

# 1 Peter – Lesson 1

Read: 1 Peter 1:3-12

## 1 Peter Bible Study – Orientation Historical and Cultural Background for 1 Peter

### Introduction

Welcome to your 1 Peter Bible Study Orientation. In order to truly understand 1 Peter, we must do a little study of its historical and cultural background.

### 1 Peter's Audience

1 Peter is addressed to Christians living in Asia minor which forms part of modern-day Turkey.

Peter calls his readers:

- Elect – They are God's chosen people
- Resident aliens – Signals a particular social status (see explanations below)
- Of the "diaspora" – Describes Jews who were living outside of their homeland (Palestine). Peter now applies this Jewish term to Christians to describe their social and religious displacement within the Roman Empire.

### The Context of Suffering

The traditional view depicted the suffering in 1 Peter as state-wide or empire sanctioned persecution.

However, many scholars now believe that the suffering in 1 Peter represents social oppression, marginalization and abuse. Christianity was a peculiar religion that stood out within a pluralistic, decadent and hostile society.

### This is important to keep in mind.

It would be difficult to connect to an ancient audience whose primary concern was being fed to the lions. This is not the case with believers who suffered mockery, marginalization and verbal abuse for wearing the Christian name.

1 Peter's context looks very similar to our own.

### The Pilgrim Language

1 Peter also utilizes a term that is usually translated as "pilgrim" or "sojourner" (1 Peter 1:1, 2:11).

These translations give the impression that Christians are just passing through this earth. This provides believers with a ready made excuse to disengage from this world.

But the term in question is better translated as "resident alien." Many in 1 Peter's audience were literally foreigners and were experiencing the displacement, disorientation, and marginalization common to any person living a foreign land.

Even in this difficult situation, Peter did not counsel his audience to disconnect from society. Rather he called for a radical engagement. In so doing, Peter was hopeful that many Gentiles would come to Christ and "glorify God in the day of visitation" (1 Peter 2:12).

## Occasion for The Letter & Main Themes

The occasion for the letter is to provide encouragement, advice and a divine perspective for the societal persecution that the readers are experiencing.

Peter makes several bold claims:

Christians are God's holy and chosen people in direct continuity with these Old Testament concepts

Christians are to live as a holy people within a hostile society. This provides a witness to the gospel and a contrast to society's norms.

When Christians are persecuted, they identify with Christ who also suffered. These themes are relevant for Christians living in a post-modern culture. We will explore them in greater detail in this 1 Peter Bible study.

## Lesson 1 Read 1 Peter 1:3-12

### A Heavenly Inheritance (1:3-12)

---

#### Introduction

Welcome to your 1 Peter Bible study Week 1.

In this lesson, we want to look more closely at 1 Peter 1:3-12 and the heavenly inheritance that God has prepared for his people.

As Christians, we often forget (or maybe take for granted) exactly what Jesus accomplished on our behalf through his death and resurrection.

These initial verses serve as glorious reminders of just how precious that salvation was (and continues to be).

*As you read, try to keep the state of 1 Peter's audience in mind.*

It is likely that their initial burst of joy at conversion has now given way to shock, frustration, confusion and even a lack of faith, given that things are probably worse for them since coming to Christ.

Thus, Peter's first task is to remind his readers about their special status in God, a status which not even the prophets of old understood but which is now applied to all believers.

#### Read 1 Peter 1:3-12

---

## Questions to reflect on the passage

---

1. Verse 1:3 starts out by saying that Christians have been born again. How does that occur according to this verse and what does it mean to be “born again?”
2. Verses 3 and 4 suggest we have been born into a “living hope” and “an inheritance.” What is the meaning of these elements? What words are used to describe the inheritance?
3. Verse 5-6 speak of trials. What is the purpose of trials in these verses?
4. Verses 10-12 speak of the prophets inquiring and diligently seeking to know something. What did they inquire about? What did God reveal to them in their searchings (v. 12)?

---

## Questions to reflect on your life

---

1. Do you see your salvation in terms of being “born again?” What does that phrase imply in terms of how we are to interact with the world?
2. Why do you suppose Peter describes our inheritance as “incorruptible”, “undefiled”, “reserved in heaven?” What do those words communicate to you about your salvation and how should that impact your faith and trust in God?
3. Do you perceive your sufferings as “trials through fire”? Why or why not? Are you undergoing difficulties at the moment? Explain. How can Peter’s advice to his readers help you in your difficult circumstances?
4. What do you make of the prophets of the Old Testament inquiring about the mysterious salvation that you now possess? (Note also how angels were curious too (v. 12). How should the fact that you have much more knowledge than the prophets regarding Christ and his mission change your approach to faith and living in that faith?