

STUDY ON THE BOOK OF FIRST PETER

INTRODUCTION

Read 1 Peter 1:1-2

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He was not merely an apostle, but there is a sense in which he was the leader of the apostolic group. Some would argue it was James. Peter was an important and influential man in the early church. Considering the author, the first Christians would receive this letter with a sense of importance.

Peter's name is mentioned in the gospels more than anyone except the name of Jesus. No one speaks in the gospels as often as Peter did, and Jesus spoke more to Peter than to any other individual.

Since Peter is so prominent in the gospel records, it is worthwhile to remind ourselves of some of the important mentions of Peter in the record of Biblical history.

- When Jesus woke up early in the morning to pray before the sun came up, Simon Peter led the other disciples on a hunt to find Jesus and tell Him what He should do (Mark 1:35-39).
- Peter put his nets out at the direction of Jesus to bring in a massive catch of fish (Luke 5:1-11).
- Peter went on a unique outreach trip with the other disciples (Matthew 10:1-42).
- Peter stepped out of the boat during a raging storm and walked on the water with Jesus (Matthew 14:24-33).
- Peter was the one who said, "Lord, to whom shall we go? You have the words of eternal life. Also, we have come to believe and to know that You are the Christ, the Son of the living God" (John 6:68-69).
- Peter saw Jesus transfigured in glory, together with Moses and Elijah (Matthew 17:1-9).
- Peter was the one who asked Jesus how many times we should forgive a brother that sins against us, quoting the high number of "seven times" (Matthew 18:21-35).
- Peter was the one who asked Jesus, after the encounter with the rich young ruler, what the disciples would receive for giving everything up to follow Jesus (Matthew 19:27-30).
- Peter was the one who insisted that Jesus would not wash his feet; then he commanded Jesus to wash his whole body! (John 13:16-20).
- Peter heard Jesus predict that he would deny Him three times (Matthew 26:30-35), and Peter replied, "Even if I have to die with you, I will not deny You!" (Matthew 26:35), and the rest of the disciples agreed.
- Peter was the one who cut off the right ear of Malchus, the servant of the high priest, when the soldiers came to arrest Jesus (John 18:1-11).
- Peter denied Jesus three times, cursing and swearing that he did not even know "the Man," refusing to even name the name of Jesus (Matthew 26:69-75).
- Peter was the one who ran with John the disciple to the tomb on the morning of the resurrection, after hearing the report of the women that the body of Jesus was not in its tomb (John 20:1-10).
- Peter was the one who received a personal visit from the resurrected Jesus on the day of the resurrection (Luke 24:34).
- Peter received a public restoration of Jesus in front of the other disciples after the resurrection of Jesus (John 21).

In this letter, Peter introduced himself as an apostle. He did nothing to explain or justify his apostleship and did not add a phrase like "by the will of God" as Paul did on some occasions (1 Corinthians 1:1, 2

Corinthians 1:1, Galatians 1:1, Ephesians 1:1, and so on). Unlike Paul, Peter's apostolic status was never questioned. This brief phrase indicates Peter's authority.

A Greeting from the Apostle Peter

“Peter, an apostle of Jesus Christ, to the pilgrims of the Dispersion in Pontus, Galatia, Cappadocia, Asia, and Bithynia, elect according to the foreknowledge of God the Father, in sanctification of the Spirit, for obedience and sprinkling of the blood of Jesus Christ: Grace to you and peace be multiplied.” (vv1-2)

The idea behind the word pilgrims is of someone who lives as a temporary resident in a foreign land. Pilgrims are sojourners and travelers, and pilgrims live in constant awareness of their true home. Who are these pilgrims?

Peter clearly wrote to Gentiles, Christians (see 1 Peter 1:18, 2:10, and 4:3). Yet he called them pilgrims of the Dispersion, a name that was applied to the Jews. He called them this because he saw the Christians of his day as sprinkled throughout the world as the Jewish people were in the Dispersion after the fall of Jerusalem when the Babylonians conquered Judah. The areas Peter mentioned in his letter were “Pontus, Galatia, Cappadocia, Asia, and Bithynia”. These specific areas is where Christianity had extended in the first several decades after the beginning of the church. It was probably the route that the original courier of Peter's letter followed in distributing the letter. This was not written to any one congregation, but intentionally written to all Christians.

Elect. Peter first described his intended readers as elect. The word "elect" is a transliteration of the Greek noun *eklektos*, "pertaining to being selected, chosen." This means simply that they are chosen, chosen by God in a particular and unique sense.

Peter is emphasizing the fact that God chose and selected us. Present-day evangelists call us to "make a decision" to follow Christ -- and this is important. But sometimes these clouds for us the realization that the only way we can come to Christ is if he chooses us, calls us, softens our hearts, brings his Holy Spirit to bear on us so we are able to repent.

“You did not choose Me, but I chose you and appointed you...” (John 15:16)

According to the foreknowledge of God: This describes the nature of their election. "Foreknowledge" (NIV, KJV) or "destined" (NRSV) is the Greek noun *prognōsis*, "foreknowledge, predetermination." This Greek word is transliterated in English. In some places it refers to a forecast of the probable course of a disease. We already discussed the word "elect" above. Put together the phrase " *elect according to the foreknowledge of God the Father*" is pregnant with possibilities and fuels an endless debate about the nature of predestination. I've concluded that we humans don't know enough to really understand predestination, much less to argue about it with any real meaning. For me it's enough to affirm that God does the choosing -- that's his part -- and I must do the responding -- that's my part. And ultimately my salvation is all because of his grace, no credit to me (Ephesians 2:8-10).

God's choosing is not random or uninformed, but according to His foreknowledge, which is an aspect of His omniscience. This foreknowledge may include prior knowledge of our response to the gospel but is not solely dependent on it. Though God's election is according to... foreknowledge, there is more to His foreknowledge than His prior knowledge of my response to Jesus. Election is not election at all if it is only a cause-and-effect arrangement basing God's choice only on man's.

In sanctification of the Spirit, for obedience: "Sanctifying" is the Greek noun *hagiasmos*, "personal dedication to the interests of the deity, holiness, consecration, sanctification."

An essential result of election is sanctification. While some would like to think that election has only to do with going to heaven or hell, Peter reminds us that it also touches earth. A claim to be among the elect is doubtful if there is no evidence of sanctification and obedience.

Notice that the Father's and the Spirit's ministries have a two-fold purpose:

1. **Obedience.** Our destiny is to obey Jesus, pure and simple.
2. **Sprinkling by his blood,** that is, forgiveness and cleansing.

"Obedience" is the Greek noun, *hupakoē*, "a state of being in compliance, obedience (one listens and follows instructions)." Listening and following instructions is our purpose and destiny in Jesus Christ. Sadly, many people sign on to Christianity to get forgiveness, but not for obedience. They come only as a package. One who says that he believes in Jesus, but refuses to listen and follow him, is kidding himself. He thinks he has acquired fire insurance, but he doesn't have true faith. As Jesus -- and his brother, the disciple James -- tell us, "By their fruits you shall know them" (Matthew 7:20) and "Faith by itself, if it is not accompanied by action is dead" (James 2:17).

However, since all the elect fall short of perfect sanctification and obedience, there is cleansing from sin provided for them through the **sprinkling of the blood of Jesus Christ.**

"Sprinkling by his blood" refers to Jewish temple worship that involved animal sacrifice and sprinkling the blood upon people or objects that were to be set apart for the service of God. This concept appears in the Pentateuch especially, dozens of times, and in the Book of Hebrews. In the Old Testament, the priest imparted holiness. In the New Testament, Jesus acts as our High Priest, who, by his own sacrifice and blood, atones for our sin and offers pardon and forgiveness for our sins.

There were three circumstances in the Old Testament where blood was sprinkled on people.

- At the establishment of Sinai or Old Covenant (Exodus 24:5-8).
- At the ordination of Aaron and his sons (Exodus 29:21).
- At the purification ceremony for a cleansed leper (Leviticus 14:6-7).

The **sprinkling of the blood of Jesus** on us accomplishes the same things. First, a covenant is formed, then we are ordained as priests to Him, and finally we are cleansed from our corruption and sin. Each of these is ours through the work of Jesus on the cross.

God the Father... the Spirit... Jesus Christ: Peter's effortless way of combining the work of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit in our salvation displays the New Testament approach to the Trinity. It is not detailed as a specific doctrine but woven into the fabric of the New Testament.

Jesus has a **Father**, but not in the sense of being higher than He or the One who gave Him existence. The Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit have existed together throughout eternity, and each is equally God. **Father** and **Son** are terms used to describe the *relationship* between these first two members of the Trinity.

Grace to you and peace be multiplied: Peter brought a greeting that had become common among the Christians, combining elements from Greek culture (**Grace**) and Jewish culture (**peace**).

