

A LIVING HOPE...



...A SURE SALVATION

**Biblical Studies In
1st & 2nd Peter**

Prepared By Jeff Smith

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Lesson 1 – General Introduction

Overview

It is often said that some are well qualified to teach and encourage others because of the many mistakes they have made and from which they have recovered. They have learned from experience what was utter failure and how to rebound to great success.

Peter is such an example. Never was there a disciple of Jesus Christ more impetuous or misguided by raw ambition & zeal than he. He had to learn “the hard way” the kind of righteousness required in the Lord’s kingdom. At times, he was his own worst enemy. Notice these “less-than-memorable” moments in his dealings with Christ:

- ♦ his rebuke of Jesus going to Jerusalem to suffer (**Mt. 16:21-23**)
- ♦ his excited notion of putting Moses & Elijah on par with Jesus (**Mt. 17:1-8**)
- ♦ his observation that he had done what others had refused to do (**Mt. 19:27**)
- ♦ his refusal to let Jesus wash his feet & his failure to grasp the event (**Jn. 13:6-9**)
- ♦ his defense of Jesus through carnal means (**Jn. 18:10-11**)
- ♦ his denial of Jesus after his defiant profession of allegiance (**Lk. 22:33-34, 54-62**)
- ♦ his worrying about others instead of his own duties to God (**Jn. 21:15-21**)

However, he rose from these failures to be a great apostle and a “pillar in the church” (**Gal. 2:9**). Jesus must have seen Peter’s potential in his undeveloped character when He changed his name from “Simon” to “Peter” in **Mt. 16:18** [*“Petros”* = a detached, but large fragment of rock]. One writer comments that earlier in his life, Peter was more like “shifting sand” than a rock.

Peter exemplifies what it means to develop the depth of character needed to faithfully follow Christ, even though you have previously failed, and especially through tribulations. He knew first-hand that for one to enjoy the salvation promised by God, one must acquire a knowledge of the ways of God through patience and steadfast hope. That seems to be the collective theme of his two epistles.

In **1st Peter**, he stresses our being begotten to a “living hope” to “obtain an inheritance which is imperishable and undefiled and will not fade away, reserved in heaven for you” (**1:3-4**). In **2nd Peter**, the apostle urges us to add “patience” (endurance) to our character (**1:6**) while growing “in the grace and the knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ” (**3:18**). As a disciple young in faith, he was much like us. As a mature, inspired apostle, he was grounded in the will of God. Succinctly, studying these epistles will help the Bible student grow in his/her faith while remaining steadfast in the face of trials.

We are all in constant need of these reminders (**cp. 2 Pet. 1:13; 3:1**). Children of God are to have a constant hope of their inheritance in heaven, and live accordingly. Peter reviews

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such important themes in his two letters. The following examples illustrate this:

- ♦ we have been begotten to a living hope of our inheritance (**1 Pet. 1:3-4**)
- ♦ we must remain faithful through trials (**1 Pet. 1:6-7; 4:12-19**)
- ♦ we should offer continual sacrifices as priests of God (**1 Pet. 2:5-12**)
- ♦ we must honor all our human relationships (**1 Pet. 2:13-20**)
- ♦ we must develop strong Christian character (**2 Pet. 1:4-11**)
- ♦ we must endure mockers and false teachers (**2 Pet. 3:3-5, 17**)
- ♦ we must be the "right sort of people" in view of judgment (**2 Pet. 3:10-13**)

Authorship

Both **1 Pet. 1:1** and **2 Pet. 1:1** state that Simon Peter is the author. Based on **1 Pet. 5:12**, it appears that Peter dictated the first letter to a brother named Silvanus. No such mention is made with regards to the second epistle, so he could have written it himself.

We know the following about Peter from the Scripture:

- ♦ he was the son of Jonah, or Jonas (**Mt. 16:17**)
- ♦ he was from the city of Bethsaida (**Jn. 1:44**)
- ♦ along with James, John, and his brother Andrew, he was a commercial fisherman, primarily on the Sea of Galilee (**Mt. 4:18-21**)
- ♦ he was a married man (**Mt. 8:14**)
 - it is inferred his wife accompanied him on preaching trips (**1 Cor. 9:5**)
- ♦ he had little, if any, formal education (**Acts 4:13**)
- ♦ he was one of the original 12 apostles hand-chosen by Jesus (**Mk. 3:13-19**)
 - in all the lists of the apostles, he is always the first one mentioned (**Mt. 10:4; Mk. 3:16; Lk. 6:14; Acts 1:13**)
- ♦ he was one of the closest disciples of the Lord, along with James & John
 - they witnessed Jesus' transfiguration (**Mt. 17:1ff**)
 - they were with the Lord in His agony in Gethsemane (**Mt. 26:37**)
- ♦ he was the main "apostolic character" in the first half of the book of Acts (**Acts 1-12**)
- ♦ he preached the first gospel sermon when the church began (**Acts 2:14-40**)
- ♦ he was involved in the "Jerusalem Conference" (**Acts 15:6-11**)
- ♦ he was rebuked by Paul at Antioch for his hypocrisy (**Gal. 2:11-14**)

Human tradition ascribes other events to Peter's life, but these are only speculative. Many teach and believe that Peter was crucified, and in his crucifixion requested that he be impaled upside down. While it is possible that Jesus alludes to a violent death for Peter in **Jn. 21:18**, we have no reliable information confirming his death in such a fashion. Of course, the most perverted tradition has Peter becoming the first Pope. Besides distorting **Mt. 16:18**, there also is no evidence that Peter was ever in Rome.

Time & Place of Writing

Textually, we know Peter wrote **1st Peter** from "Babylon" (**5:13**). No such mention is made in his second letter, so we can only assume it was written from the same place.

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There are many interpretations about "Babylon." Some take it to be figurative as a reference to Rome or Jerusalem. However, it seems more plausible to accept it as literal Babylon, the ancient site along the Euphrates River. This would be in harmony with the cities listed in **1:1** which were also in ancient Asia Minor.

As for a date, this cannot be fixed for certain. Some commentators suggest a range that provides a reasonable time frame for Peter's letters:

- ♦ at the time Peter wrote the first epistle, John Mark was with him **(5:13)**
- ♦ we know Mark was with Paul during his first Roman imprisonment **(Col. 4:10)**
 - this would have been somewhere around 63-64 A.D.
- ♦ we also know Mark was with Timothy in Asia Minor when Paul wrote his last letter shortly before his death **(2 Tim. 4:11; cp. 1 Tim. 1:3)**
 - this would have been somewhere around 67-68 A.D.
- ♦ it is therefore concluded that Mark journeyed to Babylon and was with Peter when he penned these letters
 - thus, the range of 63/64 to 67/68 A.D. is used to date Peter's two epistles

Purpose

Peter states he wrote the first epistle "exhorting and testifying that this is the true grace of God. Stand firm in it!" **(1 Pet. 5:12)**. Additionally, he says he penned the second letter to "stir up your sincere mind by way of reminder" **(2 Pet. 3:1)**.

These letters are not addressed to any specific churches or saints by name. Rather, they are general in nature, and address necessary themes to successfully live the Christian life. Notice the suggested outlines belows:

1st Peter

- ♦ **Salvation: Attainment of Believers (1:1 - 2:10)**
- ♦ **Submission: Appeal to Believers (2:11 - 3:12)**
- ♦ **Suffering: Attitude & Actions of Believers (3:13 - 5:14)**

2nd Peter

- ♦ **The True Knowledge in Which to Grow (1:1-21)**
- ♦ **The False Teachers Who Were to Come (2:1-22)**
- ♦ **The Sure Promise in Which to Hope (3:1-18)**

- New Testament Books Outlined [pp. 94-100]
Derrel Shaw