

THE BIG READ (20)

Jesus in 1 Peter

A. Introduction

1. Every book of the Bible has one dominating theme – Jesus is the Christ.

“Then he opened their minds so they could understand the Scriptures. He told them, ‘This is what is written: The Christ will suffer and rise from the dead on the third day, and repentance and forgiveness of sins will be preached in his name to all nations, beginning at Jerusalem.’”
(Luke 24:45-47)

Jesus is the Christ who will suffer and die.

Jesus is the Christ who will rise from the dead on the third day.

Jesus is the Christ who will forgive the sins of all who repent.

Jesus is the Christ who will be preached to the nations.

2. The New Testament contains a number of epistles or letters sent to individual Christians or churches.

These letters address specific situations in the lives of believers and through them we are taught how to live as God’s people.

Thirteen of these letters were written by the apostle Paul. The remaining nine letters were written by other church leaders, including the letter of 1 Peter.

B. 1 Peter: Who? Where? When?

1. Who?

1 Peter is the first of two letters written by the apostle Peter, who was one of the twelve disciples.

“Peter, an apostle of Jesus Christ.” (1 Peter 1:1)

It is likely that Peter dictated this letter to Silas, as Peter acknowledges his help in writing this letter.

“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.” (1 Peter 5:12)

Peter is writing to Christians scattered across a wide area of what is today, Turkey.

“To God’s elect, strangers in the world, scattered throughout Pontus, Galatia, Cappadocia, Asia and Bithynia.” (1 Peter 1:1)

2. Where?

“She who is in Babylon, chosen together with you, sends you her greetings, and so does my son Mark.” (1 Peter 5:13)

Peter wrote this letter from Rome.

Babylon was a symbolic way of talking about Rome, expressing something of Rome’s pride, luxury, immorality and godlessness.

3. When?

It was written in the early 60s AD, shortly before Peter was put to death during the reign of the Emperor Nero.

1. The big theme of the letter of 1 Peter is how to live as Christians in a hostile world.

"I have written to you briefly, encouraging you and testifying that this is the true grace of God. Stand fast to it." (1 Peter 5:12)

Throughout the letter Peter weaves together examples of God's grace with commands about how to stand fast in it.

The letter can be divided into two main sections:

Chapter 1:1-12: Why should we live as strangers?

Chapter 1:13-5-14: How to live as strangers?

2. In the opening verses of chapter 1, Peter gives three reasons why we should live as strangers in this world.

Our identity.

"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." (1 Peter 1:1-2)

Our inheritance.

"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, and into an inheritance that can never perish, spoil or fade – kept in heaven for you, 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." (1 Peter 1:3-5)

Our example (or inspiration).

"Concerning this salvation, the prophets, who spoke of the grace that was to come to you, searched intently and with the greatest care, 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. 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 preached the gospel to you by the Holy Spirit sent from heaven." (1 Peter 1:10-12)

"To this you were called, because Christ suffered for you, leaving you an example, that you should follow in his steps." (1 Peter 2:21)

3. Although Peter will return to the reasons why we should live as strangers in this world throughout his letter, following the introductory twelve verses, his focus is on how to live as strangers in this world.

It will mean being holy.

"As obedient children, do not conform to the evil desires you had when you lived in ignorance. But just as he who called you is holy, so be holy in all you do; for it is written: "Be holy, because I am holy." (1 Peter 1:14-16)

"Therefore, rid yourselves of all malice and all deceit, hypocrisy, envy, and slander of every kind. Like newborn babies, crave pure spiritual milk, so that by it you may grow up in your salvation, now that you have tasted that the Lord is good." (1 Peter 2:1-3)

"Dear friends, I urge you, as aliens and strangers in the world, to abstain from sinful desires, which war against your soul." (1 Peter 2:11)

It will mean living such good lives – in society (2:13-17), at work (2:18-25), in the home (3:1-7), as the church (3:8-12).

“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.” (1 Peter 2:12)

It will mean being witnesses.

“But in your hearts set apart Christ as Lord. Always be prepared to give an answer to everyone who asks you to give the reason for the hope that you have. But do this with gentleness and respect, keeping a clear conscience, so that those who speak maliciously against your good behaviour in Christ may be ashamed of their slander.” (1 Peter 3:15-16)

It will mean loving one another.

“Above all, love each other deeply, because love covers over a multitude of sins. Offer hospitality to one another without grumbling. Each one should use whatever gift he has received to serve others, faithfully administering God’s grace in its various forms. If anyone speaks, he should do it as one speaking the very words of God. If anyone serves, he should do it with the strength God provides, so that in all things God may be praised through Jesus Christ.” (1 Peter 4:8-11)

It will mean enduring suffering.

“Dear friends, do not be surprised at the painful trial you are suffering, as though something strange were happening to you. But rejoice that you participate in the sufferings of Christ, so that you may be overjoyed when his glory is revealed.” (1 Peter 4:12-13)

It will mean standing firm with humble confidence.

“Humble yourselves, therefore, under God’s mighty hand, that he may lift you up in due time. Cast all your anxiety on him because he cares for you. Be self-controlled and alert. Your enemy the devil prowls around like a roaring lion looking for someone to devour. Resist him, standing firm in the faith, because you know that your brothers throughout the world are undergoing the same kind of suffering. 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.” (1 Peter 5:7-10)

E. Jesus in 1 Peter

1. He is our living Stone.

“As you come to him, the living Stone – rejected by men but chosen by God and precious to him – you also, like living stones, are being built into a spiritual house to be a holy priesthood, offering spiritual sacrifices to God through Jesus Christ. For in Scripture it says: “See, I lay a stone in Zion, a chosen and precious cornerstone, and the one who trusts in him will never be put to shame.” (1 Peter 2:4-6)

Jesus is the one who has made it possible for us to approach God and be accepted by Him enabling us to live as strangers in this world.

2. He is our example.

“To this you were called, because Christ suffered for you, leaving you an example, that you should follow in his steps.” (1 Peter 2:21)

Jesus is the one who has walked the path we are to follow if we are to live as strangers in this world.

3. He is our Shepherd.

“For you were like sheep going astray, but now you have returned to the Shepherd and Overseer of your souls.” (1 Peter 2:25)

“And when the Chief Shepherd appears, you will receive the crown of glory that will never fade away.” (1 Peter 5:4)

Jesus is the one who watches over us as we live as strangers and who cares for us.