

Historical Context of I Peter

Author: The author identifies himself as Peter, an apostle, an elder, one who has witnessed the sufferings of Christ, and one who shares in the glory to be revealed. He is writing from "Babylon"- probably Rome, accompanied by Mark- called his "son"- and Silvanus- his secretary- and the whole church. He has a very warm relationship with the recipients, calling them beloved.

Recipients: The recipients are in 5 cities in Asia minor, called exiles. Peter describes them as chosen, sanctified for obedience to Christ. Although Peter addresses them in very Jewish terms, they were most likely Gentiles. They are Gentiles who have come out of the futile lifestyle of their ancestors. They were involved in various sins of Gentiles, but have been converted through the anonymous preaching of the gospel. In converting, they brought about the ill will of those with whom they used to participate in sin, and so are the objects of slander, ridicule and outright persecution. There are slaves among them. Masters are not addressed as such. Wives and husbands are both addressed. They are encouraged to submit to governing authorities, and so are probably from the lower classes with no say in government. The churches have specific leaders, termed elders.

Historical Situation: The recipients are under threat of or actually suffering. Sometimes it is spoken of in hypothetical terms, and sometimes as if actually happening. They are slandered and persecuted by ignorant people who have been put off by their conversion. This persecution seems to be sporadic and haphazard, and not organized persecution by the state.

Exhortations: In light of this, Peter focuses their thoughts on their reward. He speaks of their inheritance and impending glory. In light of this destiny, they are commanded to live as exiles and strangers. They are to "conduct themselves honorably among the Gentiles". Their conduct within the circle of the church- mutual fervent love and service- and their conduct toward the society – submission and godliness- are to demonstrate the glory of God. Most importantly, they are to meet suffering in a way that imitates Christ's suffering. Throughout, they are promised, if they do so, they will also meet Christ's reward of glory and turn others to God.

Key Words: hope, glory, suffering, submit, strangers, chosen/elect, holy, joy/rejoicing

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