

“REMINDERS OF Truth”^{©2009}

The Epistles of 1 & 2 Peter

BY DR. EDGAR PIERCE



I- Reminders of Truth: 1Pe 1:1; 2 Pet 1:1-2; 2Pe 3:1-2

The writings of Peter, I must confess, have been sorely neglected during my teachings. It seems I have focused on the writings of Paul and John almost to the point of making Peter's epistles the forgotten epistles. In one sense in my mind this is due to the book of Acts and it's focus on the Apostle Paul for the most part in the last part of the book after following Peter until then.

The Apostle Peter writes his epistles about 30 years after the crucifixion. He is by this time an old man in the faith. *The Layman's Bible Book Commentary* says concerning **1 Peter**, "This letter was written straight from the heart of the apostle Peter, a great heart by then finely mature in Christian faith and fully seasoned in Christian service." (p 94)

The time of the writing of both the first and second epistle were in all probability between 60-70 AD. Many debate from where or when the writings took place but most place it within these dates. While the epistles were written maybe as many as five years apart we are going to look at them as one unit of study. We will discuss my reasoning for this later. There are only 156 verses in both epistles combined. Let us first begin with an understanding of who is writing the letters.

I- Peter the Writer:

Notice how Peter identifies himself in the two epistles. **1Pe 1:1 Peter, an apostle of Jesus Christ...**

2Pe 1:1-2 Simon Peter, a servant and an apostle of Jesus Christ...

He identifies himself as an apostle and then also as a servant. A bond slave and just one of the twelve apostles. He does not set himself up above the others.

"It was the Peter Christ prophesied should become a rock (Jn 1:42), the same man, chastened by years of suffering and trial and strengthened by the baptism of the Holy Spirit." (Thompson Chain Study Bible, Analyses of Books, p 227, #4282)

Peter's younger brother Andrew brought Peter to Jesus. Jesus prophetic words about Peter are found in **Joh 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.

This is the same man who had seen Christ heal his mother in law (**Matt 8**) and had obeyed and set aside his ego and pride and cast the net into the sea after fishing all night and caught a great catch of fish (**Luke 5**). He also had walked on the water (**Matt 14**) and then made the great confession at Cesarea Philippi (**Matt 16**). He also was on the Mount of Transfiguration with the Lord Jesus (**Matt 17**) along with many other events. So this man Peter was certainly one that had lived a life that had been close to the Christ.

Peter coming now to an old age probably did not surprise Peter. He gives indication in the second letter that he knew his time was close to being over. **2Pe 1:14 Knowing that shortly I must put off this my tabernacle, even as our Lord Jesus Christ hath shewed me.** The reason I think that living to be old did not surprise Peter is that the Lord had told him this would be so. **Joh 21:18-19 Verily, verily, I say unto thee, When thou wast young, thou girdedst thyself, and walkedst whither thou wouldst: but when thou shalt be old, thou shalt stretch forth thy hands, and another shall gird thee, and carry thee whither thou wouldst not. 19 This spake he, signifying by what death he should glorify God. And when he had spoken this, he saith unto him, Follow me.**

Peter, I think, realized that this time had come. *Barnes Notes* says, "Ancient writers say that Peter was put to death about thirty-four years after this. His precise age at that time is not known." The stretching forth of Peter's hands some see as the crucifixion that he is said to have suffered upside down.

II- The Recipients:

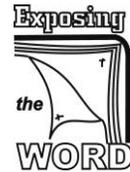
The timeframe of the writing of Peter is debated about was it before or after the persecution that Nero perpetrated upon the church.

1Pe 1:1 Peter, an apostle of Jesus Christ, to the strangers scattered throughout Pontus, Galatia, Cappadocia, Asia, and Bithynia.

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2Pe 1:1-2 *Simon Peter, a servant and an apostle of Jesus Christ, to them that have obtained like precious faith with us through the righteousness of God and our Saviour Jesus Christ: 2 Grace and peace be multiplied unto you through the knowledge of God, and of Jesus our Lord,*

The *International Standard Bible Encyclopedia* speaking of both epistles says, “Both were addressed to the same class of persons, chiefly Jewish Christians scattered abroad in the different provinces of Asia Minor, among whom Paul and his associates had planted the gospel...”

Regardless of if it was before or after the persecution had intensified Peter wanted to give encouragement to the believers scattered throughout the Jewish world.

JV McGee says, “The great theme of this epistle of Peter is Christian hope in the time of trial....Peter has been called the apostle of hope...” (*Thru the Bible*, vol. V, p 673) He points out that in 1 Peter the word suffering or some equivalent words are found 16 times. He then states, “Hope is always with suffering. Therefore, I think it is fair to say that the theme is the Christian hope in time of trial.” (ibid)

The place that Peter was living and wrote the first letter from is one of major contention. Some say he never went to Rome and that **1Pe 5:13** *The church that is at Babylon, elected together with you, saluteth you...* shows that he went west while Paul went east with the Gospel. If this be true then there was certainly a large population of Jews that did not return to the Promised Land during the return of Ezra and Nehemiah’s day that were in Babylon. Some see that he is calling the city of Rome, Babylon (see **Rev 14:8**), to protect those who were already under the heavy hand of Nero’s persecution.

III- Reminders of Truth- The Purpose:

I have entitled this entire series “Reminders of Truth.” I based this title on the purpose Peter plainly states in **2Pe 3:1-2** *This second epistle, beloved, I now write unto you; in both which I stir up your pure minds by way of remembrance: 2 That ye may be mindful of the words which were spoken before by the holy prophets, and of the commandment of us the apostles of the Lord and Saviour.*

Let me give us a few more translations of these verse that will help us flesh out Peter’s self stated purpose in writing these letters.

God’s Word 2Pe 3:1-2 *Dear friends, this is the second letter I’m writing to you. In both letters I’m trying to refresh your memory. 2 I want you to remember the words spoken in the past by the holy prophets and what the Lord and Savior commanded you through your apostles.*

The *Message 2Pe 3:1* *My dear friends, this is now the second time I’ve written to you, both letters reminders to hold your minds in a state of undistracted attention.* (I almost named the series undistracted attention.)

Holman Christian Standard Bible 2Pe 3:1 *Dear friends, this is now the second letter I’ve written you; in both, I awaken your pure understanding with a reminder,*

So we can plainly see that Peter intended to remind us of truths. This is the reason that I chose to do these letters together because that Peter obviously ties them with this purpose of reminding them and us of truth.

During our journey through these epistles we will be reminded that we have a living hope, that we are living stones and to be ready to give an answer to anyone who asks why we believe. We will see that we need to make sure of our salvation and that we need to be alert because of the enemies and false prophets. We will be reminded of the suffering of Christ and to feed the flock and to be diligent. Peter also gives us information about the consummation of the church age and the earth.

Warren Wiersbe gives us another purpose that Peter wrote these letters in his comments on 1 Peter. “Paul was assigned especially to minister to the Gentiles and Peter to the Jews (**Gal 2:1-10**) The lord had commanded Peter to strengthen his brethren (**Luke 22:32**) and to tend the flock (**John 21:15-17; also 1 Peter 5:1-4**), and the writing of this letter was a part of that ministry.” (p 388)

So the journey is before us, a journey into the truths that the one who walked, talked and was taught by the Master reminds us of...