

I Peter (Introduction)

Peter is known by a few names: Peter, Simon Barjonah, & Cephas

John 1:42 “And he brought him to Jesus. And when Jesus beheld him, he said, *Thou art Simon the son of Jona: thou shalt be called Cephas, which is by interpretation, A stone.*”

Matthew 16:15-18 “He saith unto them, *But whom say ye that I am? And Simon Peter answered and said, Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God. And Jesus answered and said unto him, Blessed art thou, Simon Barjona: for flesh and blood hath not revealed it unto thee, but my Father which is in heaven. And I say also unto thee, That thou art Peter (Petros), and upon this rock (Petra) I will build my church; and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it.*”

Petros: “small pebble or rolling stone” ; Petra: “large boulder or ledge”

Peter often spoke before he considered the depth of the situation. Consider these:

- a. Mount of Transfiguration when he asked to build three tabernacles (Matt. 17:4)
- b. When he asked to walk on water (Matt. 14:28)
- c. When he insisted he would die for him before he denied him (Matt. 26:35)

Peter was teachable and penitent. Consider these:

- a. When Jesus filled net with fish, Peter said “*Depart from me; for I am a sinful man, O Lord*” (Luke 5:8)
- b. When he began to sink he asked Jesus to save him (Matt. 14:30)
- c. When he denied Jesus he went and wept bitterly (Matt. 26:75)

Peter’s whole perspective changed after he saw Jesus resurrected from the dead and the Holy Ghost came upon him. Just 50 days after denying he even knew Jesus, he boldly preached the first Gospel Sermon (A.D. 33).

Even then, however, Peter struggled with long held traditions. Paul had to “*withstand him to his face*” when he separated from the Gentiles in Antioch when some Jews arrived (**Galatians 2:11**).

Later Peter called Paul, “*beloved brother*”! **II Peter 3:15-16** “*And account that the longsuffering of our Lord is salvation; even as our beloved brother Paul also according to the wisdom given unto him hath written unto you; As also in all his epistles, speaking in them of these things; in which are some things hard to be understood, which they that are unlearned and unstable wrest, as they do also the other scriptures, unto their own destruction.*”

Luke wrote Acts. He covered the work of Peter until chapter 12. From chapter 13 through the remainder of the book, Luke followed Paul's work. We know that Peter worked in and around Jerusalem in the early days of the church. Some think that he made his way west toward Rome visiting cities like Corinth. This could be the reason some of the Corinthians claimed to be his "*followers*" (**I Corinthians 1:12**). Many believe that Peter moved to Rome and worked closely with the church there. His mention of "*Babylon*" in **I Peter 5:13** could be a reference to Rome. The "*Babylon*" mentioned could be the actual Chaldean Babylon located in present day Iraq. Peter may have taken the Gospel to that part of the world. If he did, this is the only reference in scripture that indicates that Peter's work carried him in that direction.

Nero became the Emperor of the Roman Empire in A.D. 54. In A.D. 64 most of Rome was destroyed in the "*Great Fire of Rome*". Some believed that Nero set the fire himself to clear property that we wanted to claim. He diverted attention away from himself by blaming the Christians. This began a horrible persecution against Christians throughout the Empire. Massive population movements occurred as Christians left their homes and migrated to other areas trying to escape persecution. Unfortunately, there was no escape. The only perceived escape was to denounce their faith in Jesus, but to do so would lead to eternal destruction!

It's believed that Peter was arrested during this time of Nero's persecution. Tradition says that in A.D. 64 Nero had him crucified. Upon Peter's own request, he was crucified upside down. Paul was also arrested. We believe it was around A.D. 68 that Paul was decapitated. His Roman citizenship prohibited crucifixion.

Nero was eventually accused of crimes against Rome. He was scheduled to be executed. On June 9th, A.D. 68 he committed suicide.

Before Peter's death in A.D. 64, during the height of Nero's intense persecution of Christians, Peter wrote this first letter. It was written to Christians who have migrated to Asia Minor (*known as Turkey today*). Peter's central theme in this letter is to encourage Christians to be faithful during this difficult time. He reminds them to maintain the Christian lifestyle even in the face of suffering.