

LV. Traveling Route 66: The Bible in Biblical Perspective  
*The Journey with Christ, the Promised One*  
“I & II Peter—The Books of Peter”  
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October 6, 2013 – Evening Sermon

In this study we will cover the books of I and II Peter. Earlier today I put something on twitter that said ‘When is Jesus coming again? Answer? 6pm tonight at Briarwood Presbyterian Church.’ I wasn’t actually saying that Jesus was coming back at 6pm but I was saying at 6pm I would give the answer to that. There are people all around the nation that are having fun with that tweet right now. I was overwhelmed before I got here but I’m afraid to go back and look at it now. I will probably be brought up on charges at the Presbytery and the General Assembly this year for that one.

II Peter does address this issue for a couple of reasons. I Peter has its own unique statements. I will take you through this and then we’ll spend some time in some key passages in I and II Peter to give you a feel for these marvelous specific epistles to specific groups of people, but they almost have a general epistle feel like a James or an Ephesians. So let’s start by taking a look at the first question we try to ask each time.

Who wrote these two books? The answer to that is obviously Peter because they bear his name. Let’s look at I Peter 1:1-2 which says *[1] Peter, an apostle of Jesus Christ, To those who are elect exiles of the Dispersion in Pontus, Galatia, Cappadocia, Asia, and Bithynia, [2] according to the foreknowledge of God the Father, in the sanctification of the Spirit, for obedience to Jesus Christ and for sprinkling with his blood: May grace and peace be multiplied to you.* Clearly Peter identifies himself, the apostle of Jesus, who is the one who is speaking.

In I Peter 5 Peter reaffirms his identity. I Peter 5:1 says *[1] So I exhort the elders among you, as a fellow elder and a witness of the sufferings of Christ, as well as a partaker in the glory that is going to be revealed.* The person writing this was a witness to Christ’s suffering which would fit Peter. What Peter is anticipating as a partaker in the glory that is to be revealed is the glory of the second coming of Christ which he was exposed to at the Mount of Transfiguration along with James and John.

Now let’s look at II Peter 1 and notice the same parallel. II Peter 1:1-2 says *[1] Simeon Peter, a servant and apostle of Jesus Christ, To those who have obtained a faith of equal standing with ours by the righteousness of our God and Savior Jesus Christ: [2] May grace and peace be multiplied to you in the knowledge of God and of Jesus our Lord.* Now II Peter 1:16-18 says *[16] For we (the author of this book) did not follow cleverly devised myths when we made known to you the power and coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, but we were eyewitnesses of his majesty. [17] For when he received honor and glory from God the Father, and the voice was borne to him by the Majestic Glory, “This is my beloved Son, with whom I am well pleased,” [18] we ourselves heard this very voice borne from heaven, for we were with him on the holy mountain.*

Here Peter is again referring to the fact that he was a partaker of the transfiguration glory upon the Mount of Transfiguration as well as a witness of the sufferings of Christ. So Peter is the author of these two epistles.

Where were these two epistles written? We are not told specifically but we are told in these epistles that it is written from one in a certain place. I Peter 5:13-14 says

*[13] She who is at Babylon, who is likewise chosen, sends you greetings, and so does Mark, my son. [14] Greet one another with the kiss of love. Peace to all of you who are in Christ.* He identifies the place that he writes it as Babylon. Is he referring to the Babylon of what we call today Iraq and Iran or is it from which the Babylonian kingdom went forward in the Old Testament to capture the southern tribes of the kingdom of Israel? I don't think it was the one from the Old Testament. There was a small town, a military outpost of Rome in Egypt called Babylon at the time but I don't think it's that either.

I think Peter is doing what John will later do in the book of Revelation. He will use the term Babylon meaning the pagan city from which persecution is coming against the people of God and that is he is using the word Babylon to describe Rome. In other words, Peter is actually in Rome. Rome is referred to in the book of Revelation as Babylon also. I think that is what he is doing here so I believe Peter is writing these two books in Rome.

The next question is when did he write these two epistles? I Peter seems to be written in about 62 to 63 AD. He is in Rome but there is not the hint of some type of imprisonment nor an impending death. We know that Peter died in association and near the death of Nero in 68 to 69 AD. So very likely Peter is writing I Peter during his first stay in Rome, which would probably have been around 62 to 63, maybe 64 AD. He is writing this with no hint of persecution at Rome but an awareness of persecution out in the Roman Empire, local persecutions against Christians.

II Peter is written clearly with his impending death in view and this is probably written sometime between 64 to 67 AD. II Peter 1:12-14 says *[12] Therefore I intend always to remind you of these qualities (of the faithful Christian life described in the first 11 verses), though you know them and are established in the truth that you have. [13] I think it right, as long as I am in this body, to stir you up by way of reminder, [14] since I know that the putting off of my body will be soon, as our Lord Jesus Christ made clear to me.* Here is another reference to his conversation with Jesus at the Sea of Galilee when Jesus indicated to him that he would die a death that if he knew the death he would die he wouldn't follow Him, but he would have the grace to die that death. He'll have dying grace even as he has living grace. So here Peter is near the end of his life and there is some type of imprisonment, threat and intimidation where he knows he is close to death. Nero began to initiate persecutions at Rome and then culminated them after the burning of Rome by blaming the Christians for the burning of Rome. After that there was an intense persecution against the Christians that had been worked up by Nero himself.

To whom is Peter writing these epistles to? I Peter 1:1 says *[1] Peter, an apostle of Jesus Christ, To those who are elect exiles of the Dispersion in Pontus, Galatia, Cappadocia, Asia, and Bithynia.* Because Peter is using language similar to James he is aiming initially at Jewish Christians using Old Testament language like 'to the twelve tribes of the Dispersion.' So for many, even John Calvin, says that he is writing to the Jewish Christians in those areas but I'm not actually sure he is writing to the Jewish Christians. I think he is using that language but I think there is some evidence that he is aiming his epistle actually to the exile Christians, knowing that there would be Jewish Christians in these places that he is sending these letters to. This is Northern Galatia that he is sending this to.

I Peter 1:13-15 says [13] *Therefore, preparing your minds for action, and being sober-minded, set your hope fully on the grace that will be brought to you at the revelation of Jesus Christ. [14] As obedient children, do not be conformed to the passions of your former ignorance, [15] but as he who called you is holy, you also be holy in all your conduct.* He is referring to a former ignorance. If he was speaking to Jewish Christians there would not be a former ignorance, now they may have embraced pagan ignorance, but there wouldn't have been a former ignorance. There would have been formerly the teaching of God's Word that they may have left for the ignorance of paganism, but in fact they wouldn't have had the former ignorance.

I Peter 1:18 says [18] *knowing that you were ransomed from the futile ways inherited from your forefathers, not with perishable things such as silver or gold...* The ways that Jewish people inherited from their forefathers were not futile. Those were the promises of God's covenant mercies and the prophecies. These forefathers though, had futile ways. Again I think he is referring to the futility of their pagan forefathers and he is speaking of Gentiles. So he is aiming initially at the Gentile Christians in Northern Galatia and certainly it would be in language that would attract the Jewish Christians who would make up those churches as well.

Now I'd like to point out a brief outline of these two epistles. The introduction to I Peter is in I Peter 1:1-2. The laying out of our salvation in Christ is in I Peter 1:3-12. The life we live to Christ now that we're saved in Christ is found in I Peter 1:13-3:12. Our willingness to suffer for Christ is found in I Peter 3:13-5:11. Then the concluding statements are in I Peter 5:12-14.

Here is the outline for II Peter. The introduction and salutation is in II Peter 1:1-2. Again Peter lays out the Christian life with a doxology and praise in II Peter 1:3-11. The topic of true teaching is laid out in II Peter 1:12-21. Then he covers the false teachings that had permeated the churches in Northern Galatia in II Peter 2:1-22. Then he covers the constant questions about the second coming of Jesus Christ that he answers at the conclusion of II Peter 2. Finally there is the conclusion itself in II Peter 3:17-18 which I will read at the conclusion of this study.

Why did Peter write these two epistles? I plan to take some time on this to get to the meat of I and II Peter. He writes I Peter to prepare Christians to defend the faith winsomely, suffer courageously and live consistently for Christ. He gives a three-fold aim to them. There is an unbelievable lap in I and II Peter and the book of James. I want to look at the doxology of praise to God that declares our saving grace in I Peter 1:3-5 which says [3] *Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ! According to his great mercy, he has caused us to be born again to a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, [4] to an inheritance that is imperishable, undefiled, and unfading, kept in heaven for you, [5] who by God's power are being guarded through faith for a salvation ready to be revealed in the last time.* He is giving us this beautiful Pauline statement that Peter himself embraces. We are fully saved in grace but not yet have we experienced that salvation for the best is yet to come for the believer in this world as he heads to eternity.

Then having laid out this he talks about how testing is inevitable. He picks up on James and Paul's language in this next part. I Peter 1:6-7 says [6] *In this you rejoice, though now for a little while, if necessary, you have been grieved by various trials, [7] so that the tested genuineness of your faith—more precious than gold that perishes though it*

*is tested by fire—may be found to result in praise and glory and honor at the revelation of Jesus Christ.* You have this great salvation and now you have this Gospel life that is facing trials that are testing your faith and refining you as you honor Christ in the midst of these trials.

I Peter 1:10-12 says [10] *Concerning this salvation, the prophets who prophesied about the grace that was to be yours searched and inquired carefully, [11] inquiring what person or time the Spirit of Christ in them was indicating when he predicted the sufferings of Christ and the subsequent glories. [12] It was revealed to them that they were serving not themselves but you, in the things that have now been announced to you through those who preached the **good news** to you by the Holy Spirit sent from heaven, things into which angels long to look.* What is he saying here?

He is telling you that the prophets who wrote the Old Testament realize they were preaching ‘good news,’ the Gospel. They also knew that it was only in seed form, not in the flowered form. So even while they are writing out through promises, prophesies the Gospel in the Old Testament they are calling upon God in whom this will be accomplished. What is your timing? Who is the One who will accomplish this? They longed to know and all they were told was the Good News in seed form and secondly, Peter says they were writing for you. Not even the angels could understand it. They longed to look into this glorious message of salvation. So now these Christians are being prepared to not only suffer in this world, knowing their salvation is sure in Christ and that they are being guarded, as they win people to Christ but they will be given the opportunity to defend the faith.

I Peter 3:13-17 says [13] *Now who is there to harm you if you are zealous for what is good? [14] But even if you should suffer for righteousness' sake, you will be blessed. Have no fear of them, nor be troubled, [15] but in your hearts honor Christ the Lord as holy, always being prepared to make a defense to anyone who asks you for a reason for the hope that is in you; yet do it with gentleness and respect, [16] having a good conscience, so that, when you are slandered, those who revile your good behavior in Christ may be put to shame. [17] For it is better to suffer for doing good, if that should be God's will, than for doing evil.*

So here the writer says that suffering will be a part of our life. Don't let it be suffering because of sinful decisions about how you live your life. Let it be suffering for righteousness sake. It has been granted unto to Him to suffer for your sake and God will use this in your life but then he says do you want to know how to make sure your suffering is for righteousness. You are to set Christ as holy in your heart. The sacredness, sobriety and reverence of that statement is amazing to me. He doesn't see Jesus as a therapist or a life coach but he sees his Savior as holy, sacred and enthroned upon our hearts. Set Him upon your hearts in reverence and sacredness. Be ready to give an account of the hope that is within you. Yet when you give an account do it with gentleness, reverence and thoughtfulness. Keep your conscience clean before the Lord.

Am I forgiven of all of my sins? Absolutely, but does that mean I should be careless about sins? Never! God forbid! There are multiple reasons why I should be careful about the life that I live. One is not that the life I live will make me worthy of salvation but I would like to live a life worthy of my Savior's name. Walk in a manner worthy of your calling. God has called us to a life in which we are to seek that our conscience would be cleansed by intentional obedience to Christ, knowing that we will

and when we do falter we have a Savior who is ready to hear us and as we confess our sins He is faithful and just to forgive us of our sins.

Then he gives another reason. Keep the conscience clean and cleared so that those who will speak evil of you, you are actually not giving them a basis to speak evil. He will later go on to say that when they speak evil of you, on the day of the visitation of the Lord, they will have to glorify God for you and confess their slander against you. We are to live lives that honor the Lord so that we don't give a reason for their slander against the Lord by the way that we live our life.

I'd like to give you an illustration of this. When I was in Charlotte, North Carolina as a kid there was a NASCAR Racecar driver that was converted. He wasn't a very famous racecar driver but he was a NASCAR Racecar driver nonetheless. His name was Jack Hudson. After he was converted he planted himself a church on the northern side of Charlotte called Northside Baptist Church. He was one of those guys that learned early on about two things that my Baptist brothers back in those days learned. He learned about a bus ministry and how to use the newspaper advertisements. Because of this thousands were coming to the church and they used his pictures in the advertisements. I remember seeing that picture all the way up until the time I left for college.

I want converted. I married. I went to Covenant College and graduated. I finished Westminster Seminary and went to Miami, Florida to pastor a church for three years. Briarwood Presbyterian Church sent me to plant a church back in Charlotte, North Carolina, fourteen years after I had left. I arrived back in Charlotte in February of 1983 to plant Christ Covenant Church. As I arrived I bought the Charlotte Observer newspaper and I quickly turned to the church page. There he was – Northside Baptist Church pastored by Jack Hudson and the same picture was there fourteen years later. I made it a point to let Pastor Hudson know that I was in the area planting a PCA church, we had a good time of fellowship and we did a number of things together.

About four years before I came here I was called by one of Pastor Hudson's members who knew about our relationship who said Jack was going to be with the Lord. He was up at the Presbyterian Hospital and I thought that was certainly appropriate. I went up to the hospital to visit him and hugged his dear wife who we had gotten to be friends with. As I visited with Jack I said "Jack, I have learned much from you and I am grateful for you." To give you a little background, when I was in Charlotte there were these two mega churches that had embezzled and been engaged in immorality and right outside of Charlotte was the PTL organization that came to be known as not Praise the Lord but Pass the Loot. One of my members was the court appointed executor of that situation. What an abomination before God! The papers constantly used that against other churches in the area.

When I sat beside Jack's bed I said "Jack, I want to pray with you but before I do I want to thank you. There has never been a time since I have been here over these 13 years about being concerned and opening up the paper and reading something about you. I am grateful that you have stayed the course and that before the Lord knowing that you're a sinner saved by grace, you have attempted to live in a way that would honor the Lord. The Christian community, dare I be so bold, is to speak on behalf of the thousands of us in Charlotte to thank you not only for your ministry but for bearing the name of Christ and the name of the ministry with honor for the sake of Christ."

It is that glorious statement of God's people living in such a manner that they are winsomely drawing others to Christ because with gentleness and reverence they have sanctified Christ in their heart and they have also prepared themselves to be ready to give an account of the hope that is within us. I want to challenge you to do that. Next year we will be moving forward in this matter of making this issue of how to defend the faith in a secular world effectively and winsomely as our ministry theme. We will be working toward contending for the faith without being contentious. How can we do that effectively? I would ask that you take on this opportunity so that you can defend the faith.

I like how one of our staff puts it. He says for some of us our plan in sharing the Gospel is to memorize the pastor's phone number. I do hope to always be available so you feel free to share the phone number. I had three opportunities last week where others had set up times for me to have lunch with them and it was so enjoyable. I'm not wanting that to diminish necessarily but you can give account for the hope that is within you. You can be a personal witness for Jesus Christ and it starts as setting Christ as holy in your heart. That is what Peter is telling us and brings us to but now I want to look at I Peter 4 giving you one more thought from this particular text. Then I'll give a few final thoughts from II Peter.

I Peter 4:12-19 says [12] *Beloved, do not be surprised at the fiery trial when it comes upon you to test you, as though something strange were happening to you.* [13] *But rejoice insofar as you share Christ's sufferings, that you may also rejoice and be glad when his glory is revealed.* [14] *If you are insulted for the name of Christ, you are blessed, because the Spirit of glory and of God rests upon you.* [15] *But let none of you suffer as a murderer or a thief or an evildoer or as a meddler.* [16] *Yet if anyone suffers as a Christian (a term that was used as ridicule for the followers of Christ in Antioch, now becomes a badge of honor), let him not be ashamed, but let him glorify God in that name.* [17] *For it is time for judgment to begin at the household of God; and if it begins with us, what will be the outcome for those who do not obey the gospel of God?* [18] *And "If the righteous is scarcely saved, what will become of the ungodly and the sinner?"* [19] *Therefore let those who suffer according to God's will entrust their souls to a faithful Creator while doing good.*

'A fiery trial' is a very challenging phrase. I don't think it had happened yet in Rome but it would happen in Rome. It was happening in local situations. Nero would use fiery ordeals against Christians. He wouldn't use it against Peter. If the extra Biblical historians are right, Peter died on a cross and he requested upside down because he was not worthy to die as Christ did. But there were many believers in Rome who when the persecution intensified there was a road called the Apian Way, (please excuse the graphic nature of this) where believers would be rounded up by the hundreds and thousands and they were put on both sides of the Apian Way. They were impaled upon stakes stuck in the ground and then they were doused with tar and oil to be set on fire. Then a sign was put underneath them that read "Christians, the light of the world." Peter says when you suffer these fiery ordeals count the blessing of bearing the name of Christ with honor.

Let's look at II Peter and I'll give you the theme of this book and then I'll close. The theme of II Peter is affirming the integrity of the Christian life and teaching, in light of the contemporary apostasy (that's false teaching), while clarifying the issues of the

second coming of Christ. When you read II Peter you can look at the Christian life defined in II Peter 1:3-15. Then in II Peter 1:16 he gives what true teaching is. We have something more sure, more sure than the Mount of Transfiguration and what is that? We have the Bible.

II Peter 1:19-21 says [19] *And we have the prophetic word more fully confirmed, to which you will do well to pay attention as to a lamp shining in a dark place, until the day dawns and the morning star rises in your hearts, [20] knowing this first of all, that no prophecy of Scripture comes from someone's own interpretation. [21] For no prophecy was ever produced by the will of man, but men spoke from God as they were carried along by the Holy Spirit.*

It's interesting that Peter puts his finger on the fundamental issues, wherever liberalism parasitically destroys church after church and denomination after denomination, the first thing to go is a high view of the Scriptures as the Word of God. So Peter tells them that your Bible is not man's word about God that you can pick and choose. It is God's Word to man through men, prophets and apostles who were carried along. The verb for 'carried along' would be ferried where the Holy Spirit would fill the sails of the ferry boat moving them along, carrying them where they were to give the Word of God and they knew it. Matthew knew it. Paul knew it. I'm glad you took this for what it is, the Word of God and not the word of men. They knew they weren't writing something about God. They were writing the Word of God.

So that is the fundamental, foundational issue to thwart all apostasy. It is that the Scripture is infallible, inerrant, reliable and clear in all things that are necessary for faith and salvation. Where it has difficulties the Scripture itself is its final interpreter because it can never contradict itself. The Word of God is our only rule of faith and practice. Any seminary, church or denomination that ever moves one iota of that view of the Scripture will not long exist. So be on guard, not that a preach has to see every secondary doctrine the way you do, but that the preacher, leaders and teachers all begin with an unwavering, high view of the Scripture as the final rule of faith and practice. It is not the church, the preacher, the commentary or the confession but as I quote Martin Luther "men not only can but they do err." God's Word abides forever.

Peter goes on to deal with other issues but I want to conclude on this matter of the second coming. This is also how we know this was written by Peter and very likely from the same place that Peter wrote the first letter. II Peter 3:1, 8-9 says [1] *This is now the second letter that I am writing to you, beloved. In both of them I am stirring up your sincere mind by way of reminder...[8] But do not overlook this one fact, beloved, that with the Lord one day is as a thousand years, and a thousand years as one day. [9] The Lord is not slow to fulfill his promise as some count slowness, but is patient toward you, not wishing that any should perish, but that all should reach repentance.*

He says why hasn't Jesus come? It is because time does not control Jesus. The mission controls Jesus. The one day is like a thousand years is not a formula it's just a saying for He made time. It doesn't control Him any more than space and matter controls Him. He made time, space and matter. Then why hasn't He come? It is not because He has missed the alarm clock or that He has forgotten about anything. It is because the mission hasn't been fulfilled. He won't come because He is waiting for all of you to come to repentance, not willing that any of you should perish. Who are the 'any of you'? It says in verse 8, it's the beloved. The beloved are the people he is referring to in verse

1, the ones who just got this second letter. Jesus won't come back until all the beloved have been brought to repentance.

So who are these beloved? Let's go back to the introduction of the first letter. I Peter 1:1-2 says *[1] Peter, an apostle of Jesus Christ, To those who are elect exiles of the Dispersion in Pontus, Galatia, Cappadocia, Asia, and Bithynia, [2] according to the foreknowledge of God the Father, in the sanctification of the Spirit, for obedience to Jesus Christ and for sprinkling with his blood: May grace and peace be multiplied to you.* So what is he saying?

I'm going to tell you exactly when Jesus is coming back. Jesus is coming back when the last one of the elect has been brought to faith and repentance. Then He is coming. Until then He is patient, not wishing that any of you (the beloved, the elect) should perish. That is what the text says. Jesus said "Father, all whom You have given Me, I lose not one. I will raise them up on the last day." So Jesus will come back when the last one of the elect from the harvest field has been brought into the barn of eternal life in Jesus Christ.

Then what will happen? II Peter 3:10-13 says *[10] But the day of the Lord will come like a thief, and then the heavens will pass away with a roar, and the heavenly bodies will be burned up and dissolved, and the earth and the works that are done on it will be exposed. [11] Since all these things are thus to be dissolved, what sort of people ought you to be in lives of holiness and godliness, [12] waiting for and hastening the coming of the day of God, because of which the heavens will be set on fire and dissolved, and the heavenly bodies will melt as they burn! [13] But according to his promise we are waiting for new heavens and a new earth in which righteousness dwells.* He will come and roll up the old heavens and the old earth and they will be dissolved as with fire and He will roll out a new heavens and a new earth. It will be the home of His people whom He has gathered with the power of the Gospel by faith and repentance in Him and for Him in that day.

So in light of this coming day of the Lord what should you do? You should do two things. Live in a way that you want to be found when He comes, in Godliness and holiness. That is what the text says. Live in a way that you want to be found when He comes, not in the darkness, not with a secret life. God, give me transparency, vulnerability, assurance of my salvation and give me a heart to grow in grace and confess my sins, pursuing holiness. What sort of people ought we to be?

Secondly, hasten the coming of the Lord. How can I hasten the coming of the Lord? I think he is kind of talking baby talk to me. I just found out that Jesus won't come again until all of His people have been brought to saving faith and repentance. So humanly speaking, hastening the day of the coming of the Lord is through evangelism. Share your faith. In this past week I have had the opportunity to pray with three different people who committed their life to Christ. After each one of them prayed I thought 'this could be it! This could be the last one! Come on Jesus!'

I just have this terrible mind. I have laid in bed at night saying "Lord, will I be the one to lead the last one in?" Okay it will probably not be me but I wonder who the person is who will lead the last one to Christ and who the last person will be to accept Christ as their Savior. Then comes the end! Then Peter gives his conclusion which I give to you.



II Peter 3:17-18 says [17] *You therefore, beloved, knowing this beforehand, take care that you are not carried away with the error of lawless people and lose your own stability. [18] But grow in the grace* (Notice he doesn't say grow for grace but grow in the grace and knowledge of Jesus Christ.) *and knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. To him be the glory both now and to the day of eternity. Amen.* Let's pray.

Prayer:

Father, thank You for the time we could be together. Would You receive our praise for this Lord's Day that we have been able to assemble and praise Your Name and thank You for the means of grace that come from the Fountain of Grace, Jesus Christ that we can grow in grace, because of the Day of Your coming we have been saved. We look to the Day of Your coming again and until then we want to be found on message, in ministry and on mission hastening the coming of our Lord for I pray in Jesus' Name, Amen.