

I and II PETER

DEAR EXILES AND ALIENS, (and) people who experience suffering and abuse

Begins Peter in these letters. The Christians who first received them lived far from Jerusalem, Judah, and Israel. Many probably were Jews who had settled in what is now Turkey long before the apostle Paul and others had brought news of Jesus.

But Peter is not simply addressing Jews far from their homeland. He is writing to all Christians who know that their true home is in heaven and wait for *an inheritance that is imperishable, undefiled, and unfading, kept in heaven for you, who are being protected by the power of God through faith for a salvation ready to be revealed in the last times.* (I Peter 1:4-5)

The first letter was probably written by the apostle Peter from Rome. He writes: *your sister church in Babylon sends you greetings.* Babylon was often used as a code word for Rome in those days. It may have been written as early as A.D. 57 and the latest date given by scholars A.D. 96. Many place it between A.D. 60 and 75. Although the second letter does not include names of people or places, it is also considered to be from Rome.

Peter has four main points to make:

1. Affirm the truth of the Gospel

He speaks of Jesus' resurrection and divinity. He is a witness to this and wants to strengthen believers who face scoffers and false teachers.

For we did not follow cleverly devised myths when we made known to you the power and coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, but we had been eyewitnesses of his majesty. II Peter 1:16.

Once every three years, we read I Peter during worship during the Easter season.

Thought question: How does I and II Peter help you live the resurrection in your life?

2. Lift up their identity as God's people

We are "people who have received God's mercy."

"But you are a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, God's own people, in order that you may proclaim the mighty deeds of him who called you out of darkness into his marvelous light." I Peter 2:9

3. Encourage believers to live holy and peaceful lives while we wait to get to our homeland

Beloved, do not be surprised at the fiery ordeal that is taking place among you to test you, but rejoice insofar as you are sharing Christ's sufferings, so that you may also be glad and shout for joy when his glory is revealed. I Peter 4:12-13

Are you suffering? Are people surprised about what you do and do not do? Does your boss treat you meanly? Is your spouse hard on you? Respond with patience and kindness as Jesus did. Your gentleness and hope will surprise and convert them.

4. It seems like a long time to wait, but Jesus is coming back

But do not ignore this one fact, beloved, that with the Lord one day is like a thousand years and a thousand years are like one day. The Lord is not slow about his promise as some think of slowness, but is patient with you, not wanting any to perish, but all to come to repentance. II Peter 3:8-9