

First Peter – Then and Now

In order to stay on track, as we proceed through First Peter, it may help to utilize and follow a simple outline of the book. The one reproduced below is taken from the book written by Warren W. Wiersbe, entitled, *Be Hopeful* (Victor Books – Cook Communications). It may be helpful for you to buy the book.

A more detailed outline is found in the splendid book entitled *First Peter*, written by D. Edmond Hiebert (Moody Press). I highly recommend you buy this excellent exposition.

Be Hopeful

I. God's Grace and Salvation – 1:1-2:10

- A. Live in hope – 1:1 - 12
- B. Live in holiness – 1:13 - 21
- C. Live in harmony – 1:22 – 2:10

II. God's Grace and Submission – 2:11 – 3:12

- A. Submit to authorities – 2:11 – 3:12
- B. Submit to masters – 2:18 – 25
- C. Submit in the home – 3:1 – 7
- D. Submit in the Church – 3:8 – 12

III. God's Grace and Suffering – 3:13 – 5:11

- A. Make Jesus Christ Lord – 3:13 – 22
- B. Have Christ's attitude – 4:1 – 11
- C. Glorify Christ's name – 4:12 – 19
- D. Look for Christ's return – 5:1 – 6
- E. Depend on Christ's grace – 5:7 – 11

The Writer: The Apostle Peter

Peter had willingly chosen to leave his business as a fisherman and follow the Lord Jesus. (Luke 5:1-11) The Savior had given him a new name – “a stone.” (John 1:35-42; Matthew 16:13-20).

Peter was instructed by the Lord to work with the Jewish people, as Paul was told to minister to Gentiles. (Gal 2:1-10). He was specifically commanded to “strengthen his brethren” (Luke 22:32), and to care for the flock. (John 21:15-17). His Epistles are one way in which he carried out such instructions.

The picture of Peter in the Gospels is very different to what we see in the Book of Acts and these Epistles. Pentecost made the difference, coupled with his training by the Lord Jesus. In the Gospels he is bold, forceful and self-confident. In the Acts and these Epistles we see that he is patient, loving and depending on God.

The Recipients: Christians in Asia Minor who were suffering serious trials.

The believers addressed by Peter were living in Northern Asia Minor (Turkey). Some were in Roman Provinces. They were undergoing trials and suffering from the treatment of non-Christians. (1 Peter 1:6,7; 2:19-23; 3:9,10,14-18; 4:1-4, 13-19 and 5:9,10)

Peter probably wrote these Epistles early in AD 64. It was during the rule of the infamous Emperor Nero (AD 64-68). In that year, the fire that consumed half of Rome was blamed on the Christians by Nero. Many, however, believed it was set by the Emperor himself, to clear some ground for his building projects. That event started the systematic persecution of Christians. It is probable that both Peter and Paul were martyred about that time.

Most of the recipients of these Epistles were living in Roman Provinces and the governmental persecution eventually reached them. If a Province had a kind and cautious ruler, then the persecution was not carried out severely. However, many Provinces had Roman leaders who wished to climb the political ladder and therefore carried out the Edicts of Rome with a vengeance, in order to gain attention and favor with the Emperor.

The Lord knew what was in store for these early Christians and had Peter write his Epistles to prepare them. Peter himself seemed to anticipate such serious testing, as we will recognize, as we study this Epistle.