



Coptic Orthodox Diocese of the Southern United States



# The First Catholic Epistle of St. Peter

## Chapter 1

Bishop Youssef



# Introduction

## AUTHOR

- St. Peter, as stated in the salutation (1:1)
- It was written by one who was "a witness of the sufferings of Christ" (5:1)
- Early fathers attribute this letter to St. Peter include Irenaeus (185 A.D.), Clement of Alexandria (200 A.D.), Tertullian (200 A.D.), and Eusebius (300 A.D.)
- Peter was assisted by Silvanus, or Silas (5:12)



# Introduction

- Silas is a well-known prophet and missionary in the early church (Ac 15: 32-34,40; 16:19-25; 17:14) who also joined with St. Paul in writing some of his epistles (cf. 1Th 1:1; 2Th 1:1)

## RECIPIENTS

- "Pilgrims of the Dispersion" (1:1)
- "Dispersion" is found in Jn 7:35, it describes the Israelites "scattered" following the Assyrian and Babylonian captivities (ca. 700-500 B.C.)



# Introduction

- This leads many to suppose that the epistle was written to Jewish Christians, as was the case of James' epistle (Jas 1:1)
- However, there is indication some of his readers were Gentile converts who had come to believe in God through Jesus (1:21)
- So St. Peter applied "dispersion" to Christians, as he applied to the church, other designations that were formerly applied to Israel (2:9-10)



# Introduction

- St. Peter's initial audience were Christian "pilgrims" (2:11) who were living in Pontus, Galatia, Cappadocia, Asia, and Bithynia, provinces in what is now Turkey
- St. Paul had traveled extensively in some of these areas (Bithynia a notable exception, Ac 16:7)
- So the gospel had been given much opportunity to spread throughout the region



# Introduction

## TIME AND PLACE OF WRITING

- St. Peter died during the reign of Nero
- Since Nero committed suicide in 68 A.D., the epistle must be dated before then
- The epistle was written on the eve of the Neronian persecution (perhaps alluded to in 4:12-19), placing its composition around 63-64 A.D
- St. Peter indicates he wrote from "Babylon" (5:13)





# Introduction

- It is questionable whether he refers to literal Babylon, or is using the name as a code word for Rome or perhaps even Jerusalem
- Papias (125 A.D.) and Irenaeus (185 A.D.) said that St. Peter wrote it from Rome

## PURPOSE OF THE EPISTLE

- The Christians in Asia Minor had experienced persecution (1:6), (4:12-19). St. Peter encourages them to remain steadfast (1:13; 4:16; 5:8,9)



# Introduction

- He reminds them of their blessings and duties as God's "elect" (1:2), "His special people" (2:9)
- Also he wrote to instruct them as to their proper conduct (2:11-12)

## THEME OF THE EPISTLE

- Conduct becoming the people of God

## KEY VERSES

- 1 Peter 2:11-12





# Introduction

## OUTLINE

- Introduction (1:1-2)
- I. Our salvation in Christ (1:3-12)
- II Our duties in Christ (1:13-5:11)
  - ❖ A. In view of our privileges (1:13-2:10)
  - ❖ B. In view of our position (2:11-4:11)
  - ❖ C. In view of our persecution (4:12-5:9)
- Conclusion (5:10-14)



# Introduction

- St. Peter begins his first epistle to Christians in Asia Minor by acknowledging their election:
  - ❖ according to God's foreknowledge,
  - ❖ made possible by the sanctifying work of the Spirit for obedience
  - ❖ and sprinkling by the blood of Jesus (1-2)
- He then praises God for their living hope, incorruptible inheritance, and glorious salvation to be revealed at the coming of Christ



# Introduction

- Despite grievous trials, the power of God and their genuine faith protects them and gives them inexpressible joy
- Their salvation to come was foretold by the prophets, and preached in the gospel by those inspired by the Holy Spirit (3-12)
- In view of this salvation, St. Peter prescribes conduct becoming the people of God



# Introduction

- They are to focus their mind and hope on the grace that will brought to them at the coming of Christ
- As obedient children, they should conduct themselves in holiness and fear, imitating their holy Father who judges without partiality
- They are to love one another fervently with pure hearts, since they have purified their souls through their obedience to the truth, and have been born by the incorruptible Word of God (13-25)



# Greeting to the Elect Pilgrims (1:1-2)

- This letter opens as do the other apostolic letters
- St. Peter claims no superiority
- He addresses Jewish and Gentile Christians
- Dispersion: The Jewish race outside of Judea
- The letter is directed to the churches in five provinces of the Roman empire
- Their election and salvation was in accordance with God's predetermined purpose to save men



# Greeting to the Elect Pilgrims (1:1-2)

- We as individuals received the Holy Spirit in the sacrament of confirmation which sanctifies us
- Also as a church we have the Holy Spirit who sanctifies us through the sacraments and the Bible
- The purpose of this sanctification to be able to obey the commandment of God
- This was made possible through the sprinkling of the blood of Jesus (the work of the Holy Trinity)
- Grace is the source of peace





# A Heavenly Inheritance (1:3-12)

- The ground of thanksgiving is that the Father, out of his overflowing mercy, not our worthiness, has caused us to be born again as His children
- As children we have hope of the inheritance of the eternal life through the resurrection of Jesus
- The hope is not merely of eternal existence, but we become heirs of God, joint heirs with Christ
- Incorruptible. It can never decay
- Undefined. It is sinless and eternal



# A Heavenly Inheritance (1:3-12)

- The inheritance is reserved for those who are kept safe by God's power, through faith, so that they endure to the end
- The full salvation is ready to be revealed in the second coming of Christ
- In this glorious hope you rejoice
- This implies that a persecution was in progress
- Trials: which put faith and patience to the test

# A Heavenly Inheritance (1:3-12)



- These persecutions try their faith as gold is tried by the fire
- The faith that stands the test, being more precious than gold, will bear fruit to praise, honor, and glory at the appearing of the Lord (2 Cor 4:17)
- Though not having seen Christ, they knew Him by faith and love Him
- Because they believe upon Him, they are filled with the unspeakable joy of a glorious hope

# A Heavenly Inheritance (1:3-12)



- The object of the gospel, the faith, and of their faith was salvation
- This passage implies that the prophets used words and symbols, at the dictation of the Spirit, of which they did not comprehend the full meaning
- Searching what time - What particular period
- And what manner of time - By what marks to be distinguished

# A Heavenly Inheritance (1:3-12)



- They spoke of Christ and salvation, and then diligently inquired what the Spirit of Christ in them did signify by these words
- They spoke of the sufferings of Christ but could not understand these predictions any better than the Jews of Christ's time (Lk 24:25, 26)
- The prophets were, however, taught that the subject matter of their predictions related not unto themselves, but unto us, to a future time

# A Heavenly Inheritance (1:3-12)



- The things which were fulfilled by the gospel
- St. Paul and his companions, who preached under the influence of the Holy Spirit
- The profound mysteries of the gospel were subjects of earnest inquiry to the angels
- An indication that like the prophets they could not understand until the mystery was revealed



# Living Before God Our Father (1:13-21)



- Therefore - Having such encouragement
- A figure drawn from the custom of girding the loins when about to start on a journey
- So we must prepare himself as on a journey
- Be sober. Let there be sobriety of spirit
- Never let your hope cease until the great consummation, when Christ comes
- Obedience is a characteristic of all Christians

# Living Before God Our Father (1:13-21)



- The difference between God's children and the children of this world is due to obedience to God
- Their obedience would turn them away from former sins when they were in ignorance
- God the Father, who called us is holy
- Obedient children will be like their father
- It is our calling to be holy in every conduct,
- We must not only submit to God's commands but seek to imitate His holiness. Lev 11:44; 19:2

# Living Before God Our Father (1:13-21)



- Call on the Father. In prayer and worship
- He judges us and all men according to the deeds, not status or race
- Hence, those who seek his blessings and promises show a reverential fear
- That is the first reason given for being holy
- The life here is a period of sojourning on the earth
- Gold or earthly wealth could never have wrought our redemption

# Living Before God Our Father (1:13-21)



- Aimless conduct: Vain and profitless life
- This was true of Jewish Christians, but still more true of the heathen who had been converted
- Christ is the Lamb of God, who takes away our sins Jn 1:29; Eph 1:4, 5:27; Col 1:22; Heb 9:14
- Christ was the center of God's plans of salvation from the beginning Jn 1:29
- Though Christ was God's plan from the beginning he was only manifested in these last times

# Living Before God Our Father (1:13-21)



- Last times: the end of the Jewish age and near the end of the temple and of the Jewish nation
- Christ was manifested for the sake of His people, who have become His people by believing in Him
- All our faith and hope proceed from the power of his resurrection.
- Gave him glory: At his ascension
- Without Christ we should only dread God; whereas through Him we believe, hope, and love



# The Enduring Word (1:22-25)

- The Greek verb purified, occurs seven times in the New Testament
- In four of these, Jn 11:55 Acts 21:24,26, 24:18, it refers to ceremonial purification
- In the other three it refers to moral purification; the cleansing of the life from its sins
- It refers not only to the forgiveness of sins but to the pure life that should follow
- This purification is obtained in obeying the truth





# The Enduring Word (1:22-25)

- That is, by obedience to the gospel
- Through the Spirit. Inspiration Acts 15:8,9
- The fruit of Holy Spirit is brotherly love
- How can one profess his faith unless he loves those for whom Christ died with a sincere heart
- Born again: At conversion and baptism Jn 3:1-6
- A birth implies a moving cause
- The new life is planted by the word of God. Acts 10:36; Jas 1:18



# The Enduring Word (1:22-25)

- The gospel preached and lodged in the heart, the power of God to salvation (Rom 1:16), is the power that moves the soul to a new life
- God's word is living and eternal. It has life in it and hence communicates life. See Heb 4:12
- God's word lives forever, but the flesh is as passing as the grass Isa 40:6
- The earthly glory is like the flower of the grass, will quickly fade and disappear



# The Enduring Word (1:22-25)

- The fleshly life, like the grass, is soon followed by death
- But a birth from the living and eternal word is a birth to eternal life
- The word is like its author it is eternal and never loses its power
- That word was the gospel, the very gospel preached to them by the apostles



# Conclusion

- What does St. Paul mean when he refers to the pilgrims of Dispersion as “elect according to the foreknowledge of the Father”?
- Identify the three persons of the Holy Trinity in 1 Peter 1:2.
- In what way is each member of the Godhead described?
- In 1 Peter 1:3, what kind of hope are we asked to have? Why?



# Conclusion

- If God already knows how we will stand under trial, why does He choose to test our faith?
- What did the Old Testament prophets search carefully to find?
- How can the statement, “Be holy, for I am holy,” be understood as both a command and a promise?
- What does it mean to conduct ourselves in fear?
- What is the incorruptible seed through which we are born again? In what way are we born again?