

TITLE: Hope for the Hurting: An Introduction to 1 Peter

PASSAGE: 1 Peter 1:1a

THEME: Introduction to 1 Peter

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I don't know if you have heard the news, but a great American icon has passed away recently. The Pillsbury Doughboy. He died of a severe yeast infection and internal injuries to his abdomen. He was a ripe age and was buried in a slightly greased coffin. Funeral was well attended Mrs. Butterworth; The CA Raisens; Hungry Jack; Betty Crocker; and Captain Crunch. Aunt Jemima gave a sweet eulogy and was quoted as saying that DB never really knew how much he was kneaded. As for his life, he rose quickly, but his later life was filled with many turnovers. Some said he wasted too much dough on half-baked schemes. As flaky as he may have been he still served as a roll model for many. He had been ill for a while and was expected to recover, but he didn't pop up. He was survived by his long-time wife, Play Dough. They had two children and one in the oven. The funeral was held at 3:50 for about 20 minutes.

At least we have the hope of knowing that if he died in the faith he will one day rise again!

Speaking of hope, on a more serious note - happens to be a theme of Peter's first letter ==> Hope for the Hurting

Read Passage

Been a long time in coming - apologize for t/delay & I don't know if I should apologize for this or just forewarn you that this week & prob. next may be a little more like a classroom teaching session than a sermon as we set t/stage for what's to come over next several mos. in this great epistle by t/Apostle Peter.

This week I hope to set up some wrinkles and next week to straighten them out as we are going to spend the majority of our time in an introductory mode.

1 requirement - Will have to use your brain this AM (some of you "rats!")

Like the story told by Howard Hendricks who once asked a pathologist friend in Philadelphia the question, ‘Have you seen many brains?’ ‘Hundreds of them,’ he said. Hendricks then asked: ‘Have you ever seen one worn out?’ to which the man replied, ‘I’ve never seen one even slightly used,’” [H. Hendricks, Teaching to Change Lives, 41]

I’d like to keep it simple, so for the sake of alliteration we will let the letter “A” guide us this week, as we look at==>

A. The Author (who wrote 1 Peter?)

Modern Objections to Petrine Authorship/Date and Place of Writing

B. The Audience (to whom was 1 Peter written?)

C. The Atmosphere (what were circumstances of t/letter?)

We’re going to do all of this before we actually get into the text (hope to do next week).

I. Hope for the Hurting: An Introduction to 1 Peter (1:1a)

A. The Author (who wrote 1 Peter?)

Peter, an apostle of Jesus Christ . . .

Following t/customary way of writing letters in t/1st c. t/opening verse claims that the letter was written by “Peter” - Particularly - (Πέτρος ἀπόστολος Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ) - Peter, an apostle of Jesus Christ. With this designation he clearly identifies himself as “The Apostle Peter.”

This would clearly indicate what we call==>

1. Petrine Authorship

We are talking about The Apostle Peter, the leader among the Apostles of Jesus Christ, specifically while Jesus walked the earth.

a. There’s no doubt about Peter’s prominence

Each list of apostles in Gospels places his name first (Matt. 10; Mark 3; Luke 6). Next to JC t/Gospel writers give us more infor. about Peter than any one else.

After t/resurrection & ascension of JC, Peter became leading spokesman for t/early CH. He initiated t/replacement of t/fallen pseudo-Apostle Judas (Acts 1:15). He preached the 1st sermon recorded by t/early CH in Acts 2 w/result that 1000s came to believe in X for salvation. He dominates the first half of t/book of Acts up until t/arrival of TAP. Peter was a miracle worker & God used him to open t/door of t/gospel to the half-breed Samaritans in Acts 8, as well as t/Gentiles in Acts 10.

(1) This was a heavy-hitter!

BTIM a letter coming to you by Peter was a letter w/some serious authority behind it!

If you were to compose a spurious letter in the 1st or 2nd c. there is no better name to use as a forgery than Peter's, and many did just that (Gospel of Peter; Apocolypse of Peter, and others).

However, there is no doubt (at least in my mind) that this letter has come to us from the hand of The Apostle Peter. This was a universally accepted fact by the earliest Xns. NT scholar Guthrie claims that the letter was considered canonical as early as the word had a meaning.

b. There's plenty of early evidence

We know that Clement of Rome used 1 Peter in his Epistle to the Corinthians (AD 96). Polycarp, a disciple of Apostle John, cited 1 Peter as well. Irenaeus, Tertullian, Clement of Alexandria (all late 2d c.) quoted from this epistle.

Eusebius says that Papias (who died around AD 130) quoted from 1PET. Eusebius also includes 1PET in his list of NT books that are universally accepted by t/CH (dates to 325 AD).

Earliest reference to 1 Peter is found in 2 Peter==>

2 Peter 3:1 **This is now, beloved, the second letter I am writing to you in**

which I am stirring up your sincere mind by way of reminder

If 2PET is “The Second Letter” then there must have been a 1st letter that predated it!

To quote a well-established scholar in the field ==>

"the epistle has been well known and consistently acknowledged as Petrine from the second century well into modern times." [Michaels, xxxii]

Note the end of that quote “well into modern times” ==>

a. Modern Objections to Petrine Authorship

Might wonder, “With so much evidence, why the doubts?” Large part of it t/fact that we live in an age when some people make a living at raising doubts on the integrity of the Bible. They get great joy in raising t/most minuscule "evidence" that supposedly raises doubt on t/Bible’s integrity. Not all bad; In t/wake are 1000s of well-studied, well-credentialed conservative scholars who can aptly defend truth of Bible.

What really set it all off was the publication of a commentary on 1 Peter by F.W. Beare in 1947 in which he contended that TA Peter didnt’ write t/letter, but rather another author did it using Peter’s name.

(1) Several Different Arguments used

Boil it down for sake of simplicity, we’ll just cover 4 (most time on 1st)

(a) First (Biggest)

The quality of the Greek in 1 Peter is said to be too good for the Apostle Peter who was an unlearned fisherman from Galilee.

Key in this regard is use of t/word *αγραμματος* in Acts 4:13. Remember, in Acts 4 we have Peter & John imprisoned for preaching about JC. They are released and brought before t/Jewish leaders, including Annas t/H.P. and after being questioned, as Luke records it:

. . . as they observed the confidence of Peter and John, and understood that they were uneducated (*αγραμματος*) and untrained men, they were marveling, and *began* to recognize them as having been with Jesus.

So it's said that Peter couldn't have written this letter bearing his name because t/Greek to too good for a man who was *αγραμματος*.

i. Some have countered this charge by quoting 5:12

Through Silvanus, our faithful brother . . . I have written to you . . .

IOW - it's believed by some that Peter didn't actually pen the words, though he gave t/thoughts. Rather he used an amanuensis, namely "Silvanus" or Silas as he was more commonly known.

Nothing wrong w/this. Dictation was a common practice (cf. Rom. 16:22). Secretaries would often aid with style and grammar. In some cases the scribe would be given a bare outline to work with and the author would check over the work when it was completed.

Likely that Silas would have had excellent skills in Greek. In Acts we're told that he was a prophet and a citizen of Rome. He was well acquainted w/Apostle Paul being Paul's chosen associate on his 2d M.J. (Acts 15:40).

Silas is associated with Paul in both of the Thess. epistles being mentioned in t/introductions of both.

So it's possible that Peter used a secretary/amanuensis in writing t/letter.

However, it's more likely that Silas "carried" the letter rather than having scribed it.

The phrase used in 5:12 is no where else used of an amanuensis, however it is used of a carrier (someone who carried and delivered a letter).

Of course it's entirely possible that Peter used an unnamed amanuensis.

ii. Could Peter have known Greek well enough to write 1 Peter?

Go back to Acts 4:13 where Peter is called uneducated (αγραμματος). Word αγραμματος doesn't mean illiterate. In t/context t/word simply means that he was not formally trained in the rabbinic schools. So you can't make a judgement on this basis.

A lot can hinge on one word!

It's like the new monk who arrived at a local monastery. He's assigned to help the other monks copy old texts by hand. Soon he notices that they are copying copies and not the original books, so he goes to the head monk to ask about it. The newby points out that if there was an error in the first copy that error would be transferred to all ensuing copies. The head monk replies, "We've been copying copies for centuries, but you make a good point my son." So the head monk goes down in the cellar to see if he can unearth an original. Hours later no one has seen him. So, the new monk goes downstairs to look for him. He hears loud sobbing and finds the old monk leaning over one of the original books crying. The new monk asks him what's wrong to which the old monk looks up and sobs, "The word is celebrate."

iii. Scholars are discovering that Greek was much more widely used in first century Palestine than originally believed

Aramaic was primary language (were reminded of that in Gibson's "The Passion of the Christ").

While Aramaic was primary language in Palestine, there is evidence that Greek was widely used, as well, & that most Jews were bilingual w/many knowing Greek as well as they knew Aramaic.

Don't forget the LXX - The Gk. Translation of the OT - which was completed 2d c. BC. Testimony to the fact that Greek was very common, even in & around Israel.

Of course, this all goes back to t/conquests of Alex. the Great who conq. Palestine in 332 BC. With that came the "Hellenization" of t/area (imposition of Greek language & culture). By time Peter wrote there had

been nearly 400 years of Hellenization including many Gk. cities in & around Israel (Joppa on E. coast was a center of Gk. influence + The 10 Gk. cities (Decapolis).

Then there's the testimony of archeology.

In & around Jerus. 100s of Jewish ossuaries (stone coffins) have been excavated, dating from the 1st c. AD or earlier. One study of inscriptions on these tombs showed that out of 175, 97 were written in Hebrew or Aramaic (to be expected), but 64 were in Greek & 14 bilingual. Signif. is that you would want the inscription on your tomb to be in a language common to you and those whom you knew.

Then there's an inscription on a synagogue near t/temple in Jerusalem. On the inscription, which was written in Greek==>

"Theodotos, son of Vettesos, priest and archisynagogos [ruler of the synagogue], son of an archisynagogos, grandson of an archisynagogos, built the synagogue for the reading of the law and for the teaching of the commandments" [Grudem, 28]

Significant that a memorial plaque on a Jewish synagogue in Jerusalem would be written in Greek. Shows how deeply Greek lang. & culture had permeated Jerusalem by t/first century.

Jewish hist. Josephus states that in his day "even slaves who so chose" could acquire fluency in Greek, and it was "common" to ordinary freemen. [Grudem, 29]

As one researcher put it==>

"There is greater readiness now than there was formerly to admit that Jesus and his disciples, all of whom were Galileans (Acts ii.7) were bilingual, speaking Greek as well as Aramaic" [A.W. Argyle, cited in Grudem, 30]

In fact, some scholars believe that Peter's Greek was better than his Aramaic (Moulton and Howard, cited in Guthrie, 767).

Even if Greek wasn't Peter's first language, there's no reason to believe

that in course of 30 plus years he couldn't have acquired a mastery of it.

Joseph Conrad who lived from 1857-1924 is a perfect example of this. Conrad was an accomplished author whose native tongue was Polish. He learned French as a child. He began to learn English at the age of 21 when he signed on as a seaman aboard a British ship. His novel, *Lord Jim* is today acknowledged as a literary classic. No one says that Joseph Conrad could not have written *Lord Jim* because it was written in excellent English and that language wasn't Conrad's native tongue.

[example cited in Grudem, 31]

The argument that Peter couldn't have written a letter in excellent Greek is really w/o merit.

(b) Another objection has to do with the time of writing

Some argue that Peter is addressing a persecution of Xns under Rom. Emp. Nero that either had not happened yet, or that hadn't had time to spread to the particular areas in Asia Minor that Peter addresses (1:1b):

... aliens, scattered throughout Pontus, Galatia, Cappadocia, Asia, and Bithynia . . .

Something happened on July 19, year of 64. The great fire of Rome broke out. Here was a city built w/high wooden structures that were engulfed w/flames. The fire burned 3 days and 3 nights, it was checked and then broke out again w/double the intensity. Was pretty much common knowledge who set the fire: Nero. He had a passion for building things (or having them built). The city was full and he wanted to start over. It was said that t/firemen of the day were being deliberately hindered in their work and whenever it looked like the fire was getting under control men were seen sneaking about rekindling it.

After the devastation the people were enraged. Nero had to find a scapegoat. Who better than the Christians (sounding a little like today). The Roman historian Tacitus records the story in his *Annals*:

”Neither human assistance in the shape of imperial gifts, nor attempts to appease the gods could remove the sinister report that the fire was due to Nero’s own orders. And, so, in the hope of dissipating the rumor, he falsely diverted the charge on to a set of people to whom the vulgar gave the name of Chrestians, and who were detested for the abominations they perpetrated. The founder of the sect, one Christus by name, had been executed by Pontius Pilate in the reign of Tiberius; and the dangerous superstition, though put down for the moment, broke out again, not only Judea, the original home of the pests, but even in Rome, where everything shameful and horrible collects and is practiced.” [Barclay, 147]

1st c. Christians were distrusted. They were connected w/the Jews who weren’t very popular. The Lord’s Supper was viewed as a secret rite where people literally ate flesh and drank blood, and Xns spoke of a coming day when t/world would be destroyed in fire. Easy to see how they served as the perfect scapegoat. So, they were and a massive persecution ensued. Nero rolled Xns in pitch & lit them alive, allowing them to burn to ash as they lit his gardens. He had t/skins of wild animals sewed on them and then he set his guard dogs on them.

Again, Tacitus writes:

“Mockery of every sort was added to their deaths. Covered with the skins of beasts, they were torn by dogs and perished, or were nailed by crosses, or were doomed to the flames and burned, to served as a nightly illumination, when daylight had expired. Nero offered his gardens for the spectacle . . . “ [Barclay, 149]

It’s said that the intensity of these persecutions had not occurred when Peter wrote.

However, there’s a false assumption. It’s that Peter is writing about these persecutions. There’s no solid evidence that he is. Seems more likely that the persecutions that Peter is addressing were suffering of a general kind; being mocked and derided, not martyred. Cf. 3:15 [=>]

(c) Others have objected that Peter writes too much

like Paul

Argument is that this is someone trying to copy Paul. If that's true he's pretty stupid because he used Peter's name not Paul's!

Seriously - Parallels to Paul should be no surprise. Paul was the one who confronted Peter as recorded in Gal. 2. Peter, near the end of his life, was teaching w/Paul in Rome, and Silas, who was with Peter, was Paul's traveling companion & assistant for many years.

That Peter should reflect some of Paul is of no concern. Peter also has several parallels to James. All of these writers were led by t/same Spirit & knew much of t/same sort of common idioms that were in use in t/CH.

Fact is, when you read Peter you sense that you're not reading Paul, you are indeed reading Peter.

1 Peter shares many stylistic parallels to Peter's sermons in Acts, such as t/teaching that X is t/stone rejected by the builder has become the chief cornerstone (2:7-8, cf. Acts 4:10-11). That X is no respecter of persons (1:17, cf. Acts 10:34). Peter urges his readers to "gird themselves w/humility" in 5:5 which is a parallel to Jesus girding himself with a towel & washing the disciple's feet

Beyond that, the author claims to have been an eye-witness of the sufferings of Christ (5:1) which fits Peter's life as a witness to Jesus' rejection by men, suffering in the Garden of Gethsemane, and His trial

(d) Lastly -

Some point out that 1 Peter is not found in the Muratorian Canon (the earliest list of the NT books which dates to t/end of 2d c.). However, the copy we have of the MT is corrupt (not complete). Copy/ies we do have don't mention James or Hebrews.

There's no reason other than a hunger and thirst for skepticism, to reject that the Apostle Peter was the one who wrote this letter.

2. Date of Writing

We believe that Peter was written during the reign of Nero, probably shortly after the death of the Apostle Paul. This would give us a window of somewhere between 62-65 AD.

Peter had to have written after Paul left Rome in AD 62, since he doesn't mention Paul in his letter (1 Peter 5:12-13). On the flip side, Paul doesn't mention Peter in any of his 4 prison epistles (during his 1st Roman imprisonment).

We also have to allow time for 2 Peter to be written (around AD 65 or 66). This would give us a date of somewhere between AD 63 and 64, probably just before or after July AD 64 when Nero torched the city of Rome.

3. Place of Writing

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

We know that Peter wrote from "Babylon"

a. But what Does "Babylon" mean?

Three locations suggested for "Babylon" - 1) A Roman outpost in N. Egypt (but too obscure and no reason to believe that Peter was ever in that area); 2) Ancient Babylon in Mesopotamia (also a small, distant place and there's no reason to believe that Peter was ever there).

Rome which the Xns began to call "Babylon" as a sort of cryptic name. (cf. Rev. chapters 16-18).

With little doubt this is what Peter means by "Babylon" meaning that he wrote from Rome.

Rome was called "Babylon" for security reasons & because the term "Babylon" was a cryptogram for any center of worldly power that was

in opposition to God and his saints. That was Rome, esp. under Nero.

Also a parallel to the CH as a new Israel, so to speak. As Babylon was to the Israel of the OT (ancient Babylon who crushed Judah in 586) so Rome was to the CH of the NT.

It has traditionally been held that Peter set up residence in Rome and also died there, as did Paul==>

AD 203 - Tertullian wrote: "Since, moreover, you are close upon Italy, you have Rome from which there comes even into our own hands their very authority of the apostles themselves. How happy is its church, on which apostles poured forth all their doctrine along with their blood! Where Peter endures a passion like his Lord's! Where Paul is his crown in a death like John's! [cited in Grudem, 34]

So we have the Apostle Peter, writing from Rome around AD 64.

What about ==>

B. The Audience (to whom was 1 Peter written?)

Largely seem to be Gentiles (non Jews). There's no mention of the Law (something that always came up in the Jewish churches).

Descriptions used in 1:14, 4:3-4 fits Gentiles better than Jews.

1:14 - former lusts which were theirs in their ignorance.

4:3-4 - a course of sensuality, lusts, drunkenness, drinking parties and idolatries.

2:9-10 where the readers were told that they were once o/o of t/Covenant - that would indicate that they weren't Jewish.

The areas addressed were predominantly Gentile ==>

. . . Pontus, Galatia, Cappadocia, Asia, and Bithynia . . .

These were all Roman provinces in Asia Minor. That doesn't mean that there weren't Jews there, but it was mixed.

C. The Atmosphere (the circumstances of the letter?)

Background is that these were Xns who were suffering persecution for their faith.

God by way of Peter encourages them to live well in the midst of t/hostility w/o losing hope or becoming bitter.

Peter is one letter in which there is no theological controversy. That's rare! Philippians had the Judaizers; Colossians t/Colossian Heresy; Galatians t/Issue of t/Law and Grace; 1 Corinthians (well, we don't have enough time!). No such controversy in 1 Peter.

What we have are hurting people in need of hope. That's the theme: "Hope for the Hurting." Twin themes of Hurting and Hope.

Hope is in our salvation (1:1c-6a)	Hurting is only for a little while (1:6b, 5:10)
Hope results in joy (1:6a, 8-9)	Hurting was experienced by Jesus on our behalf (1:11, 2:21, 4:1)
Hope is why Jesus came for us (1:20-21)	Hurting believers are cared for by God (5:7)
Hope results in Holiness and Obedience (1:14-15)	Hurting is to be Expected (4:12)
Hope results in Love (1:22)	Hurting as a Christian is Noble (3:14, 4:14-15)

Bring it back to 1:3-5 [=>]