

# First Epistle of Peter (Summer 63)

By Ed Stevens -- Then and Now Podcast -- Feb. 3, 2013

## INTRODUCTION:

A. Thank you Larry for picking such an interesting song to introduce this program. We are looking at events which occurred in AD 63-64, just months before the Neronian persecution broke out, and only two years before war broke out in Judea. We may not be on the "eve of destruction" today, but they certainly were at that time in the first century.

B. If you would like to automatically receive the PDF as soon as it is ready, without having to request each one separately, simply email me and ask to be put on the **PDF list**. My email address is: <preterist1@preterist.org>

C. Let's ask God for His guidance in our study here --

*Our Heavenly Father, we again ask for your guiding hand upon the leaders of this nation who have forsaken Your Ways. We pray that our fellow Americans will wake up and turn back to You in repentance before this nation plunges further into the abyss of unsustainable debt and tyranny. Use these historical studies to teach us the mistakes of the past, so we can avoid them in the future. We praise Your Holy Name for your servants the apostles, especially Paul and Peter who literally gave their lives to spread Your gospel in every nook and cranny of the Roman world in the first century. May all who listen to these podcasts be inspired to greater service in Your kingdom by looking at their amazing examples of faithfulness in the midst of terrifying persecution and unspeakable hardship. It is in the Name of our precious Savior, and Your Glorious Son, that we pray. Amen.*

D. If you have benefited from these studies, we would encourage you to become partners with us in this teaching and publishing ministry, in order to share in all the good fruit that comes from it. Those who contribute to International Preterist Association will receive some of our latest and greatest resources as our gift to you. Simply go to our website and click on the left sidebar button entitled "Make a Donation to IPA" where you can make a one-time donation or contribute monthly. Our website address is <www.preterist.org> You can also make a donation through PayPal. Our PayPal address is: <preterist1@preterist.org>

E. In our study last time, we were looking at the activities of Apostle Paul after his release from his first Roman imprisonment in the Spring of AD 63, down to his second arrest in the summer of 63. This time we will look at the First Epistle of Peter, trying to determine when it was written, and the circumstances under which it was composed.

**Summer 63 – 1 Peter** was written while Peter was in Jerusalem at a time when Jerusalem was considered to be “Babylon” (1 Pet. 5:13). Since this allows for a possible acquaintance with the book of Revelation, we can place First Peter here (Late 63) after John had written the Apocalypse (probably late 62) and before the Neronian persecution broke out (late 64). Mark was with Peter in Jerusalem. Mark had been with Paul in Rome in AD 62-63, but now he is back in Jerusalem. He was the courier for both Paul and Peter to all the churches. Mark probably brought a copy of the book of Hebrews to Peter. This explains how Peter was aware of “all Paul’s epistles” including the book of Hebrews (2 Pet. 3:16). Peter wrote to the Jewish Christians in the Diaspora (Pontus, Galatia, Cappadocia, Asia, Bithynia, and perhaps also including Macedonia and Achaia) which implies that he was writing from Judea (which was not the Diaspora). John Mark was evidently Peter’s courier to deliver his letters to the Diaspora churches. Mark was in Rome when Paul wrote his epistles (Colossians 4:10, Philemon 1:24) to those same churches in the Diaspora, so it seems that Mark could have been the courier to take Peter’s letter back to them.

Evidently Mark was good at this courier service, and explains why both Paul and Peter used him in that capacity. I believe this is why Paul told Timothy to bring Mark with him to Rome, in order to provide that “courier” service to Paul once again in his final hour. It seems that John Mark may be a key piece of the puzzle in determining when 1 Peter was written, especially since he is mentioned by both Peter here in 1 Pet. 5:13, and by Paul (Col. 4:10, Phlm. 1:24 and 2 Tim. 4:11).

The mention of Mark in 2 Timothy is the better one to focus on. At the time Paul wrote 2 Timothy, Mark was somewhere between close to Timothy (Ephesus), perhaps carrying Peter’s first epistle with him. This would mean that 1 Peter would have been written before Paul’s second arrest (Summer of 63), and before the Neronian persecution broke out. Another reason why the late-63 date of First Peter is attractive to me is because 2 Pet. 3:1 mentions Peter’s first letter in a way that suggests that it was written not too long before the second letter (within a year or less). That would also allow for an early-64 date of First Peter. Also in both 1 Pet. 1:7 and 4:12 Peter mentions the “tested by fire” and “fiery ordeal among you” and that the devil was “prowling around like a roaring lion seeking someone to devour” (1 Pet. 5:8). This intensity of persecution suggests a time during the three and a half years of great tribulation (AD 62-66) when Satan had been released to hunt down Christians and deceive the Jews into going to war with Rome. The intensity of Peter’s language (“end of all things is near” and “she who is in Babylon” and “it is time for judgment to begin”) suggests that Peter was writing in the middle of that great tribulation period (AD 63-64) when things were beginning to heat up. A date in the Spring of 64 AD would also work. The Jews in Judea were looking for every opportunity to attack and devour the Christians after the arrest of James and his companions (AD 62), and Nero was just about to unleash his great persecution (Aug 64). The fact that Peter refers to Jerusalem as “Babylon” (1 Pet 5:13) suggests that he had already read the book of Revelation (written in the summer of 62). Somewhere in late 63 or early 64 would be a good date for First Peter. This would mean that it could have been written somewhere between the writing of the book of Revelation (late AD 62) and the outbreak of the Neronian persecution (Aug 64).

Mark was evidently the courier link between Peter (Jerusalem), Paul (Rome) and John (Patmos-Asia), which would explain how the NT “books and parchments” were circulated and collected into a finished canon before AD 70. Mark provided courier service to Paul by bringing copies of Paul’s prison epistles (including Hebrews) back to Peter (thus completing Peter’s collection of all Paul’s epistles, except for the last three Pastoral epistles (1 Tim, Titus, 2 Tim), which were written after Paul was released from his first Roman imprisonment. Mark was with Peter when 1 Peter was written in Jerusalem. And Mark was in Turkey or Greece when Paul wrote 2 Timothy. So I tend to think that Mark took Hebrews back to Peter in the summer 63 after Paul’s release, and then Peter wrote 1 Peter in the summer or early Fall of 63 so that Mark could deliver it to all the Diaspora churches about the time Paul was arrested the second time and sent to Rome for trial and execution.

This would mean that Mark was probably the courier for Peter’s first letter to the Diaspora churches, and explains why Mark was in the region of Greece and Turkey at the time Paul was arrested again (in late 63). This also helps us understand what Paul meant when he told Timothy (2 Tim. 4:11) to bring Mark with him when he came to Paul in prison, because Mark is “useful to Paul for [courier] service.” What service was Mark performing for Paul? Timothy was also bringing the “books and parchments” with him. If Paul was going to be martyred shortly, what would happen to those “books and parchments”? Would they be given to Mark and Timothy for safe-keeping and collection as a canon to be copied and circulated among all the churches wherever Mark and Timothy went? One of the reasons Paul does not spell any of this out in his letters is because those letters could easily fall into the wrong hands and increase the persecution against those who were carrying the letters, as well as those to whom the letters were sent. So it was for security reasons that the details are left out during this time of intense persecution. But there are enough facts given that the careful student can read between the lines and reconstruct it.

On the basis of the 2 Timothy evidence and the “fiery” persecution statements in First Peter, I am more inclined to date 1 Peter in the middle of the great tribulation (late 63 or early 64) just before the Neronian persecution broke out. It seems that Mark then carried that first epistle of Peter to the Diaspora churches in the late summer and early Fall of 63, and was in the region of Turkey at the time Paul was arrested the second time (summer of 63). Paul’s mention of Mark being in that region in 2 Timothy is the basis for this late 63 date of 1 Peter. Also, since 1 Peter 5 mentions “Babylon”, it implies that Peter had seen the book of Revelation before he wrote 1 Peter. The Neronian persecution had not broken out yet, so that fixes the date range for us.

As we mentioned, **1 Peter** appears to have been written in the summer of 63. It could have been written later in mid-64 just before the Neronian persecution broke out, depending on the length of Mark’s courier work after he left Rome, and when he might have arrived in Jerusalem to be with Peter at the time of writing. Did he go straight to Peter in Jerusalem, or did he go by land through Turkey, Syria, and Palestine? How long did it take him to get to Jerusalem? Is this Mark’s first visit to Jerusalem after leaving Rome, or is it his second one? If we knew the answers to those questions, we would know when this book was written. As it is, we will have to look closely at the contents of the book to see if it provides any clues to help us.

**NOTE:** *You will need to open your Bible for the rest of this podcast. We are going to get down into the text. So open your Bible to First Peter, chapter one, verse one.*

**1:1** -- Peter wrote to the Christians scattered throughout Pontus, Galatia, Cappadocia, Asia, and Bithynia -- the very churches Mark had just visited, or was soon to visit in his courier service for both Paul and Peter. The letter was written at a time when such travel and courier service was still possible, and when churches in Turkey were still able to function out in the open without immediate arrest and death.

**1:6-9** -- Peter alludes to a "little while" of persecution ("distressed by various trials" and "tested by fire") that the churches in Turkey were having to endure at the present time when this epistle was written. This does not seem to be the Neronian persecution, since couriers were still traveling and churches were still out in the open. However, if the intensity of the Neronian persecution was significantly diminished in the outlying provinces of the empire, it might allow for this letter to have been written during the Neronian persecution. It would be wise to leave that possibility open. However, I think 1 Peter was written about a year before the Neronian persecution broke out, while the persecution was heating up, especially there in Turkey (as we saw last time in connection with Paul and his second arrest there in Asia). If we assume that Mark went through Turkey on his way to Jerusalem, and that shortly he will be taking this first epistle of Peter back to those same churches in Turkey, then it makes a lot of sense to date this letter sometime between Mark's leaving Rome (March 63) and his presence back in Turkey at the time Paul was in prison again (Sept 63).

**1:3-13** -- Notice the expectations that Peter gives to this group of Christians scattered throughout these five provinces of Turkey:

**(1:4-5)** there was an imperishable **inheritance** and **salvation** that was reserved in heaven for them, and was ready to be **revealed to them** -- this "revealed to them" language would not make sense if it is talking about dead people who were already in the unseen realm with Christ. It is talking about those saints who live and remain until the Parousia at which time they would see Christ revealed from heaven bringing this salvation with Him. They would see that salvation revealed to them. This revelation language makes no sense if it does not mean that they would see it revealed. Why does Peter even use the word "revealed" if they were not going to **see** it "revealed," nor even know it happened? Is Peter giving them false expectations? This language implies that there would be a significant number of saints left alive there in Turkey at the time of the Parousia, who would see their inheritance and salvation "revealed to them".

**(1:6-9)** they were to rejoice during the persecution knowing that their suffering and distress would result in **praise and glory and honor** at the **revelation** of Jesus Christ, when they would "**obtain the salvation of their souls.**" How in the world would they know that they received that praise, glory, and honor, if they did not see it revealed to them at the "revelation of Jesus"? They were promised that they would obtain the salvation of their souls at the revelation of Jesus.

Question: What is this salvation of their souls? Peter is writing to faithful

Christians who were already saved by the blood of Christ. What was this additional "salvation of their souls" that they would obtain at the revelation of Jesus? And did they "obtain" it at the Parousia, like Peter promised here? Did they know they got it? Did they experience that "salvation of their souls" in any cognitive way? Did it result in their praising God and glorifying Him on that day when it was revealed from heaven? *Do you catch the power of that?*

**(1:13)** But wait, there's more! Look at verse 13 here. Peter tells these persecuted saints in Turkey to "fix their hope completely on the grace to be brought to them at the revelation of Jesus Christ." Again, we have to ask: What does the word "revelation" mean if no one saw Him revealed? Why does Peter even use this word "revelation" if they were not going to see Jesus revealed at the Parousia? Notice what would happen at this revelation: "the grace would be brought to them." Wait a minute, I thought these were Christians who already had the grace of God in their lives. What is this additional kind of grace that was going to be brought to them at the revelation of Jesus Christ? Did they receive that grace at the Parousia? Did they know they got it? Did they see Jesus revealed and see Him bringing that grace to them? Do you see the kind of expectations that Peter is giving to these dear persecuted saints in Turkey? They were expecting to see, hear, experience, and receive some things at the Parousia. Did they get those things? Did they know they got them? If not, why don't we hear them complaining about it afterwards? And if they did receive those things, why don't we hear them glorifying God and praising His Holy Name and exulting over their persecutors afterwards? Do you see the problem here? We don't hear them either complaining about the non-fulfillment of their expectations, or bragging about the glorious things they saw, heard, experienced and received at the Parousia. All we hear is deafening silence and absence afterwards. How do we explain that silence, especially in view of the fact that Papias, Polycarp, and Ignatius a few decades later started teaching that all these things that were promised by Peter to the Turkish Christians were still in the future! If any of those Christians who had seen, heard, and experienced the Parousia were still around afterwards, why didn't they speak up and set the record straight? The only reasonable excuse for their SILENCE, would be ABSENCE. *Do you catch the power of that?*

**(4:12-13)** Those saints in Turkey were in the midst of a "fiery ordeal" (a significant persecution) that was already beginning to heat up. Peter tells them to keep on rejoicing, because it was gaining for them a share in God's glory when it was revealed at the Parousia. Peter says that when they saw God's Glory revealed at the Parousia, they would "rejoice with exultation." Question: Did any of those Christians in Turkey live and remain until the Parousia? Did they see that Glory revealed at the Parousia? Did they "rejoice with exultation" when they saw it revealed? Did they receive their share in that Glory when it was revealed? Did they know they saw it and got it? Why don't we hear about them "rejoicing with exultation" afterwards? Peter had told them that these things were about to happen. Their hope was fixed completely upon it, and their expectations were at fever pitch. If they experienced those things that Peter promised here, they should have been high-fiving everyone and dancing in the streets and shouting

from the rooftops. Instead, all we find afterwards is SILENCE. No complaints, no brags, no high-fives, no nothing! Just silence. *Do you catch the power of that?*

- (4:17)** Peter says that at the time he was writing, "it was time for judgment to begin" and that it would begin with the saints first. This is speaking of the Neronic persecution that was about to descend upon the church. Peter is bracing them for that "fiery trial" that was about to get much worse. This statement helps us date the book before the Neronic persecution.
- (5:1-4)** Peter says he would be a fellow partaker of the GLORY that is about to be revealed to them. Question: If those saints who remained alive until the Parousia did not SEE that glory revealed, then why does Peter even say that it would be revealed to them, and that they would share in that glory when it was revealed? Do you see the problem here? Three verses later Peter says that "when the Chief Shepherd appears, those elders in the churches of Turkey would receive the unfading crown of glory." It does not say they would have to wait until their death sometime later to receive those crowns. Nor does it distinguish between those who remained alive until the Parousia versus those who had already died. They all (living and dead) would receive their crowns. Question: Do you see the kind of expectations Peter is giving these saints there in Turkey? Did those saints who remained alive until the Parousia see Christ "appear" as Peter promises here? Did they know that they saw Him appear? Did they receive their crowns? Did they know they received those crowns? Why don't we hear them talking about it later? *Do you catch the power of that?*
- (5:13)** This verse really helps us date the book of First Peter. Peter sends greetings from the church where he was located at the time of writing, which he says was in "Babylon". We know that he is writing from somewhere inside Palestine, since he said in the opening verses of the book that he was writing to the Diaspora Christians in Turkey, implying that he was not in the Diaspora himself. But how do we know he was writing from Jerusalem specifically? Why does he use the code-word "Babylon" to identify the place from which he was writing? Probably because he was under persecution also, and did not want to reveal his location. The word "Babylon" would not be recognized as Jerusalem by anyone except Christians who had read the book of Revelation. When Peter used this word "Babylon," it accomplished several things. It told his readers in Turkey that he had received the book of Revelation that had been addressed to them originally, and that he was writing from the very harlot city that the book of Revelation was talking about. Since I believe the book of Revelation was written in the summer of 62, and was in Paul's hands in Rome before the end of 62, then it was probably in the hands of Peter by late 62 as well. So that is the earliest that we could date Peter's first epistle. The latest that it can be dated is the outbreak of the Neronic persecution in late 64. This gives us a two-year span within which to date First Peter.

The presence of Mark there in Jerusalem with Peter is another significant clue that helps us date it. And, the fact that Peter is writing to the very churches who received John's book of Revelation, and among whom Paul visited just before he was arrested the second time, also helps us date it. I tend to think that this was Mark's first visit to Jerusalem after he left Rome and traveled through

Turkey and Syria delivering copies of the book of Hebrews. If he left Rome in March of 63, he would have had four months to get to Jerusalem before Peter wrote this epistle in July of 63. That would have been a pretty fast courier trip through Turkey, but it was possible, especially if he traveled by boat from Rome to Turkey, and then traveled the main Roman trade route through Turkey where most of the churches were. Then when he finished traveling through Cappadocia at the eastern side of Turkey, he could have boarded another boat from Antioch down to Caesarea. That would have given him lots of time to spend in Turkey, and still arrive in Jerusalem before the summer was over. This would still have left him time to travel back to those same churches in Turkey with this letter from Peter, so that he was back in the area of Asia about the same time (or right after) Paul was arrested in the late Summer or early Fall of 63. We noted last time that Paul in prison at Rome the second time was aware of Mark being in the nearby area around Ephesus when Paul wrote his second epistle to Timothy, where he tells Timothy to hurry up and get there before winter, and to bring Mark with him. Of course, there are several variables in all this which could change the date to early or mid-64. But July of 63 is about the earliest it could have been written, and that is where I tend to place it for now. Maybe some of you can "show me the way more accurately" on that. I am "all ears" on that, so don't hesitate to email me about it.

Next time we will begin looking at the Neronic persecution. I believe that is when Peter's second epistle, as well as the epistle of Jude, were written. I am aware of the fact that some scholars dispute the authorship and canonicity of both these epistles, especially since Jude quotes the book of **Enoch** as scripture, and Second Peter seems to give credence to another apocryphal book, the **Assumption of Moses**. We will try to interact with these issues in coming weeks. If any of you have some good information on the date and authorship of Second Peter and Jude, please email me and make me aware of it. I will give it due consideration in my preparation for coming podcasts.

Well, that will do it for this session. Thank you so much for listening. May all of you have a blessed week.

**Special Offers:** We urge you to partner with us in supporting this teaching ministry. Those who support this teaching ministry with a gift of \$25 or more per month, get a CD each month with four of the podcasts and their corresponding four PDF lesson outlines. Those who sign up to support us with a gift of \$50 or more per month, will receive a DVD with all of the past podcasts and their corresponding PDF lesson outlines that we did at AD70.net, plus a monthly CD with four more recent podcasts from Covenant Key with their PDF lesson outlines. If this is something you would like to take advantage of, simply email me and I will get it set up for you: <preterist1@preterist.org>

If any of this material has raised any questions for you,  
or if you need more information, do not hesitate to email me at:  
<preterist1@preterist.org>

There are a lot of great supplementary articles posted on our website,  
plus books and audio/video media for purchase. Go there and browse all you want.  
Here is the link: <http://preterist.org>

If you would like a couple of great books which detail all of these events, I would recommend **ISRAEL AND THE NATIONS** by F. F. Bruce, which is available for order at our website ([www.preterist.org](http://www.preterist.org)), and **JEWISH BACKGROUNDS OF THE NEW TESTAMENT** by J. Julius Scott, which is available from Amazon.com. Be sure to get a copy of my book, **First Century Events**, which deals with the Roman, Jewish, and Christian events of the first century. We will be using it as a study guide here in our studies of the first century. You can purchase it from our website: [www.preterist.org](http://www.preterist.org)

**Some further recommended reading:**

Josephus *Antiquities* and *Wars* (sections which deal with the Herodian rulers)