy, love, and the expectation of our glorious inheritance.

Closing

Dear Father in heaven,

We thank you for calling us to be your children since before creation, for revealing your plan of salvation through Jesus Christ, saving us from our sinful nature, and giving us a new birth through your Spirit. We pray for your kingdom's advancement and that it advances through us. Amen