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1 Peter Introduction (Part 2)



1 Peter - Steve Gregg

Steve Gregg delves into the context of 1 Peter in the second part of his introduction. He suggests that the fiery trials mentioned in chapter 4 may have been related to Nero's persecution of Christians, which some argue did not reach Asia at the time this letter was written. He also explores the use of the term "pilgrims" to refer to the dispersed Christians who were living in Gentile lands, and highlights the similarities between the teachings in 1 Peter and the words of Jesus. With a focus on the suffering and conduct of believers, the letter addresses theological points that serve as an opening to the subject matter.

Transcript

I want to finish up our introduction to 1 Peter now in this session. We talked about who the author was. It was obviously, well, traditionally Peter, and to my mind it's fairly obvious that that tradition is reliable.

So we will proceed on that assumption that Peter is our author here. But where, when, and to whom he wrote it is something to consider also. In fact, these are not simply trivial details.

In some cases there are things that are affected by these questions. Not always, but occasionally. And so it's good to have some, sort of place ourselves back at the time it was written and see if we can figure who it was written to and why and what they're going through.

It is generally believed by scholars that this was written just prior to Nero's persecution. Peter and Paul both traditionally are said to have died under Nero's reign. Nero committed suicide in 68 AD and therefore did not continue to reign or persecute after that point.

So the book would be written, as were all Paul's books, before the death of Nero. Therefore before 68 AD. Now, Nero's persecution of the Christians arose because there was a fire that burned down much of Rome.

And Nero was kind of a nut, as you may know, and he was suspected by the people of Rome of having started the fire himself. Because he was obsessed with building. And in order to make room to build more buildings, he wanted to burn down the ones that were there.

So it was thought. And therefore the burning of Rome, which of course cost many lives and cost Rome many of their cultural treasures and things like that, made the populace pretty angry at Nero. And in order to deflect their wrath against him, he accused the Christians, who were already unpopular among the pagans, of having burned Rome.

Now, I don't know if anyone ever really believed him. But in order to make his claim convincing, he launched an official persecution of Christians, in which he tortured Christians and burned them and fed them to lions and did things like that in a big way from about 64 AD on. And of course he died in 68 AD.

So there's a window of time there from 64 to 68 where persecution in Rome was very severe. And many people believe that this was written in connection with that time, but perhaps a little before. Because Peter seems to be describing a persecution that is coming upon them, not necessarily one that has hit them full force yet.

For example, in chapter 4, verse 12, he says, Beloved, do not think it strange, concerning the fiery trial, which is to try you, as though some strange thing happened to you. It sounds like there's something coming. At least some people think so.

However, some have argued, but this was not written to Christians in Rome. This was written to Christians in Galatia and Pontus and Cappadocia and Asia and Bithynia. And these were the provinces and Nero didn't persecute the Christians in the provinces as far as we know.

He was mainly just trying to take the heat off his own reputation by killing Christians in his own neighborhood, as it were, who might have burned down Rome. And therefore Christians in Rome were persecuted, but the rest of the Christian empire or the rest of Roman empire did not persecute the Christians. And so it would seem that Nero's persecutions would not necessarily have touched directly the people that Peter's writing to.

Now, people have sometimes made this same complaint about the book of Revelation, which also talks about persecution. And yet it was written to the provinces also. It was written to Christians in Asia, not in Rome.

And when you suggest that Nero was the emperor at the time that Revelation was written, one of the objections that's raised is that Nero's persecution wouldn't have reached Asia. It wouldn't have reached the Christians who are addressed in the book of Revelation. So why would Nero's persecution cause the writer John to write to those

churches in that way? Now, see, we have to argue that if Nero's persecution being locally confined to Rome, if that becomes an argument against the book of Revelation being written during his reign, it would also be an argument against 1 Peter being written against his reign.

Because these Christians weren't in Rome either, and yet they are said to be suffering. The thing to note, though, is that in neither Revelation nor 1 Peter, is it ever said that the persecution they were experiencing was imperial persecution? That is, we know that there were emperors who persecuted Christians over the years. And in the first century, it's just pretty much Nero and Domitian.

But no one believes that Peter was written during Domitian's reign, because Peter was dead in Nero's reign, and Domitian was 25 years later or so. So the point I'm making is, there's no reason to think that the Christians either in, who were written to in Revelation or in 1 Peter, were subject to whatever imperial persecutions were going on in Rome. But they could be persecuted by local antagonists.

In the book of Revelation, we know that a couple of the churches were persecuted by the local Jews in their town. The church in Pergamos appeared to be persecuted by the local state authorities in their town. Christianity has been persecuted by locals, by neighbors and things like that, and by the local synagogue in the early days, in times when the Romans couldn't have cared less about them.

In Paul's lifetime, for the most part, until his death, the Romans didn't persecute Paul. But the Jews did, and others did. The pagans did, but not the Roman Empire.

So just because Christians are being written to about suffering, and that certainly does become a major issue in the book of 1 Peter, suffering, there's no suggestion that it's imperial persecutions, either in 1 Peter or in Revelation. 1 Peter and Revelation could easily have both been written around the same time, and they both testify to sufferings that their readers were going through. And we know that Peter would have had to be written no later than Nero's time.

Revelation might not have been written any later either. The point is, though, that persecution can come from anywhere. It doesn't have to come from Nero or Domitian or from the emperor over in Rome.

The local non-Christians can persecute the Christians, and that is at least probably what was going on here. Now, if Nero was persecuting the Christians in Rome, that might encourage the Roman officials outside of Rome to say, well, we can persecute the Christians in our town too, because after all, Nero won't complain about that. We won't get into trouble if we persecute the Christian citizens here, because after all, the emperor's doing the same thing in his town.

It may be that the emperor's attitude toward Christians influenced the attitude toward Christians on the part of other government officials in other places. But Nero's persecution would not have reached these people directly. That is, Nero wasn't hunting these people down.

They were too far from Rome to be his concern. Now, where was the letter written from? It was written from Babylon, according to 1 Peter 5.13. Peter says, Now, she who is in Babylon, the she no doubt speaks of a church. Babylon is a location.

The church in that location, who is elect in Christ, as were the Christians in the other locations to which the letter was written, sends greetings. The fact that the church in Babylon would be sending greetings through this letter means that the writer is in that town. He is with those Christians who are sending greetings through his letter to them.

So, it's unmistakable that Peter was writing from Babylon. But where's Babylon? You see, Babylon might not be ancient Babylon. In fact, it doesn't seem very likely that it was.

The city of Babylon that Nebuchadnezzar had reigned in and built was pretty much not a major town, not a major city. It didn't have a major population in the days of the first century. It had been destroyed six centuries earlier.

And although there was population there in the region, it really was not a... We have no record that Peter ever went up there to Mesopotamia to minister. It was a long way from anywhere we know that he ministered. It was a long way from Jerusalem, a long way from Rome, a long way from even where these people were.

That Peter would have gone up to the ruins of ancient Babylon and ministered up there does not seem to me very likely, though there are a few scholars who would take it as if he is referring to literal Babylon, and I guess it can't be 100% ruled out. But it's not the majority view. Most scholars believe that he's writing from Rome.

And that Rome was codenamed Babylon. Why would they codename Rome Babylon? Well, there might be, if you're going to give it a nickname, Babylon would not be a bad one. Rome was a pagan, was the fountainhead of paganism in the world.

Babylon was that too at an earlier time. Babylon destroyed Jerusalem and carried the Jews into captivity. Rome didn't... Well, Rome later did the same thing.

Not at this time. Later, the Romans destroyed Jerusalem and carried the people back to... And it may well be that the early Christians knew that it was Rome that was going to fulfill those prophecies that Jesus made about the destruction of Jerusalem. It may be that because of that connection that they called Rome Babylon, the new Babylon.

There's some reason to believe that Babylon might have been a codename for Jerusalem. But the traditions are very strong in the early church that Peter died in Rome.

And that this was probably written late in Nero's reign rather than early.

The suggestion that Paul had died, for example. And that's why Peter's writing to those churches that Paul had once shepherded would mean that it would be in the late 60s that this would be happening. And Peter, if he did in fact die in Rome, would probably have been in Rome at this late time.

There's another suggestion that seems to support it. And that is in Colossians 4 and verse 10. Mark was with Paul when he wrote Colossians.

Now, most scholars think Colossians was written from Rome. I question that. I think Colossians might have been written from Ephesus.

But most scholars think Colossians was written from Rome. And that Mark was with Paul there in Rome. But Mark is also with Peter when he writes this letter.

So Mark may have resided in Rome in these times. These are not solid answers. We don't know for sure.

But the tradition is that Peter wrote it from Rome late in his life. And that he later died in Rome. So that probably is a default.

A traditional view that we could work with. We don't know otherwise. There are some who think Jerusalem was Babylon.

In the book of Revelation there's some identifiers of Babylon that seem to point toward Jerusalem. But that doesn't mean that the book of Revelation would use the word Babylon the same way that Peter would. Peter, who probably never read the book of Revelation.

So it's not clear where Babylon is. Is it literal Babylon? Is it Rome? Is it Jerusalem he's writing from? Hard to say. We don't have any real solid answers to that.

But his readers apparently knew. And if in fact Babylon had been used by the early Christians as a nickname for Rome, as some think, then his readers would know he's saying Rome when he says Babylon. Now, who were the readers? We know where the readers lived because he gives their geographical region in verse 1. But the real question is were they primarily Jewish Christians or Gentile Christians? The reason this becomes important is because there are some Christians who believe that the things that Peter said to the church here could really only apply to Jews.

For example, when he writes to his readers in 1 Peter 2, verses 9 and 10, he says, But you are a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, his own special people, that you may proclaim the praises of him who called you out of darkness into his marvelous light. These phrases are echoes of Old Testament passages that are

addressed to Israel. Likewise, in the first verse of chapter 1, they are referred to as the Diaspora.

Actually, in chapter 1, verse 1, it says, The word pilgrims is a word which means people who are far from their home. And the word dispersion is the Greek word diaspora, which was typically used of the Jews who lived outside of Israel. Now, James wrote his letter to the 12 tribes that were scattered abroad.

That would be the Diaspora also. And James is clearly writing to Jewish Christians. I mean, it comes out pretty clearly, it seems, in his letter.

But Peter, it's not so clear, but he calls his readers the strangers of the Diaspora. And since the Diaspora was a technical term for the Jews who lived outside of Israel, some feel like he's writing to Jewish Christians of the Diaspora, and he refers to them in those traditional terms in chapter 2, verses 9 and 10, that the Old Testament referred to them by. Also, he does seem, some feel, to contrast his readers from Gentiles.

In chapter 2, verse 12, he says, In chapter 4, verse 3, he says, Again, speaking of the Gentiles as someone other than his readers. These few things basically have convinced many people that he's writing to Jewish Christians. In fact, there are some scholars who would say all the epistles, what we call the general epistles, that are not Pauline epistles, are written to Jewish Christians.

Hebrews, James, 1 and 2 Peter, 1, 2 and 3 John, Jude, it is often said that they are the Jewish epistles. Some people call them that. I don't feel there's sufficient reason to.

Certainly Hebrews and James. I'd be surprised to find anyone denying that those are written to Jewish Christians. But Peter, John, Jude, we have to consider those as separate cases.

These letters were not all written at the same time to the same people. They were collected later. And I think the evidence within 1 Peter would suggest a Gentile audience, notwithstanding the points we just made.

If he is writing to Gentiles, it's not a strange thing to refer to them as the Diaspora, strangers of the Diaspora, and to give them Jewish-sounding labels like a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, when in fact the New Testament teaches in general, Jesus taught, Paul taught, and Peter would teach, that the Christians are now in possession of the promises of God because they are in Christ, and Christ is the one to whom all the promises were made. And in Christ we have all things that Israel had. Jesus said to the Jews, he said, The kingdom of God is taken from you and given to a nation that will bring forth the fruits of it.

In Matthew 21, I think around verse 44 or somewhere like that. The point is that Paul refers to the Gentile Christians in Galatia as the Israel of God, in Galatians 6.16. And so

to use Jewish-sounding terms for the church is not unheard of in the Scripture. In fact, the word church itself was used of the Jews in the Old Testament.

The word church in the Greek is ekklesia. Whenever you find the word church in the New Testament in the Greek, it's ekklesia. If you read the Greek Old Testament, Israel was called the ekklesia.

When you find the term congregation in the Old Testament, referring to the congregation of Israel, the Septuagint calls it the ekklesia. Even Stephen in his answer to the Sanhedrin in Acts chapter 7 says that Moses was with the ekklesia in the wilderness, meaning the Jews in the wilderness. The ekklesia was first a term that applied to Israel.

When the New Testament writers started calling their group the ekklesia, they were just taking on themselves, for their group, the name that belonged to Israel. And this is true throughout the New Testament. And Paul says he's not a Jew who's one outwardly, but he's a Jew who's one inwardly.

Circumcision isn't outward and of the flesh, but it's in the heart. Paul says we are the true circumcision, to the Philippians, who are Gentiles, by the way. Philippians 3.3 says we're the true circumcision who worship God in the spirit and who rejoice in Christ Jesus and put no confidence in the flesh.

He's not talking about Jewish people. He's talking about the church, Jew and Gentile. The church is not Gentile.

The church is multi-ethnic, including Jew and Gentile. Sometimes people want to make a distinction between Israel on the one hand and the Gentile church on the other. The church has never been Gentile.

The church started out with Jews. The apostles were Jews. On the day of Pentecost, all the original converts to the church were Jews.

And for many years after Pentecost, only Jews were evangelized. When Cornelius, a Gentile, was evangelized, it was kind of a breakthrough in the apostles' understanding. It was quite a few years after Pentecost.

And wherever Paul went and preached in Gentile lands, he preached in the synagogue first so that he'd gather the remnant of Israel into the church and then the Gentiles would be coming after them. The Bible indicates that the gospel came to the Jew first and also the Gentile. As a result, the first converts in almost every place were Jewish.

Gentiles were grafted in like branches on the tree later and eventually outnumbered the Jews in the churches. But the demographics being more Gentiles than Jews doesn't change the fact the church is the remnant of Israel. It's just that God has allowed Gentiles to be part of it.

The remnant came to Christ first in the evangelism of the early church. And the remnant of Israel is the church. In the New Testament, the church is Israel.

Now, the fact that Peter is writing to places like Pontus, Galatia, Cappadocia, Asia, and Bithynia and he's not specifying this is just to that part. Those few of you there who are Jewish would suggest that he's writing to churches that are predominantly Gentile. Certainly, Galatia, Asia, these are the churches Paul founded among the Gentiles.

Most of the converts there were Gentiles. But to dwell on their ethnicity is to be distracted into some area that's not important. He's not writing to Jews or Gentiles as Jews or as Gentiles.

He's writing to followers of Christ. Congregations that were multi-ethnic including Jews and Gentiles. But that means, of course, when he called them the diaspora or he called them a holy nation, he means the church as a whole is like a diaspora.

It's like we're away from our homeland. Our citizenship is elsewhere. We're in this world as strangers and pilgrims as he says later on in chapter 2. So, these Jewish sounding titles being applied to the church does not mean that the readers were all Jewish people or primarily Jewish.

These churches in the regions he's talking about were predominantly made up of Gentiles with, of course, a certain number of Jews among them also. But in chapter 2, verse 11, he says, Beloved, I beg you as sojourners and pilgrims, abstain from fleshly lust which war against the soul. Christians are sojourners in this world.

We're the diaspora in the planet Earth. Not so much Jews outside of Israel, but Christians outside of our homeland, heaven. Our citizenship is in heaven.

Our king is there. In this world, we're strangers and pilgrims just like the Jews were in the Gentile lands where they were dispersed. The Gentiles is a term that does not necessarily contrast simply with Jews.

But the word Gentiles is used in scripture to contrast with not only Jews, but with Christians too. So, in saying order your conduct well among the Gentiles, it doesn't mean you aren't ethnic Gentiles yourself. It means the Gentiles are a category that means heathen, the pagans.

You are Christians and there's no Jew or Gentile in Christ. So, you're not a Gentile anymore. I mean, if you want to talk technically about your ethnicity, you're a Gentile, but we don't talk that way in the church.

We don't talk about ethnicity. There's no Jew or Gentile, male or female, bond or free in the church. We're all just Christians.

And Gentiles and Jews are separate categories other than Christian. You know, in 1 Corinthians chapter 10, and we know that Paul was writing to Gentiles in Corinth. In chapter 10, verse 32, he says, Either to the Jews or to the Greeks.

These men were Greeks. Or to the church of God. Greeks is used essentially to mean Gentiles.

Corinth was a Greek Gentile town. You've got Jews, you've got Greeks. Well, everyone in the church was one or the other of those.

They were either a Jew or a Greek. But he says there's three categories. There's Jews, Greeks, and then the church.

The church is its own category. So, you can speak of the Greeks, even if you are a Greek. You can speak of the Greeks as someone different than yourself.

Even if you are a Gentile, you can speak of the Gentiles as the heathen out there. They're separate from what we are. In Ephesians 4, in verse 17, it says, This I say, therefore, and testify in the Lord that you should no longer walk as the rest of the Gentiles walk in the futility of their mind.

Now, it says as the rest of the Gentiles, but in the Alexandrian text, it just says it leaves out the rest of. And in the oldest manuscripts, it just says you should not walk as the Gentiles walk. Though the readers in Ephesus clearly were Gentiles.

Paul has made an issue of the fact, even in this same chapter. Later on, he says you were aliens from the commonwealth of Israel. You were Gentiles.

You were uncircumcised. He says don't walk like Gentiles walk. Gentiles are the category, a cultural category, as well as an ethnic.

So is Jew. A person could be an ethnic Jew, but be a Christian. Or he could be an ethnic Jew and atheist.

But a Jew could also be a religious designation. Jew is a religion and an ethnicity, both. Gentile was an ethnicity and also it could be considered a cultural, you know, religio-cultural label.

Pagan. Christians were not an ethnicity, but just a religio-cultural label. Separate from Jews and Gentiles.

And it seems very clear that these particular readers that Peter is writing to were, in fact, of the Gentile religio-cultural background. Not Jewish. And we see that, for example, in chapter 1 in verse 14.

Where it says, as obedient children, not conforming yourselves to the former lusts as in

your ignorance. That is when you didn't know about God. Now, he could mean ignorant of Christianity.

He goes on to say, though, in verse 18, knowing that you were not redeemed with corruptible things like silver and gold from your aimless conduct received by tradition from your fathers. Now, while there's a possibility he means Jewish traditions, because those would be considered aimless, too. You would not assume that every Jew had been neglecting the law and just living by traditions.

But all the Gentiles would have been. The traditions of the Gentiles' fathers were all aimless and human in origin. And it's more likely he'd say this to Gentiles, it would seem.

But more importantly, in chapter 2 in verse 10, he says of them that you once were not a people, but are now the people of God. Now, even if they were not Christians before, if they were Jewish, they were a people. They were the people of God.

Their ancestors were the people of God. The Gentiles, no, they were never a people of God. And he says, you were once not a people at all.

And that sounds like it's referring to them as non-Jews. And then, in chapter 4, when he's talking about them not living like the rest of the Gentiles, or like the Gentiles, he describes the sins that they had been committing in their Gentile lives, including what he calls abominable idolatries. Chapter 4, verse 3, For we have spent enough of our lifetime in doing the will of the Gentiles, when we walk in licentiousness, lusts, drunkenness, revelries, drinking parties, and abominable idolatries.

It seems unlikely that a Jewish congregation would have been characterized prior to their conversion by idolatry. Although in the Old Testament, there were plenty of times that Israel lapsed into idolatry, they had given that up. After the Babylonian exile, the Jews never embraced idolatry in their culture again.

And it was basically the claim to fame among the Jews, that they were better than the Gentiles, because the Gentiles worshipped these disgusting idols, and Jews didn't. And to say these people had come out of idolatrous backgrounds makes it seem like he's writing to Gentile people. Or at least people, many of whom were Gentiles.

He's not specifically, in other words, writing to Jewish Christians. If he was writing specifically to Jewish Christians, it seems like he would have left out some of these references to the idolatry and stuff in the background, because most of them would say, I never did that. It's not something my ancestors have done for the past 500 years since the Babylonian exile.

So my impression is he's got mixed ethnic, but predominantly Gentile people in these Gentile regions where these churches were. To put it briefly, he's just writing to the church, which is made up of Jews and Gentiles, but these particular churches probably

have a higher Gentile demographic than Jewish. Now, before we actually get into 1 Peter, verse by verse, there's a few things I want to compare it with.

I want to show you the comparisons between the content in 1 Peter and some of the things in Jesus' teaching. And I also want to show you the content of Peter in comparison with things Paul wrote. I mentioned there's some similarities between Peter and some of Paul's writings.

With reference to Jesus' teaching, we know that in Matthew 5, 16, Jesus said, Let your light shine before men, so that they may see your good works and glorify your Father, which is in heaven. If you look at 1 Peter 2, 12, Peter certainly has this verse in mind. When he says in 1 Peter 2, 12, Having your conduct honorable among the Gentiles, so that when they speak against you as evil doers, they may, by your good works which they observe, glorify God.

In the day of visitation, Jesus said, let them see your good works and glorify your Father. He says, well, we want them to see our good works and glorify our Father, which is in heaven. That's what Jesus said, and Peter practically is quoting him there.

In Matthew 5, 10, in the Beatitudes, Jesus said, Blessed are they who are persecuted for righteousness' sake. And Peter says something like that in 1 Peter 3, 14. Peter says, but even if you should suffer for righteousness' sake, you are blessed.

That's what Jesus said, blessed are you if you are persecuted for righteousness' sake. He said, well, if you suffer for righteousness' sake, you're blessed, like Jesus said you are. Jesus said in Luke 14 and verse 11, Luke 14, 11, Jesus said, those that humble themselves will be exalted, but those who exalt themselves will be humbled.

Peter says that also in 1 Peter 5, 6. He says, therefore humble yourselves under the mighty hand of God, that he may exalt you in due time. So we see echoes of Jesus in 1 Peter quite a bit. Also, in Matthew 6, 25, Matthew 6, at the end of Matthew 6, in the Sermon on the Mount, in that section, Jesus talks a great deal about worry and not worrying about things.

He says in verse 25, therefore I say to you, do not worry about your life, what you will eat or what you will drink, nor about your body, what you will put on. It's not life more than food and the body more than clothing. He goes on to talk about considering how God clothes the flowers and how he feeds the birds and things like that.

You're more valuable to God than they are, so you don't have to worry that he will fail to do that to you as well. But in 1 Peter 5, 7, 1 Peter 5, 7, Peter says, cast all your cares upon him, for he cares for you. The word cares here means anxieties or worries.

So don't worry, he's saying, which is of course what Jesus taught in the Sermon on the Mount. You don't worry about things, you cast those cares on God. Now how would you

do that? How do you cast cares on God? Well, as I understand it, it's very much like what Jesus said in Matthew 6, 33, seek first the kingdom of God and his righteousness and all these things, that is all the things you're worried about, will be added to you.

It's in the context of worry that he says, just seek the kingdom of God and his righteousness, then all these other things, instead of worrying about them, just seek what God wants and let him worry about the other things. This is casting your cares on him. It's like taking it off your shoulders and saying, I'm just going to do what God wants me to do, and I won't worry about the outcome.

That's my definition of living by faith, is just doing whatever God wants you to do, and not worry about how things will turn out. Let God worry about how things will turn out. You cast your cares on him by making yourself vulnerable through obedience to him.

If you're worried about finances, and you're fretting and running around, and you're ignoring what God wants you to do, sort of like Martha, when Mary was sitting at Jesus' feet, Martha's bustling around with a whole bunch of concerns, and Jesus said, you're concerned, Martha, about so many things. Martha, Martha, he said, you are worried and concerned about many things, but only one thing is needful. The one thing that's needful is to seek God's will, to seek the kingdom of God and his righteousness, and then he'll do the rest.

That's how you cast your cares or your worries on him. Of course, you pray, as it says in Philippians chapter 4. It says, in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving, let your requests be made known to God, but that's in the context of don't be anxious for anything. You pray, and you do the will of God, and let God worry about the rest.

It's his problem after that. Now, those are similarities between the contents of 1 Peter and some of the teachings of Jesus. There's also marked similarities between Paul's letters and Peter's, some of which I've observed already.

The first one I mentioned was the similarity between Romans 13, verses 1 through 7, where Paul talks about the authorities, the government authorities are ordained by God, and that Christians should essentially be subject to them. Peter makes the same point in 1 Peter 2, verses 13 and 14 especially. He continues something along that vein through verse 17, but mainly verses 13 and 14.

Those are really the two places that the New Testament talks to us about submitting to government authorities as ordained by God. There's some hints along these lines in a couple other places too. For example, Jesus said, Render to Caesar what is Caesar's, and to God what is God's.

One could argue that there's some hint there about submitting to authorities, if you were to render to Caesar what is his. Also, Titus 3, verse 1, Paul writes, Remind them to be

subject to rulers and authorities, to obey and to be ready for every good work. These are additional places where Jesus and Paul talks about submission to government authorities, but only in Romans 13 and in 1 Peter 2 does it bring out that those authorities are ordained by God to maintain justice and to punish criminals and things like that.

That's a thought that Paul brings out in Romans 13. Peter may well have been influenced by Romans 13 in writing 1 Peter 2, verses 13 and 14. Now, we will find, as we go through the opening verses of 1 Peter, a number of themes that Paul also emphasizes in the beginning of Ephesians.

I won't at this point bring them all out, because that's going to be left to our verse-by-verse study, but in particular, there's a block of material in 1 Peter 2.18 through 1 Peter 3.7, which very clearly follows what is sometimes called the household code that is found in Ephesians and Colossians. Commentators sometimes say that this household code might be a block of teaching that was given to all the Christians, and Paul quotes it to the Ephesians and Colossians, and Peter quotes it, that it was something independent of all these letters that they all included, which is about how husbands and wives should relate to each other, how children and parents should relate, how servants and masters of the household should relate. In 1 Peter 2.18, he begins addressing servants about their need to submit, even to masters that are abusive.

And then in chapter 3, verses 1 through 5, he talks to wives about their need to submit to their husbands, actually verse 1 through 6, but then he addresses the husbands about the need to dwell considerably with their wives. This instructions to servants and to wives and to husbands agrees with portions of both Ephesians and Colossians. In Ephesians 5.21, Paul begins to address wives, and then after that, husbands, and gives them instructions.

And then when you get to chapter 6 of Ephesians, the opening verses talk about children and their parents, and instructions to children about submission to their parents, and then to fathers about how to treat their children. And then in Ephesians 6.5 through 9, instructions to servants and to their masters. So although we don't have... Paul gives us like six portions, instruction to wives, instruction to husbands, instruction to children, instruction to parents, instruction to servants, instruction to masters.

Peter has three of those that he includes in 1 Peter, but seems to be very much on the same page, so to speak, with Paul in Ephesians. By the way, Colossians also has the household code there in Colossians 3.18 through Colossians 4.1. And so we see that Peter is, I think, almost certainly the author. I have no doubts about it myself.

His readers are just probably multi-ethnic church, though he speaks to them as if they're the new Israel. He may be writing from Rome. That's the strongest traditional view.

And in his letter, there are things that he says. Although it's a short letter, there are quite a few allusions to things Jesus taught in general, to things Paul taught, and specifically to things that Jesus said to Peter in his lifetime. And some vocabulary that overlaps special terms that Peter used in his sermons in the book of Acts.

Those are things to note by way of introduction. And now we'll look at chapter 1. Well, let me first give you kind of an outline of the book. There's kind of three essential sections of the book.

In chapter 1, beginning with verse 1 and going into chapter 2, up through about verse 10, we have what corresponds to the first parts of Paul's epistles as a theological section. The theology that informs the Christian life. Theological concepts.

Paul's letters usually begin with this too. Not all of them do, but many of them do. Colossians, Ephesians, Romans, Galatians, pretty much.

I mean, Galatians first has an autobiographical section. Then there's the theological section. But usually before Paul gets into his practical instructions in his letters, he will give a theological section.

Because our Christian behavior, which he gives practical advice about, is based on our Christian beliefs. Our theology. What we believe about God.

What we believe about Christ. What we believe about ourselves. These are theological issues, which are brought out by Paul.

Generally, he brings it out before he talks about practical things. So does Peter. Chapter 1, 1 through chapter 2, verse 10.

That'd be section 1 of the epistle. It's the doctrinal section of the letter. Then we've got the practical.

Comes up next. Chapter 2, verse 11, through chapter 4, verse 11. Essentially, the instructions that we've talked about, about how to behave as a Christian, including the household code given.

But also generic information about how to behave. All the way up to chapter 4, verse 11. Now, chapter 4, verse 11 ends with a doxology.

It says about Christ, to whom belong the glory and the dominion forever and ever. Amen. Many scholars feel like this sounds like the end of an epistle.

It's certainly the end of a section. Some have felt like it was actually the end of the epistle. Originally.

That Peter wrote a section on theology and a section on practical behavior. And he

closed his epistle, or intended to close his epistle with this statement. And in these earlier chapters, he seems to indicate that suffering may come upon them.

But at chapter 4, verse 12, he begins to talk as if the suffering is imminent, or maybe has already arrived. And he writes to them strictly about suffering. For the most part, the remainder of 1 Peter, from chapter 4, verse 12 to the end, is in the context of suffering.

How the church should behave during suffering. And it is mostly practical exhortation. There are, of course, some theological ideas woven in, as is inevitable in preaching and teaching.

But we could say the last section, the third section, is about conduct in suffering. And suffering actually comes up earlier in the epistle, even in chapter 1, but it becomes the focus, it becomes the milieu of the reader. In chapter 4, verse 12 to the end.

It seems like the suffering has come. Now, there's no reason to assume that Peter couldn't have written the whole thing at one time. He could have just organized it this way.

But because suffering is spoken of more or less as a slightly abstraction in the first part. But now it's upon them. Some feel that before Peter got around to sending the letter, which he intended to end at chapter 4, verse 12, he got news of greater developments of suffering.

And then he wrote this latter section with somewhat more of an urgency, somewhat more of a focus on the need of enduring suffering in a certain way as Christians. We can't know for sure. It's awfully hard.

Once you read a commentator or scholar who thinks something like this, it's hard to read it without that in your mind. And you say, well, yeah, it does kind of look that way. But it was just some commentator's idea, really.

There's no actual proof that this is behind the writing of this last section. But one thing can be said that the theme of Peter, of 1 Peter, is suffering. And it's especially so after chapter 4, verse 12.

But it's not absent from the earlier section either. And now let's look at the opening verses of 1 Peter. Peter, an apostle of Jesus Christ, to the pilgrims of the dispersion in Pontus, Galatia, Cappadocia, Asia, and Bithynia, elect according to the foreknowledge of God the Father, in sanctification of the Spirit, for obedience and sprinkling of the blood of Jesus Christ, grace to you and peace be multiplied.

Now this is, of course, in some respects, a very standard opening of a letter. Most of the letters open in general like this. The author gives his name.

He calls himself an apostle of Jesus Christ. And he addresses or identifies his audience, usually by geographical indicators. And then he says at the end of that, as he does in verse 2 at the end, grace to you and peace be multiplied.

Paul usually just said grace and peace be unto you and from Jesus Christ and so forth. Peter says be multiplied. Grace and peace are not just polite words being offered at the beginning of the letter, but there's something substantial that he wishes to see multiplied or increased in their lives.

So he says peace, you can always use more of that, especially if you're under persecution. And grace, you can always use more of that too, especially if you're under persecution. There are places in 1 Peter where he speaks about grace in terms of an enablement to endure.

This is certainly how Paul spoke of it in some places. That is when he talked about his thorn in the flesh in 2 Corinthians 12. He said it was such an annoyance to him that he prayed three times that God would take it away and Christ said my grace is sufficient for you.

My strength is made perfect in your weakness. So instead of removing trouble, Christ says I'll give you enough grace to endure it. And so in Peter, we're going to find grace a theme woven through the book often in a context that sounds like he's referring to it as an enablement to endure suffering in a certain gracious manner.

We'll worry about that later though as we come to some of the later instances of it. Now the main body of the section we just read is of course beginning at to the pilgrims of the dispersion and until you get to grace to you. That section in there is packed with stuff, theological stuff that can be unpacked.

And the stuff that's in there is stuff that Paul writes extensively about especially in Ephesians but also elsewhere. But initially as I said the term to the pilgrims of the dispersion. Dispersion means diaspora and the idea that Gentiles who are Christians might be regarded as a diaspora and not just seeing that term as a reference to the Jews who are dispersed may come from a statement of John.

In John 7.35 it says, Then the Jews said among themselves, Where does he intend to go that we might not find him? Does he intend to go to the diaspora among the Greeks and teach the Greeks? Now the diaspora probably in the mind of these Jews are the Jews who are scattered among the Greeks. But they say is he going to go among the diaspora and teach the Greeks? As if he's going to teach people who aren't even Jews. These people among the Greeks.

In chapter 11 John makes a comment that I think is very relevant to the use of the term diaspora for Christians who are not Jews necessarily. In chapter 11 of John the high priest

Caiaphas is speaking. In verse 49 one of them Caiaphas being the high priest that year said to them, You know nothing at all nor do you consider that it is expedient for us that one man should die for the people and not that the whole nation should perish.

And then John comments in verse 51 and 52, Now this he did not say in his own authority, but being high priest that year he prophesied that Jesus would die for that nation, that's Israel, and not for that nation only, but also that he would gather together in one the children of God who were scattered abroad. Now that nation was Israel. The children of God who are scattered abroad would be not that nation only, but them too, meaning the Gentiles.

Remember Jesus said I have sheep that you don't know about and I must go and gather them too, he said in chapter 10. But here John is seeing the children of God scattered abroad, which to the Jewish mind would be the Jews of the diaspora. John is using it in contrast with the Jews, in contrast with that nation, not that nation only but also the, by implication, Gentile children of God who are scattered out there to be gathered in.

The Jews expected the Messiah to come and regather Israel from the diaspora. The Jews of Jesus' day, and for that matter many Jews of our own day, do not believe that the Babylonian exile has ever ended. It seems strange to us because it lasted for about 70 years and then Cyrus rose up, as Isaiah said he would, the Persian, he conquered Babylon, he released the Jews to go back home.

But only about 50,000 went originally back and later a trickle more, but most of the Jews remained in the diaspora. Most of them never went back to Israel. And the rabbis of Jesus' day taught that when the Messiah comes he's going to bring back the diaspora.

In fact, modern rabbis sometimes say this. They say, why don't you believe that Jesus is the Messiah? They say, well, he didn't bring back the diaspora. He didn't bring the Jews back to Israel.

That is to say, to the Jewish mind, the diaspora, which occurred with the Jews going into Babylon, has only in a very small way ever been reversed. Sure, Zerubbabel built a temple. Sure, a few thousand people went back.

But most Jews are still outside Israel. There's more Jews outside Israel than there are inside Israel. And that's been the case ever since the Babylonian exile began.

So to the Jewish mind, in many cases, the diaspora is something the Messiah will bring back. He'll gather together the children of God who are scattered throughout the world, the Jews, back to Israel. And when John said that Jesus was going to gather together the children of God, he actually made it clear he's not just talking about Israel, not that nation only, but also for all the children gathered together.

So John seems to be referring to the church as the diaspora that the Messiah will gather

to himself. And the Jews don't understand it that way because they understand Israel to be strictly Jewish. The Christians, the apostles, came to understand, Peter especially, that God is not a respecter of persons.

Peter, with that sheep, with the animals and so forth, and Jesus saying, kill and eat these unclean animals, Peter received the revelation that God isn't calling the Gentiles unclean anymore. He's not excluding them. When Peter said, I haven't eaten unclean things, Jesus said, what I have cleansed, you don't call unclean.

And when Peter went to the house of Cornelius right after, he said, oh, God has shown me not to call anyone unclean. You Gentiles, I thought of you as something different than Israel, but God's not a respecter of persons. But in every nation, those who fear God and do what is right are accepted by him, Peter said.

So the Jewish mentality that the diaspora is the Jews outside Israel is replaced, I think, in the New Testament by the Christians are the diaspora in the world that need to be gathered to Christ. Not geographically gathered, but gathered to the Messiah as worshipers of his. Now he says in verse 2 that we are elect according to the foreknowledge of God the Father.

Paul said in Romans 8, 29 that whom he foreknew, he also predestinated to be conformed to the image of his son, that he might be the firstborn of many brethren. So this foreknowledge related to God's choice is confirmed by Peter. Now he doesn't say exactly in what way God's foreknowledge has an impact on election.

He just said we're elect according to the foreknowledge of God. What's that mean? Calvinists would say, well, it just means that God foreknew and foreordained that some would be elect, and we are them. We're the elect according to God's prior plan.

Arminians often will say, well, foreknowledge doesn't mean God's ordination. It just means God knowing something in advance. And that being so, he's just saying that God knew who would receive Christ, and therefore he chose them or elected them on the basis of what he foreknew.

This verse actually is a very important verse for Arminians in that respect. So is, frankly, Romans 8, 29, whom he foreknew, he also predestinated to be conformed to the image of his son. So the foreknowledge of God, the Arminian says, God just knew who would become a Christian.

God knew who would be saved, who would believe, and who would persevere. And based on his knowing who would do that, he chose them to be saved before they were even born, just knowing in advance about them. The Calvinists would say, no, foreknowledge actually means something more like God not only just knowing, but loving, loving them beforehand, choosing them in the unilateral sense of unconditional election.

Now, of course, the third view, and one that I incline toward myself, is that election is always a reference to the corporate election of the body of Christ. And God foreknew before the world began that there was going to be a body of Christ. We are those people.

We are the body of Christ. We are the elect ones, collectively. And God foreknew about this before Jesus even came to earth.

He knew he was going to have a body of Christ. He knew there would be us. It doesn't mean he knew who would be the composition of it, though he might have.

I'm not saying he didn't, but that's not necessarily what is being affirmed. At least we don't have to assume that's what's being affirmed. Not so much that God knew you and me and each individual before we were born would be in it.

Even if that's true, that's not necessarily what Peter is suggesting, necessarily. But that God knew there'd be a church. God knew there'd be people who'd follow Christ.

Whether he knew who they would be or not is a separate question. But that he foreknew there'd be an elect group. And we are in that group.

We are Christians. We are elect. In Christ, according to God's foreknowledge.

He knew that would be the case. But he says, the foreknowledge of God the Father. And the reason he singles out the Father here, I think, is because he makes a contrast between the Father, the Spirit, and the Son.

Here we have the whole Trinity named in this verse. We're elect according to the foreknowledge of God the Father. In sanctification of the Spirit.

For obedience and sprinkling of the blood of Jesus Christ. So we've got all three persons there. Sanctification of the Spirit means set apart by the Spirit.

In exactly what sense this is intended. Of course, we may not be 100% sure. We are made holy.

Sanctification means made holy. By the work of the Holy Spirit in our lives. So the Holy Spirit sanctifies us.

And makes us holy people. But also it's the very possession of the Spirit that sets us apart from others who don't have the Spirit. And sanctification can simply refer to the positional fact that God has set us apart as a special group to belong to him.

And giving us the Spirit is that which sets us apart from those that he hasn't chosen. Because he hasn't given his Spirit to others. The church, the elect body of Christ, possesses the Spirit.

And that sets the church apart from everyone else in the world who does not possess the Spirit. And therefore, we have been chosen according to the foreknowledge of God. In that setting apart of the Spirit for two things related to Jesus.

One of them is obedience. The other is the sprinkling of blood. Now the sprinkling of blood of the blood of Jesus is something that comes up again in this chapter later on.

In verse 19 it says, we've been redeemed with the precious blood of Christ as of a lamb without blemish and without spot. And the sprinkling of blood is something that we find referred to in Hebrews chapter 9. That we have our conscience sprinkled. The blood of Christ sprinkles us from an evil conscience it says.

And sprinkling goes back to the time when Moses instituted the old covenant and sprinkled the blood of animals on the congregation. Setting them aside and establishing the old covenant. And so this reference to us being sprinkled by the blood of the new covenant, the blood of Christ, may very well simply be emphasizing that there's a new covenant that's replaced the old covenant.

Israel was sprinkled by the blood of bulls and goats in that ceremony with Moses. We have been sprinkled in the inauguration of a new covenant. A new people have got a new Israel.

And we've had blood sprinkled on us too, but it's the blood of Christ. Which cleanses us, purifies us, but also identifies us as the covenant people. Because we have had that blood sprinkled upon us so to speak.

But also there's the obedience issue here. God has chosen us to go to heaven. Well maybe, but it doesn't say so.

He's chosen us to obey. Israel was chosen not to be saved specifically, but to obey. God chose Israel to do something.

Of course if they did it obediently to God, he would bless them and they would experience his deliverance and salvation from their enemies and so forth. But that was corollary to their choosing. They weren't chosen just to receive privileges, they were chosen for a task.

To which privileges would be attached. Likewise when we are chosen, people say I'm one of the chosen ones, I'm going to heaven. Well maybe you are, maybe you're not, but the point is that's not what chosen refers to.

Being chosen doesn't mean God chose some people to go to heaven and others not. It's that he chose some people to be his functionaries, to be his servants. Doing his will on earth, obeying his commands.

Yeah, his servants will be rewarded. In this life and in the next. That's a separate issue.

God chose us for obedience to Jesus. That's something that's a responsibility. And Peter's very much into the need for obedience.

In verse 14 of this chapter he says, as obedient children. We need to be like obedient children. In verse 22 he says, since you have purified your souls in obeying the truth.

Obedience is simply the description of what a Christian is. And Peter who wrote this, also is speaking in Acts chapter 5 to the Sanhedrin. Acts 5, 32, Peter was speaking and he says, and we are his witnesses to these things.

And so also is the Holy Spirit whom God has given to those who obey him. So Peter in describing Christians, it was natural for him to describe the Christians as the ones who obey Christ. There's people in town who do obey Christ.

They're the Christians. There's people who don't obey Christ. Obviously they're not the Christians.

The Christians are the ones who obey him, said Peter in Acts 5, 32. And said Peter, here, God has chosen us for obedience. And to be obedient children.

So here in the opening of the letter, before he actually gets into his subject matter, he's introduced quite a few theological points. He's introduced the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit as having separate roles in the life of the believer. The Father in choosing us, the Holy Spirit in sanctifying us, and Christ in commanding us.

And strengthening us with his blood. The idea being, of course, that we are apparently the new Israel, the new diaspora, chosen as Israel was chosen. Sanctified as Israel was once sanctified, and sprinkled with blood as Israel was once sprinkled with blood.

And obedient as Israel was supposed to be, but unfortunately in the Old Testament failed to be. So God has called us to step in where there was a failure before on Israel's part. And that's how he introduces his listeners to themselves.

This is what you are. All these things. God has had this involvement in all these ways in your life.

Then of course he begins his subject matter after his grace and peace be multiplied. We're not going to speak about that yet until we talk about grace later on in the epistle. But we'll stop there because this is the end of an introduction.

And not only our introduction to 1 Peter, but his introduction to 1 Peter in those first two verses. We'll take the rest of the letter in subsequent sessions.