

BOOK OF FIRST PETER

Peter wrote two epistles near the end of his life. The Church was growing at an alarming rate despite increased persecution. There was a competition in Jerusalem as to who was king, Caesar or Jesus?

Who is Peter?

1. Peter and Andrew were the first appointed Apostles of Christ. They were fishermen.
2. Peter's original name was Simon and then in Matthew 16:18-19, Jesus changed his name from Simon to Peter. The name Simon means "Reed" and reeds sway easily with the wind that blows on it. Cephas, which is the Aramaic word for Peter, means "Rock".
3. Peter became the lead Apostle after Jesus' ascension.
4. Peter was writing to churches in the northwest Turkey area. These believers were present on the Pentecost Day mentioned in book of Acts Chapter 2. They returned home to start churches in northwest Turkey.
5. Peter visited these churches before subsequently spending his final years in Rome. These letters were written in his last days in Rome. Roman churches were always under persecution and it worsen under Emperor Nero who made huge monuments of himself. A huge fire broke out in Rome and many people attributed it to Emperor Nero who destroyed the old buildings to build such monuments. But Emperor Nero deflected the blame to Christians and persecuted them. The persecution spread everywhere. Peter was concerned about these churches in northwest Turkey which were also under persecution.
6. According to tradition, Peter was crucified in an upside down manner by the Romans because Peter did not think he was worthy to be treated the same way as Jesus.
7. Jesus foretold Peter will be martyred in John 21:18-19. Peter died about 40 years after the prophecy by Jesus.

How are the two epistles of First Peter and Second Peter different?

1. The epistle of First Peter was more about sufferings due to persecution. This word "suffering" appears about 18 times in different forms.
2. The epistle of Second Peter was focussed on warnings against heresy which is in fact a greater danger. This is because the danger comes from inside, unlike persecution which comes from outside (as in 1 Peter).
3. The word "knowledge" appears 13 times in different forms.
4. The epistle of First Peter is about persecution. Persecution makes the church stronger, not weaker! External persecution will cause the church to be purged, leaving behind true believers. Hence the persecuted church will become purer and united but internal heresies can destroy the church and its foundation. In the first 300 years, the Church under persecution grew and the Devil knows that this tactic does not work for him. So the Devil uses false teachings which is very effective. Nowadays, we see less persecution but more heresies happening!

Chapter 1

1. 1 Peter 1:1. The names of these places were also found in book of Acts Chapter 2 on Pentecost Day. The people present during the Pentecost return home to these places to build churches there.
2. 1 Peter 1:2 teaches about the election of believers, according to the foreknowledge of God the Father, who are being sanctified by the Holy Spirit to obey Christ. We are saved to be Christ-like.
3. 1 Peter 1:3. We are “born again” (ESV) to a living hope. So we should keep on living through the resurrection of Jesus Christ. Life on Earth is only a short period of our eternal life.
4. 1 Peter 1:4 says we have an imperishable, undefiled inheritance in heaven, waiting for us. There will be a New Heaven and New Earth!
5. 1 Peter 1:5. We are guarded by God’s power, even in persecution, by faith, for salvation (glorification) ready to be revealed in the last time.
6. 1 Peter 1:6. You are now under persecution if God thinks you need to be tested for your faith’s genuineness! To see if the fruit of faith is genuine, persecution is a better test. The fake ones will give up their faith during persecution! Therefore, persecution refines the churches and gets rid of false believers and false teachers, i.e. the church is rid of dross.
7. 1 Peter 1:14-16. Do not be conformed to former lusts, be holy as God is holy. During persecution, live a holy life, different from the world. Do not curse or blame God during persecution.
8. 1 Peter 1:22. Love one another with a pure heart in persecution, with agape love! In persecution, you can be very selfish and protect what you have rather than give or share in agape love or sacrificial love.

Chapter 2

1. 1 Peter 2:4-5. We are living stones and come to the Chief Corner Stone to be a spiritual house. We are the temple of God. We, who are of holy priesthood are to offer spiritual sacrifices. We are not just layman. So we should pray for those who are persecuted.
2. 1 Peter 2:9.
 - a) We are a royal priesthood and a holy nation.
 - b) Persecuted Christians must not think they are scums.
 - c) Our job is to proclaim the excellences of Christ even during persecution, by living a holy life and shine for God rather than be a selfish nation!
 - d) We should note that it is hard to shine when everything is smooth! So shine under adversity.
3. 1 Peter 2:12. Proclaim Christ through good conduct and good deeds during persecution.
4. 1 Peter 2:13. Be subject to authority, including the emperor or the government who are persecuting you. Christians should never rebel under persecution.
5. 1 Peter 2:18.
 - a) Servants (especially slaves who trusted Christ during those Roman times) serving non-believing masters faced a lot of persecution. But Peter said

servants or slaves must submit even if they have been unfairly treated by their masters.

- b) We should submit with grace, knowing that we have eternal rewards awaiting us. There is no need to fight for earthly rights.

Chapter 3

1. 1 Peter 3:1.
 - a) Wives must submit to unbelieving husbands who persecute them.
 - b) Unbelieving husbands think that "Jesus stole their wives" if they keep pressurising their unbelieving husbands to go to church, etc.
 - c) These wives with unbelieving husbands are to win without a word, and to win by conduct. Stop words and start works of being a good wife. Words will only drive him away!
2. 1 Peter 3:7. Saved husbands love your wives, so that your prayers will not be hindered.
3. 1 Peter 3:9. Do not repay or take revenge but bless your persecutors.
4. 1 Peter 3:16. Display good behaviour so that you cannot be slandered. For example, obey the laws of the authority as long as these laws do not contradict God's laws. So pay your taxes that are due.

Chapter 4

1. 1 Peter 4:1-2. Christ suffered. If we suffer like Christ, then frivolous things will have no more meaning in our life! Nobody in persecution will think of branded goods, partying, etc. We should be aware that sins of materialism do grip us!
2. 1 Peter 4:8-10. Keep loving one another and serve with your spiritual gifts. Agape love will cover a multitude of sins.
3. 1 Peter 4:12-13. Do not think trials are strange and do not be shocked by persecution. Therefore we should not avoid witnessing that may result in scolding from our relatives or friends. .
4. 1 Peter 4:16. This whole epistle is not about persecution caused by our own wrongdoing! But about persecution due to righteousness' sake as in Matthew 5:10.

Chapter 5

1. 1 Peter 5:1-2. Shepherds are not to be shepherding for shameful gain. They should not manipulate God's words to extract money from the innocent believers.
2. 1 Peter 5:8-9. Be sober, vigilant and alert against the Devil. The Devil is behind all the persecution to destroy those weak in faith. The Devil is always looking for the weak believers just like a lion will go after the weak deer.
3. 1 Peter 5:13. Rome is called "Babylon" here! Babylon refers to people who wants to gain power and fame.

What do we see in this book of First Peter?

1. Persecution will cause suffering but those persecuted can shine by doing good works and leading holy lives during persecution.
2. If persecuted, we should encourage one another to continue in submission and obedience, knowing that we have an eternal reward.