

First Epistle of St Peter

“Blessed are you Simon Bar-Jonah for flesh and blood has not revealed this to you, My Father who is in heaven. And I also say to you that you are Peter, and on this rock I will build my church, and the gates of Hades will not prevail against it.” Matt 16: 17,18

Review of Catholic Epistles

- How many epistles are there in the Catholic Epistles?
 - 7
- What are they?
 - James
 - 1 & 2 Peter
 - 1,2,3 John
 - Jude
- Why are they called Catholic epistles?
 - They are addressed to Christians in general and not to any church or person in particular

What we know of St Peter

- **Jesus' call to Peter**
 - 'Come follow me and I will make you fishers of men.' At once they left their nets and followed Him. (Mark 1: 16-18)
- **Jesus heals Peter's mother-in-law**
 - 'So He went to her, took her hand and helped her up. The fever left her and she began to wait on them.

- **Jesus' unexpected comeback**
 - 'But what about you?' Jesus asked. 'Who do you say I am?' Peter answered 'You are Christ.' Jesus warned them not to tell anyone about Him. He then began to teach them that the Son of Man must suffer many things, be rejected by the elders, be killed and rise again after 3 days. Peter took Him aside and began to rebuke Him. But.. Jesus rebuked Peter saying 'Get behind me Satan! For you are not mindful of the things of God but the things of men.' (Mark 8:29-33)
- **Jesus' transfiguration before Peter (Matt 17:1-2)**
- **Gethsemane**
 - He took Peter, James and John along with Him and He began to be deeply distressed and troubled. 'My soul is overwhelmed with sorrow to the point of death.' (Mark 14:33-34)

- **Peter's denial of Christ**
 - Matt 26: 58-75
- **The empty tomb**
 - John 20:6-7
- **Jesus appears to Peter after Peter has gone back to fishing**
 - John 21:15-16
- **Jesus ascends up to heaven**
 - 'After He said this, He was taken up before their very eyes, and a cloud hid Him from their sight.'
Acts 1:9

In Context

- Purpose: to offer encouragement to **suffering Christians**
- Written to: “The pilgrims of Dispersion” - **Jewish Christians** driven out of Jerusalem and scattered throughout Asia Minor, & all believers everywhere
- Date written: **about 62-64AD, possibly from Rome**

To the pilgrims of the Dispersion in Pontus, Galatia, Cappadocia, Asia and Bithynia

QuickTime™ and a
TIFF (Uncompressed) decompressor
are needed to see this picture.

Background:

- Peter was probably in Rome when the great persecution of **Emperor Nero** began*
- Christians were being **tortured and killed for their faith** under the Roman Empire
- The church in Jerusalem was being scattered throughout the Mediterranean world

“You have been grieved by various trials, that the genuineness of your faith... may be found to praise, honour, and glory at the revelation of Jesus Christ.” (1:6,7)

Discussion

- Though we aren't being tortured and persecuted today for our faith, what trials do we face?
 - Social
 - Personal

Persecution

- St Peter offers believers **comfort and hope** through their trials
- Under Emperor Nero, Christians would be tortured, harassed, even put to death by the Romans, the Jews or their own families
- Peter wanted to **warn** new Christians of what lay ahead - to **encourage** them to face the opposition
- Key message:
Expect persecution but do not be afraid. Be confident that we will live eternally with Christ. Seek your strength in Christ; be patient and hope to always stand firm

Salvation through suffering

- St Peter motivates the Christians by reminding them of our salvation - a gracious gift from God
- Out of His love for us, Jesus died to pay the penalty for our sin, and the Holy Spirit cleansed us from sin when we believed
- Strategy of St Peter's letter is therefore to instil **hope** in the believers. This hope should **motivate us to serve Christ with greater commitment** - even through trials

Salvation: Yesterday, today and tomorrow

- An evangelist on the streets of New York asked the theologian H Richard Niebuhr, “*Are you saved?*”
- *Niebuhr answered;*
“I was saved by what Christ did; I am being saved right now; I shall be saved when the kingdom comes.”
- This quote echoes what Peter preaches is the truth of salvation

Our Inheritance

- The future salvation (1:3-5) *'Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who according to His abundant mercy has **begotten us again to a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, to an inheritance incorruptible and undefiled that does not fade away, reserved in heaven for you, who are kept by the power of God through faith for salvation ready to be revealed in the last time.**'*
- Eternal life begins when we trust in Christ and join God's family
- No matter the trials we face in this life, eventually we will live with Christ forever

Quick Questions

- How would you describe Peter's tone as he starts this letter to suffering Christians? (refer to 1:3-6 on last slide)
- In what practical way would the words “new birth” / “begotten again” mean to these Christians?
- Why would the words in v5 mean so much to the Christians? (Especially ‘**kept by the power of God..**’)

- How will we see the “big picture” change the mental attitude of Christians who are going through pain and suffering? (v5-6)
- What is the value of pain, or (as our peers often ask us) why does God allow bad things to happen to good people? (v7)
- Through these difficult times, how does Peter describe their relationship with Jesus Christ? (v8-9)
- In what sense do these Christians (through suffering and difficult times) have a lot more to be thankful about than the Old Testament prophets?

Apply

- In times of personal crisis, do you tend to lean more on God or blame God?
- What have you found helpful in tough times?