

LESSON FOUR

THE FIRST EPISTLE OF PETER

TEXT: I Peter Chapter 1 & 2.

A. **THE AUTHOR:**

The Apostle Peter's natural name was "Simon." At the first recorded meeting with our Lord, Jesus named him "Cephas" (John 1:40-42). His new name was "Peter" (Greek) or "Cephas" (Aramaic) both meaning, "rock." Three years later Jesus reaffirmed this (Matthew 16:18). Here Jesus used two words, "petros" and "Petra." Petros, a single piece of rock was Peter. Petra, a large mass of rock, was Peter's confession or the truth of the deity of Jesus upon which the church was to be built.

Peter was a native of Bethsaida (John 1:44) and had a home in Capernaum (Mark 1:29). Peter had a wife (Mark 1:30) who accompanied him in his ministry (I Corinthians 9:5).

Peter was a natural born leader, enthusiastic and impulsive. He is a well-loved Bible character because of his human nature.

Jesus gave him the keys of the kingdom. It was Peter who preached the first gospel message as recorded in the second chapter of Acts.

Although he once denied his Master and once dissimulated at Antioch, he was absolutely fearless under persecution.

Peter suffered martyrdom under Nero at Rome. Tradition states that he was crucified head downward, feeling not worthy to be crucified as his Lord was.

B. **THE FIRST EPISTLE OF PETER:**

This letter was written by Peter from Babylon (I Peter 5:13) around 60 AD. Some believe that this was literal Babylon on the Euphrates; however, it was undoubtedly Rome. In Revelation, Rome was called Babylon.

The purpose of the epistle was to encourage believers to hold fast during persecution and suffering and exhort them to holiness. Jesus had commanded Peter, "*Strengthen thy brethren*" (Luke 22:32). This epistle accomplished this very thing.

B. **SALUTATION: (I Peter 1:1-2).**

Peter addressed this epistle to the "stranger scattered abroad." These were the Jewish exiles of the dispersion. Many of them had been converted at Jerusalem on the Day of Pentecost. They were scattered throughout Pontus, Galatia, Cappadocia, Asia and Bithynia. They were from parts of the country where Paul had established churches, mainly among the Gentiles. Undoubtedly many of these Jewish believers had heard Peter preach on the Day of Pentecost.

In I Peter 2:11, Peter called them strangers and pilgrims. This world certainly was not their home. They were strangers in the cities where they lived. Now that they were Christians, this fact became all the more pronounced.

Verse 2 is a very important verse. Man is a free-will agent. God never has and never will violate this prerogative which He has given man. He allows man to choose freely. God foreknows man's choice and on the basis of this foreknowledge, chooses His elect. This fact must be understood in order to understand the great doctrine of predestination. This also explains that our security in Christ is wholly conditional upon our own free choice.

D. CONSUMMATION OF FAITH: (I Peter 1:3-12).

1. LIVELY HOPE: (Verse 3).

Peter stresses the fact that the saints are lively stones. Everything that God has provided for His children is lively (alive). They have a living hope because Jesus arose from the dead. He is alive and therefore our hope is alive.

2. KEPT BY THE POWER OF GOD: (Verse 5).

The power of God keeps the Christian unto salvation. The saint cannot keep himself, but it is his responsibility to keep himself in the love of God (Jude 21). He keeps himself where he can be kept by God's power.

He is like a passenger who buys a ticket and takes a seat in the train. The locomotive takes him to his destination, but the passenger must stay on board until they reach his destination.

3. TRIAL OF YOUR FAITH: (Verse 7).

The testing of faith is more valuable than gold because it is through this exercise of faith that it is made strong. It is exercise, which makes strong muscles. It is the trial of faith, which makes our faith strong.

4. JOY UNSPEAKABLE: (Verse 8).

The fact that we cannot see Jesus does not make Him any less real. If we could see Him, we would need no faith. We see Him through the eye of faith and love Him. This brings rejoicing with a glorious joy, which cannot be expressed with mere words.

5. CONSUMMATION OF FAITH: (Verse 9).

The result of our faith is the salvation of our souls. Persecution will strengthen our faith, which will be found unto praise and glory when Jesus comes for His church. For this reason, we rejoice with joy unspeakable.

6. THEY WHO DESIRED TO UNDERSTAND: (Verses 10-12).

The prophets prophesied concerning the grace that should come. They desired to understand, but the only thing that was revealed was that they were not ministering unto themselves but unto us. The importance of salvation can be seen when we know that the angels are desirous of looking into it.

It should be noted that the "Spirit of Christ" which testified of the sufferings of Christ was "in them."

E. EXHORTATION TO HOLINESS: (I Peter 1:13-16).

Peter exhorted them to be alert and to be strong in their thinking. They were not to conform to the evil desires that controlled them previously. They were to be holy in all their conduct and manner of living. The Lord is holy and therefore they were to be holy.

F. TWO INCORRUPTIBLE AGENTS OF SALVATION: (1:17-23).

1. INCORRUPTIBLE BLOOD: (Verses 18-19).

God did not pay the price for the redemption of our souls with silver and gold, something which is perishable. The price that was paid was the blood of Christ. The power of the blood to redeem will last eternally. As an agent of salvation, the blood of Christ will never perish.

2. INCORRUPTIBLE SEED: (Verse 23).

Not only is the child of God born of water and of the Spirit, but he is also born of the Word of God. God's Word is the incorruptible seed, which is planted in the heart of the believer. This seed will never perish. It will live and abide forever.

G. BEFORE THE FOUNDATION OF THE WORLD:

Scriptural Reference:

"Who verily was foreordained before the foundation of the world, but was manifest in these last times for you." (I Peter 1:20).

Jesus is the Lamb slain from the foundation of the world (Revelation 13:8). However, this was in the mind and plan of God in the past ages of eternity. It was foreordained before the foundation of the world that Christ should be the Lamb of God without blemish and without spot.

H. A HEALTHY APPETITE NECESSARY: (I Peter 2:1-3).

Peter desired that the Christians would have a healthy, spiritual growth. In order to grow, they were to get rid of all hatred, insincerity and dishonesty. They were to have healthy appetites for the milk of God's Word. The Word is milk for babes in Christ but also meat for adult Christians (I Corinthians 3:2). Apparently Peter looked upon them as still being in spiritual infancy.

I. DESCRIPTION OF GOD'S CHILDREN: (I Peter 2:4-10).

In this Scripture we find some description of the saints:

1. Lively stones (verse 5);
2. Spiritual house (verse 5);
3. Chosen generation (verse 9);
4. Royal priesthood (verse 9);
5. Holy nation (verse 9);

6. Peculiar people (verse 9).

The word "peculiar" does not mean odd but rather a people for a possession. We are a purchased people.

In this same Scripture we find also some vivid descriptions of our Lord:

1. Living stone (verse 4);
2. Chief cornerstone (verse 6);
3. Head of the corner (verse 7).

The cornerstone of a building is the stone from which all measurements and directions are taken. Jesus is the cornerstone to the church. To the disobedient, He is a stumbling stone, but to the saints He is precious!

As a holy priesthood, the saints are to offer up spiritual sacrifices. Many things may be included in these spiritual sacrifices: prayer, fasting, worship, and thanksgiving, church attendance, tithing, etc.

J. EXHORTATION TO SEPARATION: (I Peter 2:11-12).

The saints are strangers and pilgrims. They must separate themselves from all evil desires and conduct themselves properly among the Gentiles. Although these Gentiles might slander them now, they will praise God for their good works when Jesus returns.

K. EXHORTATION TO BE GOOD CITIZENS: (I Peter 2:13-20).

Peter gave some practical instructions regarding the duties of Christians to the government and their masters. Submission, obedience, and respect are the proper attitudes. They will submit themselves to every law of man until it conflicts with their worship of God, then it means martyrdom. It should be remembered that Nero was emperor when these words were being written.

L. OUR EXAMPLE: (I Peter 2:21-25).

Jesus Christ is our example. He never sinned or never told a lie. He never answered back when insulted. When He suffered, He never threatened to get even. He carried our sins in His own body on the cross. Therefore our sins were judged there. Because of this great truth, we are dead to sins that we might be alive to righteousness.

LESSON FOUR

SELF HELP TEST

- A. Explain the difference in meaning between the words "Petros" and "Petra."
- B. To whom did Peter write his first epistle?
- C. Why were they called strangers?
- D. Name TWO incorruptible agents of salvation.
1. _____
 2. _____
- E. What truths are taught regarding the Lamb of God in I Peter 1:20 and Revelation 13:8?
- F. List FIVE expressions describing the saints.
1. _____
 2. _____
 3. _____
 4. _____
 5. _____
- G. Explain clearly the meaning of "elect according to the foreknowledge of God" (I Peter 1:2).