Study Notes on 1 Peter

Authorship: 1.1 names Peter as the author

This was confirmed by: Irenaeus (AD 140-203)

Tertullian (AD 150-222)

Clement of Alexandria (AD 155-215)

Origen (AD 185-254)

Written from: "Babylon" (5:13). This could mean:

Babylon in Egypt – now part of Cairo called old Cairo

Babylon in Iraq

Jerusalem
Rome } Here Babylon is being used as a code word – see Rev. 14:8.

Destination of the letter: Believers in Pontus, Galatia, Cappadocia, Asia and Bithinya. These are Roman provinces in the central and western modern day Turkey. The provinces are given in the order you would travel if you arrived at a port in Pontus and went in a circuit returning to the Euxine Sea. Perhaps the person carrying this letter covered this route.

Date: In the reign of Nero – about AD 62-64. Nero's persecution of the church began in AD 63. James, Jesus' brother, was murdered in Jerusalem in AD 62 indicating the final repudiation of the Christian faith by Judaism. This was followed by persecution of the Palestinian church and that led to a dispersion of Jewish believers. Some of them moved to Turkey. Probably both Paul and Peter were killed on the instructions of Nero in AD 64.

Reason for writing the letter

This letter was written with the authority of Peter an apostle of the Lord Jesus and a witness of the glory and sufferings of Jesus. This is the work of the one who boasted and blustered and denied His Lord to escape suffering. This is Peter who, when Jesus looked at him, went out and wept bitter tears. Now he writes to those who are suffering persecution or who are about to suffer and tells them he is rejoicing that he is worthy to suffer shame for Jesus' sake. Peter was soon to stretch out his hands and be crucified to glorify God in his death.

These are the words of a man who knew the full heat of the furnace in which our faith in Jesus can be tried. They are given to us to give us **hope**. If Paul is the apostle of faith and John is the apostle of love, then Peter is the apostle of hope.

As you read through 1 Peter you will be well grounded in the great teachings of our faith. You will gain a new assurance concerning spiritual realities. You will be well taught in the truth of God and impressed with the grandeur of God Himself. You will also be thrilled with the majestic language the Peter uses.

Homework:

Week 1 Read the whole of 1 Peter through without stopping. Don't be discouraged if you can't grasp all the details. It is a letter and it should be read through as a letter. It is short. It should take 15 minutes to read through.

When you have read it write down or mark all the verses that might be helpful to **the original readers** who were facing the second wave of persecution (the first wave sent them into exile). In other words, mark all the references to suffering.

Now read it again and mark everything that suggests to you something **about yourself**.

To most of us our earthly life looms so large that we don't grasp our eternal background. This wasn't the case with Peter. He had glimpsed eternity in the life of Jesus. To him the eternal was all important and this life was of value only as it contributed to the eternal.

Note down the following:

- References to eternal things
- Words of encouragement
- Peter's deep concern for us to live a life of righteous conduct. What are his motives for holy living? There is no benefit in being good for nothing!

Lastly, imagine you are reading about Jesus for the very first time. Write down what you would discover about Him – e.g. what He did, His faith, His joy, His love, His hope etc.

1 Peter 1: 1-2

The Introduction

- Peter – it was the custom in the Roman World to start by giving your name.
- Peter is perhaps our favourite disciple. He lived in Bethsaida and in Capernaum. He was married and was involved in the fishing industry. Andrew, his brother, introduced him to Jesus. (Jn. 1:40-41)
- By temperament he was impulsive and affectionate. He made some great statements about Jesus – Mt. 16:16-17; Jn. 6:68-69. He grieved Jesus by his cowardly denial at the Crucifixion – Lk. 22:54-62, but later on he was wonderfully restored and recommissioned. (Jn. 21:15-127) He was empowered on the Day of Pentecost. (Acts 2:1-4)

An Apostle of Jesus Christ/Messiah

- An apostle is 'a sent one' – i.e. one who is sent by the Lord Jesus and not self-appointed. (Jn. 15:16 & 2 Cor. 5:20)
- There are perhaps three orders of apostleship:
  - The one whom the Father has sent. The only person in this category is Jesus.
  - The eleven plus Paul who were sent out by Jesus.
  - Those sent out by the Holy Spirit – apostles like Barnabas. If there are apostles today they are exclusively in this category.

Seven key words

Peter has given us his name and told us of his appointment and authority as an apostle of the Lord Jesus. Now he gives us a description of us – the believers. The words he uses (re-arranged) are: elect – foreknowledge – blood – sanctification – obedience – strangers – scattered

If you ask when our **progress** begins in this amazing process of grace, the answer is:

It began in the heart of God (v.2) way back in eternity because our salvation is the sovereign work of the Triune God.

Seven Points

1. <u>Back in eternity, before time. Before the big bang/creation we were **elected** and chosen by God</u>.

   Verse 2 tells us this very clearly. We believe it by faith even though we can't explain it or understand the wonder of it. To 'elect' means to pick out or to select. God has picked us

out, selected us to be his very own children. Read also Eph. 1:4-6 and John 6:37-39. Children 'picked' in a team for a playground game are so relieved – someone values me!

Live in the reality of this truth.

2. We were chosen according to the **foreknowledge** of God the Father.

   Verse 2 tells us this. It is important to notice that God the Father is the author of the plan of salvation. Foreknowledge conveys not only the idea of having previous knowledge, but includes the idea of deliberate action based on that background of knowledge. [See Peter's message in Acts 2:23.] Knowing all the facts about a case or, to put it more personally, knowing **all about me** – my sin, my failure, my many weaknesses – the Lord still chose me! Perhaps Peter remembered Jesus' first words to him, ***"So you are Simon the son of John, you will be called Peter"***. (Jn. 1:42)

   In the past, in eternity we were chosen by God the Father Who put our names in the Book of Life. (Rev. 21:27)

3. God the Son, Our Lord Jesus, shed His precious **blood** to redeem us and make us His own.

   Our salvation was **planned in eternity** but **procured on the Cross** almost 2000 years ago. Verse 2 tells us this. It is important to get the sequence in **Our Progress** – election, foreknowledge and then redemption. In this letter Peter gives great prominence to the doctrine of the **atonement**. (see 1 Pet. 1:18-20; 2:21-24; 3:18) In the fullness of time the Lord Jesus came and by His death and atoning sacrifice He provided a righteous basis on which those elected according to God's foreknowledge were **brought back into fellowship with God.**

   What happens then?

4. God the Holy Spirit does the work of **sanctification**, setting us apart from the world to be those who are receiving His grace.

   Our salvation was planned in eternity and procured at the Cross and now the Holy Spirit has actually come after us, identified us and set us apart to belong to the Lord Jesus. This is very wonderful indeed. This is what the Holy Spirit is doing today. He is seeking out and setting apart those whom God the Father has chosen so that they can be cleansed by the blood of Jesus and brought into the family circle of the redeemed.

   How was it you first became interested in spiritual things and heard the call to follow and love the Lord Jesus? It was only because the Holy Spirit was at work in your life. (Jn. 6:65) What comes next? Why are we set apart? Why are we saved?

5. We were chosen to be **obedient** to the truth.

   The work of the Holy Spirit is not just to save us, but that we would have the faith and the power to obey. Once we were dead, now we are alive. But why were we called, chosen and redeemed? It is so that we can live a life of obedience. The purpose of God in choosing people is:

   - To be fruitful (Jn. 15:16)
   - To confound the wise and the mighty (1 Cor. 1:27)
   - To abolish the existing order of things (1 Cor. 1:28)
   - To be holy and blameless before Him in love (Eph. 1:4)

   Usually we associate 'election' with being saved. But notice that Jesus was chosen before the creation of the world. (1:20). So it may be questioned whether God's choice of believers

is in order for them to be saved or whether the choice relates to 'things that accompany salvation' – to use the phrase in Heb. 6:9.

Jesus had no need to be saved. He was chosen to save rather than be saved. We are chosen in Him (Eph. 1:8) and our great function is to obey the Great Commission and take the Gospel to the unsaved everywhere and so co-operate with the Lord Jesus in saving this world.

6. Having been saved, we are now **strangers** and pilgrims.

   This world is not our home. We are exiles here because we are citizens of heaven and our eternal home is there. These first believers, to whom Peter is writing, were Jews – 'exiles of the dispersion' – pilgrims. So we are not to settle here in some 'comfort zone' since earth is not our home!

7. Finally – we who are pilgrims have been **scattered** abroad to be God's witnesses to all nations.

   In the 21st century God is scattering His people all over the world. Why doesn't the Lord Jesus take us to heaven right away when we are saved? One very great reason is that He scatters us about the world to be His witnesses to all nations. The Greek phrase means 'scattered alongside the people of ….' This means He has placed you in your family, your office/school, your town, your country to be a witness. But He might want to scatter you further – obey!

Conclusion

When we see what God has done for us and the privilege that is ours to be His witnesses, surely our hearts are moved to love Him more and to obey Him more fully.