

## 1 Peter – some notes as we journey through this book.

**WHO WROTE IT AND WHEN-** The authorship of this letter named 1 Peter is traditionally ascribed to Peter, the apostle, although scholars disagree about this. The book is complex in its linguistic formation, and some scholars doubt that Peter, a fisherman, would have had these skills. However, the end of the letter states that Silvanus is writing the document on behalf of the author, so it may have been dictated by Peter and interpreted and written by Silvanus or it may have emerged from the circle of Peter's followers. The dates given by scholars vary from 64 CE, 70 CE and 100 CE, perhaps well after Peter's death!

### **WHAT WAS THE SOCIO-POLITICAL BACKGROUND-**

**July 64 CE** the great fire of Rome broke out. The Romans blamed Nero, but he diverted the blame towards the Christians. Tacitus detailed the cruel persecution- "*They were clad in the hides of beasts and torn to death by dogs; others were crucified, others set on fire to illuminate the night when daylight failed.*"

**70 CE-** the temple in Jerusalem was destroyed- recorded by Josephus- an important point in the separation of Christianity from its Jewish roots

**112 CE** – Pliny writes to Trajan requesting advice on about "the Christian problem."

**WHERE WAS IT WRITTEN-** It is probable that it was written in Rome. The word Babylon appears towards the end of the letter, which is short-hand for Rome. Rome was regarded as the new "whore of Babylon" because culture and religion was steeped licentious ways of living. If you managed to get to the Pompeii exhibition at the Ashmoleum, you will undoubtedly have raised an eyebrow or two!

**WHERE DID THE LETTER GET SENT TO-** It is a type of "round robin" letter sent out to Christians beyond the border of Israel, in Asia Minor. They probably would have been a mixture of Jewish Christians and Gentile Christians.

**WHY WAS IT SENT-** It was sent to the *diaspora*, the dispersed communities of Christians, to offer encouragement in difficult times. There was a background of sporadic persecution of Christians at the time, and Roman rulers would have regarded this sect as a subversive political presence. Christians were living counter cultural lives.

### **WHAT IS THE STRUCTURE OF THE LETTER –**

- I. **Greeting** – the diaspora, in the provinces of Pontus, Galatia, Cappadocia, Asia and Bithynia
- II. **Praise** – song of praise to God, who has given new birth and a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ
- III. **Key themes in the letter are-**
  - a) **A new identity** – affirms their new identity- through Christ they are they are part of God's family, under Abraham, exiles in a foreign land
  - b) **Suffering** – their new identity enables them to make "sense" of their suffering- it is a "vehicle" through which they bear witness to Christ and

focuses their spiritual vision upon the future hopes promised- it enables a more genuine and deeper faith

**c) Future hopes through salvation -(eschatology /end-times).**Through suffering they can focus themselves on the return of Jesus and the life in the new promised land given through the resurrection

**d) Handy tips to surviving persecution while holding on to your faith!**- living as Christians in the midst of those who hold other values

**A. A NEW IDENTITY-** all people are invited into to be part of the new family, centred around Jesus. They are part of the family of Abraham; God's beloved children. They are a people of the new exodus and the new covenant, who have the word of God buried in their lives, restoring their hearts and renewing their minds.

**B. THE PARADOX OF SUFFERING** - Through Christ, the people are offered a new perspective on suffering-there is a new narrative that regards suffering as a gift, because paradoxically it purifies and deepens their faith and is a way of bearing witness to Christ among the nations. They are to regard it an honour to suffer for Christ's names-sake.

**C. FUTURE HOPES THROUGH SALVATION** - They are redeemed and strengthened through the sacrifice of Christ and are to look towards their future home in the promised land, under the Kingship of Christ, when he comes again.

**D. HANDY TIPS TO SURVIVING PERSECUTION, WHILE HOLDING ON TO YOUR FAITH!**

- Seek to grow in the image of Christ and demonstrate this in all you do
- Strive to be holy
- Love and respect all people, even in the face of adversity
- Resist dark forces be they from cultural, political realms or from those that inspire hatred
- Church leaders- show particular care for persecuted people
- Don't get involved in violent resistance- demonstrate the freedom and gentleness of Christ
- Be prepared to give a reason for your great hope
- Be confident in your salvation won through the victory of Christ's resurrection

**PRAYER AND A WARM GREETING ENDS THE LETTER**