

LIBERTY UNIVERSITY  
RAWLINGS SCHOOL OF DIVINITY

Peter, the Apostle to the Gentiles?  
First Peter's New Covenant Missional Strategy to Bless the Nations

A Thesis Submitted to  
the Faculty of the Rawlings School of Divinity  
in Candidacy for the Degree of  
Master of Arts in Biblical Studies

By  
Cole V. Laing

Lynchburg, VA  
April 2022

## **Abstract**

The purpose of this thesis is to further develop the message of First Peter within the context of the Apostle Peter's life and witness. The majority of modern scholars suggest that First Peter is written to a predominantly Gentile audience. This begs the question as to why the apostle to the circumcised (Gal. 2:7) writes to a group of Gentile believers. The study aims to show that Peter, in fact, played a significant role in the earliest church's mission to the Gentiles. Peter's exhortation in his first epistle is to a group of believers who are suffering because of their faith in Christ. Peter establishes that through Christ they have an identity and citizenship as the elect people of God. They have become sojourners on earth because they no longer belong to the nations who live by their ignorance of the flesh, but they belong to the people of God who await an inheritance that is reserved in heaven. Peter develops a missional strategy based on the Noahic, Abrahamic, and Mosaic Covenants for the Gentile believers to not remove themselves from their society but to rather take advantage of the social codes as a means to be a blessing to the nations.

## Contents

List of Abbreviations .....	vi
<b>CHAPTER 1: Introduction</b> .....	1
Goal of the Study .....	3
Research Method .....	5
Chapter Summaries .....	8
<b>CHAPTER 2: THE FIRST EPISTLE OF PETER</b> .....	10
<b>Background of First Peter</b> .....	10
History of Interpretation .....	10
Critique .....	16
Summary .....	23
<b>παρεπίδημος (1 Pet. 1:1; 2:11) and πάροικος (1 Pet. 2:11)</b> .....	23
<b>Summary</b> .....	26
<b>CHAPTER 3: Peter's Life and Ministry</b> .....	28
<b>Peter in the Gospels</b> .....	29
<b>Peter in Acts</b> .....	33
Upper Room (Acts 1:12-26) .....	35
Pentecost (Acts 2:1-47) .....	38
Peter at the Temple (Acts 3:1-26) .....	39
Before the Rulers and Elders (Acts 4:1-22) .....	40
Peter and the Hellenists and Samaritans (Acts 6:1-7; 8:4-25) .....	41
Peter at Cornelius' Home (Acts 10:1-48) .....	43

Council of Jerusalem (Acts 15:1-30) .....	44
Summary .....	45
<b>The Gap Years</b> .....	46
The Location of Peter’s Ministry: Did He Reside in Rome? .....	46
Peter, Paul, and Antioch.....	54
<b>Chapter Summary</b> .....	60
<b>CHAPTER 4: THE MISSION AND ETHIC OF FIRST PETER</b> .....	62
<b>The Covenants</b> .....	64
The Noahic Covenant .....	64
The Abrahamic Covenant .....	67
The Mosaic Covenant .....	69
Covenant Exile.....	72
First Peter and Ethnic Israel.....	75
Summary .....	79
<b>The Mission and Ethic of First Peter</b> .....	79
Called to Covenant with God (1 Pet. 1:1-2) .....	80
The Fearful Life (1 Pet. 1:13-25).....	81
The Excellence of Behavior (1 Pet. 2:11-3:9) .....	82
Peter’s Missional Strategy in the Twenty-First Century.....	91
Christ Our Example .....	94
<b>CONCLUSION</b> .....	96
Further Study .....	96

Chapter Conclusions .....	96
Final Thoughts .....	98
<b>Bibliography .....</b>	<b>100</b>

## List of Abbreviations

### Secondary Sources

AB	Anchor Bible
ANTC	Abingdon New Testament Commentaries
<i>BBR</i>	<i>Bulletin for Biblical Research</i>
BECNT	Baker Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament
<i>BJRL</i>	<i>Bulletin of the John Rylands Library</i>
BST	Bible Speaks Today
<i>BTB</i>	<i>Biblical Theology Bulletin</i>
CCGNT	Classic Commentaries on the Greek New Testament
<i>HeyJ</i>	<i>Heythrop Journal</i>
<i>JBL</i>	<i>Journal of Biblical Literature</i>
<i>JSOT</i>	<i>Journal of the Study of the Old Testament</i>
NIBC	New International Bible Commentary
NICNT	New International Commentary on the New Testament
NIVAC	NIV Application Commentary
NTL	New Testament Library
RNT	Reading the New Testament
<i>RTR</i>	<i>Reformed Theological Review</i>
SGBC	Story of God Bible Commentary
SNTSMS	Society for New Testament Studies Monograph Series
<i>SwJT</i>	<i>Southwestern Journal of Theology</i>
TNTC	Tyndale New Testament Commentaries

TOTC	Tyndale Old Testament Commentaries
TTCS	Teach the Text Commentary Series
WBC	Word Biblical Commentary
WUNT	Wissenschaftliche Untersuchungen zum Neuen Testament

### **Ancient and Early Christian Writings**

<i>1 Clem.</i>	Clement of Rome, <i>First Clement</i>
<i>Act Phil.</i>	Acts of Philip
<i>Ant.</i>	Josephus, <i>Jewish Antiquities</i>
<i>Apol.</i>	Tertullian, <i>Apologeticum (Apology)</i>
<i>b. Sanh.</i>	Babylonian Talmud: Tractate Sanhedrin
<i>Can. Epi.</i>	Peter of Alexandria, <i>Canonical Epistle</i>
<i>Haer.</i>	Irenaeus, <i>Adversus haereses (Against Heresies)</i>
<i>Hist. eccl.</i>	Eusebius, <i>Historia ecclesiastica (Ecclesiastical history)</i>
<i>Phil.</i>	Polycarp, <i>To the Philippians</i>
<i>Pol.</i>	Aristotle, <i>Politics</i>
<i>Praesc.</i>	Tertullian, <i>De praescriptione haereticorum (Prescription Against Heretics)</i>
Sib. Or.	Sibylline Oracles
Wis.	Wisdom of Solomon

## Chapter 1: Introduction

The Apostle Peter is a fascinating character in the early moment of the church. Larry Helyer writes, “Even when discounting many of the legendary details that appear in the later tradition about this man, one must still marvel at what God accomplished through a Galilean fisherman who became a fisher of men.”<sup>1</sup> Peter is famous for his role in the Gospels as Christ’s chosen leader for the New Covenant community, giving him the keys to the Kingdom when Peter confessed, “You are the Christ, the Son of the living God” (Matt. 16:16). But Peter is also known for his failures. In the New Testament epistles, he denies Christ by cursing “I do not know the man!” (Matt. 26:74). Paul’s confrontation with Peter in Galatians stands out in an otherwise silent portion of his life in Scripture (Gal. 1:18-2:14). Peter is known as the apostle to the Jews (Gal. 2:7), but that is hardly a definition to describe the scope of his life and witness. Paul calls Peter the apostle to the circumcised in contrast to himself being the apostle to the uncircumcised (Gal. 2:7), but Paul is giving an incomplete statement of Peter’s ministry in defense of his own.<sup>2</sup> The fact is, when considering Peter’s life and witness described throughout the New Testament, Peter becomes an important feature in the Gentile mission—Peter is an apostle to the Gentiles.

Paul is likely the first apostle to come to mind in the Gentile mission of the earliest church, and rightfully so. Having written a significant portion of the New Testament (13 out of 27 canonical books), Paul’s role in expanding the gospel to the Gentiles is clearly seen in the Scriptures. This may have caused Peter’s role in the Gentile mission of the church to be overshadowed by Paul’s, especially in light of Galatians 2:7 and its surrounding context. Based

---

<sup>1</sup> Larry L. Helyer, *The Life and Witness of Peter* (Downers Grove, IL: IVP Academic, 2012), 302.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, 115.

on Paul's word, it seems unlikely that Peter could be considered an apostle to the Gentiles. But this study will show that this fisherman from Galilee also played a significant role in the earliest Church's mission to the Gentiles that is evident in Peter's life, witness, and first epistle. The goal of this study is to show that the themes and exhortations in the First Epistle of Peter are influenced by Peter's life and witness as told in the Gospels, Acts, and the Pauline Epistles.

In his first epistle, Peter uses the imagery and themes of Old Covenant Israel and applies them to the New Covenant community of believers. This heavy use of Old Testament themes has led many to believe that First Peter was written to a Jewish audience.<sup>3</sup> But a problem seems to exist with that interpretation as there is hardly consensus amongst scholarship on the intended audience of First Peter.<sup>4</sup> Studying the recipients of First Peter leaves one dissatisfied with the current arguments pertaining to the identity of the recipients. This is where this study fits in. Further development of placing the message of First Peter in the context of Peter's life and witness may be needed. There are numerous studies on the life of Peter that include his epistles,<sup>5</sup> but what specific incidents in Peter's life impact the recipients of his epistle? Of course, this assumes that First Peter is written by the apostle himself, a position this study holds.<sup>6</sup> Many studies will look into Peter's life within discussion on the authorship of the epistle and the influences of Peter's teachings.<sup>7</sup> The question of this study is whether or not Peter's life may

---

<sup>3</sup> Jim Sibley, "You Talkin' to Me? 1 Peter 2:2-4:10 and a Theology of Israel," *SwJT* 59 no. 1 (Fall 2016): 59.

<sup>4</sup> Chapter 2 will focus on the audience of First Peter, including four main interpretations, as well as issues on the authorship and the date of the epistle.

<sup>5</sup> See bibliography for the various studies considered for this thesis.

<sup>6</sup> See Chapter 2 for further discussion on the authorship of First Peter.

<sup>7</sup> Helyer, *The Life and Witness*, 105-125.

show that Peter is writing not only to Jews but to Gentiles as well, in light of the modern consensus suggesting First Peter is written to a predominantly Gentile audience.

The aim of this study is not to be a biography of Peter's life, nor will this be a Petrine theology or a commentary of his First Epistle. Thus, there are various implications of First Peter that this study will not cover. The scope of this study will be to show that Peter was a strong supporter of Gentile inclusion in the Church and considered them as a part of the elect people of God. First Peter is a letter of exhortation near the end of his life written to the New Covenant community of believers in response to the trials of suffering they will face in the Christian life to create a mission and ethic that the believer is to live by in the world. This chapter will introduce the study by overviewing the goal of the thesis and the research method and conclude with a summary of the remaining chapters of the study.

#### Goal of the Study

The goal of this study is to show how Peter's life and witness as described in the Gospels, Acts, and the Pauline Epistles may support the argument for a predominantly Gentile audience of First Peter, and the implication and application of the epistle in light of the study. Many studies have looked internally in First Peter for evidence of the original audience of the epistle. However, the arguments prove unsatisfactory.<sup>8</sup> Perhaps more is needed in the study of Peter's intended audience.

The New Testament shows how Peter ministered, who he ministered to, and the journey he went on to be fully amenable to Gentile inclusion. This paper will show that his life's journey leads him to a point where he understands that in the present age, the New Covenant community

---

<sup>8</sup> Chapter 2 will discuss the current arguments of the audience of the epistle.

of believers, established by Christ, has obtained the role to bless the nations by their witness.<sup>9</sup> Peter's exhortation to the believers in Pontus, Galatia, Cappadocia, Asia, and Bithynia applied to all believers in that area regardless of ethnicity—God shows no partiality in the New Covenant community of believers (Acts 10:34).<sup>10</sup> Peter was an apostle who influenced the earliest church into Gentile inclusion and created a mission and ethic based on the teachings of Christ and the Old Testament on how the community was to behave in a world in which they socially were not accepted. Peter's message is a natural continuation of the teaching of the Old Testament as it is steeped in the mission of the patriarchs and nation of Israel.<sup>11</sup> The purpose to understanding the audience of First Peter being both Jews and Gentiles shows that Peter's instruction toward a proper mission and ethic applies to all believers who are a part of the New Covenant community, regardless of their ethnicity.

The importance of this study is that it may provide a reason for understanding the Gentiles as a part of First Peter's audience.<sup>12</sup> The identity of First Peter's recipients drives the

---

<sup>9</sup> Some call this the 'missional strategy' of First Peter. See David M. Shaw, "Called to Bless: Considering an Under-appreciated Aspect of 'Doing Good' in 1 Peter 3:8-17," *BTB* 50, no. 1 (2020): 162. Shaw believes this is an aspect of First Peter in need of further research. N. T. Wright and Michael F. Bird describe Peter as "a mission strategist to Jews and gentiles." *The New Testament in its World: An Introduction to the History, Literature, and Theology of the First Christians* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan Academic, 2019), 758.

<sup>10</sup> As this study will show, Peter struggles to come to this conclusion that Gentiles are a part of the New Covenant Community believers by faith alone and apart from the Law. He becomes a champion of Gentile's receiving the full blessing of the Spirit without having to be circumcised to be an elect of God and works to bring his fellow Jews into the same mindset.

<sup>11</sup> This will be developed in Chapter 4.

<sup>12</sup> This is the majority opinion of scholarship today. See Craig S. Keener, *1 Peter: A Commentary* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2012), 31-62; Helyer, *The Life and Witness*, 113; see also Peter H. Davids, *The First Epistle of Peter*, NICNT (Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1990), 8; Norman Hillyer, *1 and 2 Peter*, NIBC (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson Publishers, Inc., 1992), 4; Luke Timothy Johnson, *Among the Gentiles: Greco-Roman Religion and Christianity* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2009), 6; Scot McKnight, *1 Peter*, NIVAC (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1996), 23; J. Ramsey Michaels, *1 Peter*, WBC (Waco, TX: Word, Inc, 1988), xlili.

interpretation of the epistle.<sup>13</sup> There are academic studies that interpret Peter's audience as predominately Gentile,<sup>14</sup> but this study looks to give a biblical framework and theology as to why Gentile inclusion is important and how that is seen throughout Peter's life and ministry. It will also show how First Peter fits within the entire narrative of Scripture as it views the New Covenant community of believers as a natural progression from the Old Covenant, because the foundation of the mission and the ethic of the New Covenant is found in the Noahic, Abrahamic and Mosaic Covenant. This is not to say the other epistles do not contribute to that idea or even discuss it, but Peter as the leader of the early church played a significant role in the formation of the New Covenant community of believers.

### Research Method

There is no shortage of scholarship concerning Petrine studies. There was a time in which the scholarship on Peter often lagged behind that of Paul and other New Testament topics.<sup>15</sup> Today, Petrine studies have grown and continue to bring new scholarship ranging from studies on his two epistles, studies within the gospels, studies within Acts, and monographs of his life.<sup>16</sup> The first step in this study will be to establish where scholarship currently stands on the identity of the recipients of First Peter as well as the authorship and the date of writing. In an

---

<sup>13</sup> Sibley, "You Talkin'," 60.

<sup>14</sup> See Keener, *1 Peter*, 31-62 for a recent academic study on why Gentiles are to be included in the audience.

<sup>15</sup> John H. Elliott deemed First Peter as the "stepchild" of biblical New Testament studies. "The Rehabilitation of an Exegetical Step-Child: 1 Peter in Recent Research," *JBL* 95, no. 2 (June 1976): 243-254. It is not that there was a lack of classical studies on the Apostle Peter. It may be that there was lack of consideration for Elliott's socio-scientific approach to the Petrine Epistles, but Elliott is correct that Petrine studies were not given the emphasis it deserves in scholarship.

<sup>16</sup> For an overview of the recent scholarship dating back to the end of the Second World War see Davids, *A Theology of James, Peter, and Jude: Biblical Theology of the New Testament* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2014), 96-100. Elliott provides an extensive bibliography of works on Peter in his commentary dating back to antiquity. *1 Peter: A New Translation with Introduction and Commentary*. AB (New York, NY: Doubleday, 2000), 153-304.

effort to condense the various opinions, four scholars of differing viewpoints on the identity of the audience have been selected who will represent the various opinions as a whole: John H. Elliott, Karen Jobes, Ben Witherington III, and Craig Keener.<sup>17</sup> These four scholars are diverse in their opinions on First Peter but also build off of each other despite their differences in conclusions.<sup>18</sup> The selection of these four scholars does not nullify the importance of other scholars, but for the sake of this thesis, these scholars represent the main arguments. Other scholars will be consulted when necessary and relevant.

After establishing the current arguments of the recipients of First Peter, this study will survey the external evidence on whether First Peter can be understood as written to Gentiles since Peter is the apostle of the circumcised (Gal. 2:7) and uses the language of the Mosaic Covenant to his readers. This will be done by examining Peter's life throughout Scripture with emphasis on his speeches in Acts and the Pauline epistles. In light of the findings, the focus of the study will shift to Peter's exhortation to his readers with emphasis on his sojourn imagery. While this study could have implications for Second Peter as well, the issues surrounding Second Peter are beyond the scope of this thesis but will be discussed where it is relevant to the study.

The approach to the study will be to understand Peter within the Protestant Canon of Scripture. This comes with the assumption that the Protestant Canon is authoritative and the inspired Word of God. The apocrypha and extrabiblical sources on Peter will be addressed when

---

<sup>17</sup> See Elliott, *1 Peter*; "The Rehabilitation of an Exegetical Step-Child," 243-254; Karen H. Jobes, *1 Peter*, BECNT (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2005); Ben Witherington III, *Letters and Homilies for Hellenized Christians Volume II: A Social-Rhetorical Commentary on 1-2 Peter* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2007); Keener, *1 Peter*.

<sup>18</sup> It could possibly be argued that any serious scholarship on First Peter will be established out of Elliott's study. Elliott is responsible for bringing Peter into the forefront of biblical scholarship and cannot be ignored, even if his conclusions are disagreeable.

necessary but are not viewed as God's inspired Word. Special consideration to the speeches attributed to Peter in Acts, the Council of Jerusalem (Acts 15) and Paul's confrontation of Peter at Antioch (Galatians 2-3) will be addressed in this study.

Much of the thesis depends on how biblical writers portrayed the events written in Scripture. Michael Licona writes that historical reliability does not need to equate to exact historical representation of the event but rather offer "an accurate gist, or an essentially faithful representation of what occurred."<sup>19</sup> As will be seen in this study, it will be impossible to fully develop a history of Peter's life due to the lack of information on the apostle.<sup>20</sup> History is limited to the sources available. Perhaps there are lost writings that would contribute to the story of Peter, but that is up to conjecture. Licona argues that Scripture ought not be considered less than other ancient sources in their historical relevance. Ancient history was not written as an exact representation of what occurred, and authors would take liberty in their writing for the sake of the story.<sup>21</sup> This thesis seeks to look at Peter from the perspective of Scripture as a whole with the understanding that the essence of Peter's historical life and ministry is portrayed. One shortcoming of the study is that the New Testament was not written to be a biography of Peter. The New Testament is written with Christ as the center theme. Peter was a part of the stories that were selected by the authors pertaining to Christ, but he was not the main focus.

Nonetheless, the gist or essence of Peter's life and witness can be developed from the New

---

<sup>19</sup> Michael R. Licona, "Are the Gospels 'Historically Reliable'?: A Focused Comparison of Suetonius's Life of Augustus and the Gospel of Mark," *Religions* 10, no. 3 (2019): 148. See his in-depth description of his approach in Licona, *The Resurrection of Jesus: A New Historiographical Approach* (Downers Grove, IL: IVP Academic, 2010), 29-132.

<sup>20</sup> This is a fact that all historical studies ultimately have to come to. There is no way to verify anything of the past as absolute. See Licona, *The Resurrection*, 31.

<sup>21</sup> Licona, "Are the Gospels," 149.

Testament that leads to the writing of his first epistle.<sup>22</sup>

The data collected for this study consists of Scripture, commentaries, monographs, scholarly articles, and reference materials. Acts and Galatians will be the main focus in this study concerning Peter's life prior to the writing of First Peter. The study will primarily interact with modern scholarship from the end of the twentieth century through the twenty-first century. The early church fathers and historical references will be considered in order to gain a historical perspective on Peter's life and witness when necessary.<sup>23</sup>

### Chapter Summaries

Chapter 2 will address the various views surrounding the recipients of First Peter. There are four main views that scholars have proposed to identify the audience. This chapter will consider the views of John H. Elliott, Karen Jobes, Ben Witherington III, and Craig Keener.<sup>24</sup> Upon surveying the four positions, a critique of the authorship, date, and audience of First Peter will be given in light of the four positions analyzed. The chapter will conclude with an overview of the sojourn imagery of First Peter. The identity of the recipients will set the foundation for the sojourn imagery used in First Peter that reflects the Noahic Covenant, Abrahamic Covenant and the Mosaic Covenant and will set the stage for Chapters 3 and 4 to explain how the imagery can be applied to a predominately Gentile audience.

Chapter 3 will cover Peter's life and ministry and how he grows into accepting Gentiles into the New Covenant community of believers. The sources of this chapter will be the Gospels, Acts, and the Pauline Epistles. Peter has one of the most in-depth character arcs in Scripture. His

---

<sup>22</sup> Further development of the history of Peter's life will be addressed throughout the thesis as necessary.

<sup>23</sup> See Bibliography for specific sources.

<sup>24</sup> See note 17 for specific sources.

life can be traced from his early calling to the authorship of First Peter. This chapter will consider his calling to leadership in the Gospels, his leadership in action in the book of Acts, and the location of his ministry in light of the phrase ἐν Βαβυλῶνι (1 Pet. 5:13). Emphasis will be placed on how Peter develops his ministry to the Gentiles and accepts them into the New Covenant community without the yoke of the Law. The chapter will conclude by analyzing Peter and Paul's ministry as they intersect in Antioch and the implication of that incident. The emphasis of this chapter will show that his ministry championed Gentile inclusion in the church and that he was an apostle to the Gentiles in addition to the Jews.

Chapter 4 will address the mission and ethic of the New Covenant community of believers in light of Peter's ministry. With the establishment that Peter is writing to the New Covenant community of believers as a whole as an apostle to both Jews and Gentiles, this chapter will focus on the application of his ministry for believers. The basis for Peter's ethic and mission is in the sojourn imagery of First Peter and how the Abrahamic and Mosaic covenants are key to the correct interpretation. Peter calls his readers to be a blessing in the life of sojourn in a world in which they suffer for their faith. The chapter will conclude with the practical application to the everyday believer in First Peter in light of the call to bless.

The conclusion will summarize the findings of this study. In light of the study, the conclusion will offer further areas of study beyond the scope of this thesis. The reader will come away with a greater appreciation of the mission of the believer as he lives a life of sojourn in the world as he awaits the blessing hidden away in heaven. To begin, the study now moves into Chapter 2 in order to investigate whether or not First Peter can be understood as an epistle written to Gentiles.

## CHAPTER 2: THE FIRST EPISTLE OF PETER

### Background of First Peter

A proper understanding of First Peter begins with establishing the background of the epistle. This chapter will consider authorship, audience, date, and occasion of the epistle. Due to how intertwined these considerations are in First Peter, they must be considered working together and cannot be separated.<sup>25</sup> There is disagreement among scholarship on whether the epistle is pseudonymous or not, as well as if the audience is predominately Gentile or Jewish.<sup>26</sup> The date of the epistle is tied into the interpretation of the author, as well as the occasion of the epistle. The socio-historical significance of the letter changes depending on when one may date First Peter due to the nature of Christian persecution changing in Rome.<sup>27</sup> The occasion also has ramifications on whether there is a figurative or literal interpretation of *παρεπιδήμιος* (1 Pet. 1:1; 2:11) and *παροίκους* (1 Pet. 2:11).

### History of Interpretation

There are four studies to consider concerning the audience situation of First Peter. The views of John H. Elliott, Karen Jobes, Ben Witherington III, and Craig Keener will be surveyed

---

<sup>25</sup> Jobes, *1 Peter*, 26.

<sup>26</sup> Sibley argues that the audience must be a Jewish audience due to concerns that any form of Gentile inclusion would be an argument for supersessionism. His argument will be considered in Chapter 3. “You Talkin’,” 59; Wright and Bird feel that there is not enough evidence to say with certainty who the intended audience of First Peter is concluding that it is best to remain “agnostic” on the intended audience. *The New Testament in*, 762; Jobes argues the identity of Jews and Gentiles is irrelevant to how the letter is written. *1 Peter*, 42. However, the majority of modern consensus is that the audience is predominantly Gentile.

<sup>27</sup> State persecution did not begin in Rome until the reign of Nero after A.D. 64 when Nero blamed the Christians for the great fire. However, Nero’s persecution seems to be local to Rome itself. An earlier date of the epistle would put its writing during the reign of Emperor Claudius (A.D. 41-54). See Allen M. Ward, Fritz M. Heichelheim, and Cedric A. Yeo, *A History of the Roman People*, Sixth ed. (Abingdon, Oxon: Routledge, 2016), 306-316; Most scholars agree that the suffering in First Peter is not from state persecution in Rome but tied to local social issues. Jobes views the Jewish displacement by Claudius (approximately AD 49) is the historical suffering to which Peter is referring. *1 Peter*, 44-55; Keener suggests that even if the persecution is not official state persecution, the persecution of Christians by Nero would certainly create imperial precedent to the persecution of Christians for the rest of the Roman provinces. *1 Peter*, 36-37.

for this thesis. The four studies are not an exhaustive list of the scholarship pertaining to the audience of First Peter, but for the purposes of this study they will suffice. The selections below are meant to be an overview of the positions. Further suggested studies will be footnoted for further in-depth analysis of the various views.<sup>28</sup> The goal is to show the arguments of differing opinions of the audience of First Peter, as well as some other pertinent information on the epistle that will be relevant to the study.

### **Social-Scientific View**

John Elliott proposed a social-scientific approach to the epistle of First Peter. He defines social-scientific criticism as “that phase of the exegetical task which analyzes the social and cultural dimensions of the text and of its environmental context through the utilization of the perspectives, theory, models, and research of the social sciences.”<sup>29</sup> Elliott views the authorship of First Peter as pseudonymous. Whether First Peter is written by a single person, or a Petrine tradition does not matter, though Elliott opts for a Petrine tradition.<sup>30</sup> This view allows for a late date of the writing during the reign of the Flavian emperors of Rome. Elliott sees a number of reasons for a late composition of First Peter between A.D. 73-92.<sup>31</sup> A few main points of his

---

<sup>28</sup> It is worth noting a classical view by J. R. MacDuff. MacDuff views Peter assisting the Apostle Paul in a region he would normally not minister. When Paul was imprisoned in Rome, the people of Asia minor turned away from Paul (2 Tim. 1:15). MacDuff believes those who turned from Paul in Asia are the same people to whom Peter is writing after being given a report by Silvanus who had been with Paul. With Paul in prison, Peter is assisting him in his ministry by writing to churches who are questioning their commitment to Christ because of the perceived persecution of Paul. MacDuff attests to a Petrine authorship of First Peter, and Silvanus was the courier of the letter. *The Footsteps of St Peter: Being the Life and Times of the Apostle* (Minneapolis, MN: Klock & Klock Christian Publishers, Inc., 1876, 1982), 569-570, 576.

<sup>29</sup> Elliott, *What is Social-Scientific Criticism?* (Minneapolis, MN: Fortress Press, 1993), 7.

<sup>30</sup> He does admit that the letter indicates a single author. In defense of his argument, he says that a single person representing the tradition is the writer, but the teaching of the letter comes from multiple sources. Elliott, *I Peter*, 130.

<sup>31</sup> For Elliott’s full reasoning see, *I Peter*, 134-138.

argument to consider are: 1) The reference to Rome as “Babylon” indicates a date after the fall of the Temple in A.D. 70.<sup>32</sup> 2) The familiarity of First Peter by Papias, Polycarp, Second Peter, and *1 Clement* suggest a date prior to A.D. 95.<sup>33</sup> 3) The mid-Flavian period allowed for the growth of the Church in Asia Minor that First Peter acknowledges as there was no state persecution of Christianity, only local social persecution.<sup>34</sup>

The issue with the Social-Scientific approach is that it disregards a figurative use of *παρεπιδήμους* (1 Pet. 1:1; 2:11) and *παροίκους* (1 Pet. 2:11). The Greek and Roman world understood the word *παροίκους* to refer to “resident aliens” as a lower social status, and the interpretation should not be used to imply an earthly pilgrimage in Elliott’s mind.<sup>35</sup> The believers’ nonconformity to society gave them a lower societal status in the Roman Empire.<sup>36</sup> The combination brought about the suffering that the believers faced described in First Peter. Elliott provides a compelling argument from the social-scientific perspective, yet there seems to be a lack of appreciation for a figurative or spiritual interpretation of First Peter. Nonetheless, his social argument is yet to be disproved and continues to hold weight in the interpretation of First Peter.<sup>37</sup>

---

<sup>32</sup> This statement is in Elliott, *1 Peter*, 137. Documents of Rome being cited as Babylon in literature occur in documents after AD 70. Thus, Elliott views First Peter to be written by someone else in Rome after AD 70. For various views on the identity of Babylon see *ibid.*, 131-134.

<sup>33</sup> *Ibid.*, 135.

<sup>34</sup> *Ibid.*, 138.

<sup>35</sup> Elliott, *Conflict, Community, and Honor: 1 Peter in Social-Scientific Perspective* (Eugene, OR: Cascade Books: 2007), 20.

<sup>36</sup> Elliott, *A Home for the Homeless: A Social-Scientific Criticism of 1 Peter, Its Situation and Strategy* (Minneapolis, MN: Fortress Press, 1990), 37-49, 67-68, 130-132.

<sup>37</sup> Keener, *1 Peter*, 45n27.

## Displacement View

The displacement view is promoted by Karen Jobes. In this view, the recipients of First Peter are believers who were displaced by the Emperor Claudius between AD 41-54.<sup>38</sup> It is these believers who were the *παρεπιδήμιος* (1 Pet. 1:1; 2:11) and *παροίκους* (1 Pet. 2:11). To Jobes, the identity of a Jewish versus Gentile audience is irrelevant to the epistle. The early date allows for Peter to be the author—or an amanuensis under his direction—of the epistle and rejects the pseudonymous claims of Elliott.<sup>39</sup> The displacement view holds that Peter based his ministry out of Rome. This would allow for the displaced believers to have had previous contact with the apostle to whom he is addressing in First Peter.<sup>40</sup>

The benefit of Jobes' argument is that it takes the social principles of Elliott's view, attributes the authorship to Peter, and works to make sense of the silent gaps in his life. The position works in theory, but the main issue is that the view requires that Peter was living in Rome early in his ministry.<sup>41</sup> Jobes admits the argument is from silence and does pose an issue to her theory.<sup>42</sup> Nonetheless, the displacement theory has drawn support from other scholars for how much it explains the gaps left in Scripture in Peter's life.<sup>43</sup>

## Socio-Rhetorical

Also based out of Elliott's work, Witherington builds a social argument that is based in

---

<sup>38</sup> Jobes, *1 Peter*, 45.

<sup>39</sup> *Ibid.*, 27, 35-38

<sup>40</sup> *Ibid.*, 49-52.

<sup>41</sup> Chapter 2 will address the location of Peter's ministry and Rome.

<sup>42</sup> Jobes, *1 Peter*, 50.

<sup>43</sup> Helyer, *The Life and Witness*, 114-116. He believes Jobes' thesis provides the best solution to a number of issues in the background of First Peter.

rhetoric. The goal of Witherington's work is to show that the author of First Peter is not only building upon a social world, but also creating a rhetorical world to his readers.<sup>44</sup> Witherington differs from Elliott in that he understands Peter to be the author of the epistle and that he is writing to Jewish Christians.<sup>45</sup> The purpose of the letter is to rhetorically build the social life Jewish believers are to live out in the diaspora. The reference to "Babylon" (1 Pet. 5:13) then is coded language to indicate the shared exilic condition the author and the readers face.<sup>46</sup> Witherington views the similarity between Peter and Paul's message as a common gospel that Peter offers to the Hellenized Jews and Paul offers the Gentiles.<sup>47</sup> Though, he finds no connection between Paul's churches and the people to whom Peter writes.<sup>48</sup> It is hard to believe that none of Paul's churches were unaware of Peter's epistles due to the large area Peter wrote to, but Witherington is correct in that Peter was not necessarily writing to Paul's churches.<sup>49</sup>

Witherington's view is important to consider in the background of First Peter. He differs from modern scholarship arguing for a Jewish audience. However, his contribution to the rhetorical perspective of First Peter cannot be ignored. First Peter, especially beginning in 2:13,

---

<sup>44</sup> Witherington, *Letters and Homilies*, 21.

<sup>45</sup> *Ibid.*, 17.

<sup>46</sup> *Ibid.*, 24.

<sup>47</sup> *Ibid.*, 27. This point will be further analyzed later.

<sup>48</sup> *Ibid.*, 33-34.

<sup>49</sup> Paul's influence in that area seems to be relatively minor. He wrote the epistles of Galatians, Colossians, and Philemon to citizens of Asia Minor, but was withheld by the Spirit to go to these areas (Acts 16:6-10). Robert Benton Seeley believes that Peter and Paul may have had a previous agreement on the division of their ministries, and the Holy Spirit approved and enforced that division. However, the epistle to the Galatians assumes that Paul had a presence in the area as well as Peter. *The Life and Writings of St. Peter*, Kessinger's Legacy Reprints (Whitefish, MT: Kessinger Publishing, LLC, 2010), 162-163.

is creating the ideal way in which a believer is to live in their social situation.<sup>50</sup> The place of disagreement with the socio-rhetorical view lies in the Jewish-only audience.<sup>51</sup>

### **Predominantly Gentile View**

This view was recently promoted by Craig Keener.<sup>52</sup> This view holds that Peter authored of the epistle, either by his own hand or by the use of a scribe. Peter is writing to an audience made of predominately Gentile ethnicity but understands Jews to also be a part of the general audience. The diaspora language used by Peter is not ethnic but spiritual. Peter is not making an argument that the earth is an exile of Christians who are to be heavenly minded, but rather an argument like Jeremiah 29:7 in that believers are to seek the welfare of the city in which they live.<sup>53</sup> In Keener's view, Peter does not go to Rome until late in his life close to his martyrdom.<sup>54</sup>

Keener's predominantly Gentile view has many satisfying qualities. However, the overall argumentation seems to lack a solid foundation as one could view the internal evidence as support both for and against Gentile recipients.<sup>55</sup> More support is needed from the rest of the canon. While Scripture is silent on the majority of Peter's life after the Gospels and Acts, it does show the nature of Peter's ministry to the New Covenant community of believers in Paul's letters and the Petrine Epistles (1 Cor. 1:11-13; 3:21-22; 9:5; Gal. 2:7-14; 1 Pet. 5:1, 12; 2 Pet.

---

<sup>50</sup> Witherington argues that Peter builds his ethic on the basis of theology, ethics, and a good evangelistic strategy. Witherington, *Letters and Homilies*, 127.

<sup>51</sup> Thomas R. Schreiner provides a critique of Witherington's position in his commentary. *1-2 Peter and Jude: The Christian Standard Commentary* (Nashville, TN: B&H Publishing Group, 2020), 25-27.

<sup>52</sup> Found in his commentary, Keener, *1 Peter*. This position is not original to Keener. There was a need for an updated defense of this position that Keener has provided. Most scholars would hold to a position similar to Keener's. For those who propose a Gentile audience see note 12 above.

<sup>53</sup> Keener, *1 Peter*, 47-48.

<sup>54</sup> *Ibid.*, 45n27.

<sup>55</sup> The passages cited by scholars are 1 Peter 1:14, 18; 2:9-10, 25; 3:6. This will be further analyzed below.

3:1-2). It is difficult to piece together the historical Peter, but the Peter of the Bible can be deducted.<sup>56</sup> The predominantly Gentile view will be further developed below to set the groundwork for the remainder of the study.

### Critique

The position of this thesis closely resembles Keener's predominately Gentile view. However, there is validity to the social ramifications proposed by Elliott that has inspired Jobes and Witherington's interpretations. In consideration of the four positions above, a critique of the authorship, date, and audience of First Peter will be provided.

### **The Authorship of First Peter**

From the first century through the eighteenth century, the apostle Peter was believed to be the author of the epistle. Despite the recent criticisms, it seems best to continue that position today.<sup>57</sup> The opening of the epistles names Peter as the author (1 Pet. 1:1). Second Peter also references a previous letter that is likely referring to First Peter (2 Pet. 3:1).<sup>58</sup> A letter bearing Peter's name would be well received due to his importance in the early Church even if he had never visited the providences specifically.<sup>59</sup> There is early reference and dependence on First Peter, most notably by Polycarp who wrote approximately around AD 112-114 (cf. *Phil.* 8:2 and 1 Pet. 2:21; *Phil.* 1:3 and 1 Pet. 1:8; *Phil.* 8:1 and 1 Pet. 2:22, 24; *Phil.* 2:1 and 1 Pet. 1:13, 22).<sup>60</sup>

A common argument found against Petrine authorship is that the Greek is too good for a

---

<sup>56</sup> Wright and Bird, *The New Testament in*, 759.

<sup>57</sup> For a recent in-depth analysis of authorship of First Peter see Schreiner, *1-2 Peter*, 4-18.

<sup>58</sup> Second Peter receives more scrutiny of genuineness than First Peter. However, even if Second Peter is pseudonymous, that would not mean First Peter is. *Ibid.*, 4-5.

<sup>59</sup> Keener, *1 Peter*, 44.

<sup>60</sup> Schreiner, *1-2 Peter*, 5.

Galilean fisherman.<sup>61</sup> This argument ultimately cannot be proven. The reference to Peter being “uneducated” and “untrained” (NASB) in Acts 4:13 is from the perspective of the rulers, elders, and scribes of Jerusalem (Acts 4:5). They felt the same way about Jesus (Mark. 1:22). They say this because Peter lacked the education in the Scriptures they had and it is not a reference to social education.<sup>62</sup> Since the time of Alexander the Great, Greek was the second language many males learned, similar to the English language today.<sup>63</sup> The possibility remains that Peter used a scribe to write his first epistle. Paul used a scribe and there is no reason to suggest Peter could not have as well.<sup>64</sup> Nonetheless, to argue the literary ability of someone two thousand years ago cannot be credibly proven one way or another.<sup>65</sup> Thirty years of ministry could have improved Peter’s Greek because he made a living by preaching the Gospel which would also improve his rhetoric.<sup>66</sup> Another argument found against Petrine authorship is that his language is too similar

---

<sup>61</sup> Werner Georg Kümmel says it is not conceivable for a Galilean fisherman to write such cultivated Greek. *Introduction to the New Testament*, trans. Howard Clarke Kee (Nashville, TN: Abingdon Press, 1975), 423.

<sup>62</sup> Davids says the terms imply one who is “relatively unskilled or inexperienced in some activity or field of knowledge.” If the religious leaders are arguing that Peter and John are untrained in religion, they would be correct. *A Theology of*, 107.

<sup>63</sup> Wright and Bird, *The New Testament in*, 759.

<sup>64</sup> The common view is that either Silvanus or Mark were the scribes and couriers of the epistle. Elliott sees them as the authority behind the letter rather than Peter. *1 Peter*, 311. Silvanus is understood to be the full name of Silas, the colleague of Paul. Peter mentions Silvanus at the end of his epistle calling him a faithful brother through whom he wrote his epistle (1 Pet. 5:12). The language Peter uses is unclear as to what role Silvanus had in the letter. At the very least, it is best to understand Silvanus may have been the courier of the letter. The language does allow for him to be Peter’s scribe, but that cannot be assumed. For further analysis of Silvanus’ role in First Peter see Keener, *1 Peter*, 393-402. It is unlikely Mark served as the scribe. There is tradition that Mark served as Peter’s interpreter in Rome and wrote his Gospel based on Peter’s stories (*Hist. eccl. 3.39.14-15; Haer. 3.1.1*), but that offers no support to Mark being Peter’s scribe. Nonetheless, the use of scribes was common in that day by both the poor and wealthy, and Peter would have had easy access to a scribe for the composition of his epistle. Keener, *1 Peter*, 10.

<sup>65</sup> Helyer, *The Life and Witness*, 109-111, esp. 110n13.

<sup>66</sup> Davids, *A Theology of*, 107. This would at least improve his oral skills in Greek. It is impossible to say if it would have improved his writing skills without an earlier document written by Peter. Thus, it is only speculative that he worked on his written skills during his lifetime.

to that of Paul's.<sup>67</sup> However, Peter and Paul teach a similar theology that has been confirmed by the Apostles themselves.<sup>68</sup> However, it would be difficult to base an argument for authorship on the similarity of language as it is unlikely there was direct dependence in the epistles of Peter and Paul one way or another.<sup>69</sup> Based on the evidence, this study views Peter as the author of the epistle with the likelihood of a scribe being used under Peter's direction.<sup>70</sup>

### **Date of the Epistle**

If Peter is the author of the epistle, the date of writing would be during the early to mid-60s A.D. This date is accepted by most who hold to Petrine authorship of the epistle.<sup>71</sup> A date in the 60s would place it during the reign of Nero.<sup>72</sup> Tradition suggests that Peter died at Nero's command (*1 Clem.* 5.4; 6.1; *Apol.* 5.3; *Praesc.* 36.1-3; *Can. Epi.* 9; *Hist. eccl.* 2.25; 3.1).<sup>73</sup> The reasoning for Nero calling for Peter's death is unknown. It could be part of his plan to blame the Christians for the fire of Rome, and he sought out two of the largest figures in Christianity—

---

<sup>67</sup> Compare the following passages from Paul and Peter's epistles: Eph 1:3, 1 Pt 1:3; Col. 3:8, 1 Pet. 2:1; Eph. 5:22, 1 Pet. 3:1; 1 Th. 5:6, 1 Pet. 5:8; 1 Cor. 16:20, 1 Pet. 5:14; Rom. 8:18, 1 Pet. 5:1; Rom. 4:24, 1 Pet. 1:21; Rom. 13:1, 1 Pet. 2:13; Rom. 12:6-7, 1 Pet. 4:10-11; 1 Tim. 2:9, 1 Pet. 3:3. See Davids, *A Theology of*, 110-112 for a brief overview of Pauline influence in First Peter.

<sup>68</sup> See Wright and Bird, *The New Testament in*, 759-760. Jobes argues that the similarity of Paul and Peter's messages does not mean Peter depended on Paul's writing for First Peter. *1 Peter*, 31-32. Chapter 3 will discuss the formation of the common message of Peter and Paul further.

<sup>69</sup> See Davids, *A Theology of*, 110-112.

<sup>70</sup> Keener agrees saying, "The external attestation for 1 Peter is thus stronger than for most ancient works accepted by classicists," and "it seems significantly likelier than not that this letter was authored by Peter." *1 Peter*, 24. See also his authorship argument *ibid.*, 8-25.

<sup>71</sup> For those who argue along these lines and a critique against it see Helyer, *The Life and Witness*, 107-113.

<sup>72</sup> Some argue for a date before AD 72. Jobes, *1 Peter*, 37.

<sup>73</sup> For an analysis of the literary evidence of Peter's martyrdom see Daniel Wm. O'Connor, *Peter in Rome: The Literary, Liturgical, and Archeological Evidence* (New York, NY: Columbia University Press, 1969), 53-89.

Peter and Paul.<sup>74</sup> Jobes suggests the date to be in the early 50s AD and Elliott suggests a date between 73-92 AD.<sup>75</sup> If Peter is indeed the author of the epistle, a date in the 60s AD is accepted. This date will be assumed for the remainder of this study.

## **Audience**

Peter is writing to believers located in the provinces of Pontus, Galatia, Cappadocia, Asia, and Bithynia.<sup>76</sup> The debate on the audience of the epistle has occurred throughout church history.<sup>77</sup> By the time Peter wrote his epistle, Jews had resided in the Asia Minor providences for some time.<sup>78</sup> The Jews' influence in the land as well as the empire's allowance for Jews to freely follow their religion would provide ample opportunity for the Gentiles to understand the Old Testament imagery of First Peter.<sup>79</sup> How the gospel spread into this area is up to conjecture. Three of the five named provinces were represented at Pentecost: Cappadocia, Pontus, and Asia (Acts 2:9). This could be an early indication of how the gospel spread in those regions if the

---

<sup>74</sup> This is speculation but plausible that Nero would seek out Peter and Paul to stifle the early Christian movement. Many early fathers attest to Peter and Paul's death by Nero. See Helyer, *The Life and Witness*, 273-277. See also David L. Eastman, *The Ancient Martyrdom Accounts of Peter and Paul* (Atlanta, GA: Society of Biblical Literature, 2015).

<sup>75</sup> Jobes, *1 Peter*, 54-55; Elliott, *1 Peter*, 138.

<sup>76</sup> Elliott views Peter's recipients being in the rural parts of these providences distinguishing them from Paul's influence on the urban communities. *1 Peter*, 90.

<sup>77</sup> The early church fathers and the reformers were divided on who the book was written to. Origen, Eusebius, and the Greek writers believed the audience to be Jewish while Augustine, Jerome, and Latin writers believed the audience to be Gentile. Edward Gordon Selwyn, *The First Epistle of St. Peter: The Greek Text with Introduction, Notes, and Essays* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Book House, 1981), 42.

<sup>78</sup> Elliott estimates that there were no less than 250,000 Israelites in the overall population of four million. Of the four million, he estimates about 5,000 were believers in Christ prior to AD 66, and by the turn of the century there were 80,000 believers. *Conflict*, 16. Keener agrees that many Jews lived in these providences. *1 Peter*, 43.

<sup>79</sup> First Peter would have been written approximately thirty years after Pentecost. This is more than enough time for Gentile believers to learn and study the Old Testament, the only Scriptures of that day. Wayne Grudem, *1 Peter: An Introduction and Commentary*, TCNT (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1988), 38-40.

Jews returned after Pentecost as many were saved (Acts 2:47).<sup>80</sup> This could also create the familiarity with Peter to that area based off his speech at Pentecost. Acts 18:2 states that Aquila and Priscilla were from Pontus. Jobes' displacement theory may be the reason for some of the early believers in that area, but even if true, that happened about 15-20 years after Pentecost.<sup>81</sup>

Paul and Silvanus did interact with some communities in the southern regions of that area (Acts 16:6; 18:19-21; 19:1-41; 20:17-35; Epistles of Galatians, Ephesians, and Colossians). One could think this would create an issue of overlap between Peter and Paul's missions. Acts 16:6 however states that the Holy Spirit prevented Paul from entering Asia and Bithynia. In addition, Antioch became a central hub of the early New Covenant community which was a bridge city into Asia Minor from Israel. It seems best to understand that Christianity did spread into these regions fairly early by the Jews at Pentecost as well as the missions of Paul.

Peter identifies his audience as the ἐκλεκτοῖς παρεπιδήμοις διασπορᾶς (1 Pet.1:1).<sup>82</sup> This conjures connection to the Old Covenant Israel.<sup>83</sup> This leads many scholars through the AD 1800s to assume the audience was Jewish.<sup>84</sup> The amount of Jewish perspective in First Peter allows for an easy connection of the audience being Jewish.<sup>85</sup> However, there are also

---

<sup>80</sup> This cannot be proven but is a realistic speculation. Jobes, *1 Peter*, 44; Elliott, *1 Peter*, 87; Davids, *The First Epistle of Peter*, 7-8.

<sup>81</sup> Refer to previous section for discussion on the Displacement Theory.

<sup>82</sup> The theme of election is significant to First Peter from the moment it starts. It connects the readers as the people of God. For a study on the significance of election in First Peter see Martin Williams, *The Doctrine of Salvation in the First Letter of Peter*, SNTSMS, 149 (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 2011), 43-80.

<sup>83</sup> For an analysis on the Jewish connections surrounding the metaphorical versus literal use of the imagery and how it connects to Gentiles see Joel B. Green, *1 Peter* (Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 2007), 14-18.

<sup>84</sup> Sibley, "You Talkin'," 60-63.

<sup>85</sup> This is James D. G. Dunn's argument. *Beginning From Jerusalem*, Christianity in the Making, Volume 2 (Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans publishing Company, 2009), 1158-1159.

descriptions of his readers that are difficult to believe Peter would describe a Jewish audience as (1 Pet. 1:14, 18; 2:25; 3:6; 4:3-4). There is surface level validity to believing these are comments to a Gentile audience, however, the same verses have been used to identify a Jewish audience.<sup>86</sup> The descriptions Peter used are based in the Old Testament. He calls their fathers' ways futile (1 Pet. 1:18),<sup>87</sup> they were straying like sheep (1 Pet. 2:25; cf. Is. 53:6), they have become the children of Sarah (1 Pet. 3:6),<sup>88</sup> and their time of acting like the Gentiles has passed (1 Pet. 4:3-4).<sup>89</sup> Many scholars have pointed to these verses as an indication that Gentiles must be a part of the recipients as well (also adding 1 Pet. 2:9-10).<sup>90</sup> Thus, it seems that based on internal evidence alone, the argument for the audience is not conclusive and seems to suggest that there is a mix of both Jews and Gentiles in Peter's audience.

The diaspora language of Peter ought to be understood as both literal and spiritual. There seems to be social implications in Peter's epistle. The reason for social suffering is debated. Elliott favors the idea that believers had become socially distant from the Greco-Roman culture

---

<sup>86</sup> See Witherington for an argument as to why these verses related to a Jewish audience. *Letters and Homilies*, 30-33.

<sup>87</sup> Keener writes that this phrase is a denouncement of pagan activities in the language Jews would use and that Peter has in mind the gentile heritage here. He also affirms that this is used in reference to Jewish heritage but believes First Peter lacks the signs of "intra-Jewish polemic." *1 Peter*, 105. Witherington believes that it could be referring to Israel's wilderness wondering or be in reference to Jews who have broken the Law and sacrificed to false gods. *Letters and Homilies*, 30. In the Old Testament, what is considered as derived of man and not God is futile (1 Sam. 12:20-22; 2 Kings. 17:15; Ps. 94:11; Eccles. 1:14; 2:1, 11).

<sup>88</sup> Whether written to Jews or Gentiles, this is a metaphorical statement. Sarah is the mother of the nation of Israel as is Abraham the father of the nation. Jews are directly descended from Sarah and Gentiles are spiritual sons and daughters of Sarah and Abraham through Christ.

<sup>89</sup> This too can be taken either way. It seems that the usage of "Gentiles" here refers to pagan activity. Jews did fall into pagan idolatry and the Gentiles had always been in it before coming to Christ. At this time in the early Church, Gentiles likely identified they were joining a Jewish movement and had taken a new identity in Christ, becoming sons and daughters of Abraham. See Keener, *1 Peter*, 291-292. As for why Peter may be identifying the Church to Judaism see Davids, *A Theology of*, 127-128.

<sup>90</sup> Grudem, *1 Peter*, 39; Davids, *A Theology of*, 102-103.

at large, and their refusal to partake in the culture brings about their suffering. David Shaw favors a different approach. He writes that the core identity to the culture remained in the believers' lives. Shaw identifies three ways Peter's exhorts his readers to bless: non-retaliation (1 Pet. 3:9); peacefulness (1 Pet. 3:11); and defense of faith (1 Pet. 3:15).<sup>91</sup> They continued to be functional citizens within society—to their government, to their masters, and in their marriages—but the new identity of Christ that impacts their lives makes them social foreigners in the eyes of society. Thus, it is not the differences but the similarities that bring about suffering from the community. This leaves no real reason for the society to cite as to why they made the Christian community suffer.<sup>92</sup>

In contrast to Elliott's position, Shaw's theory may fit best in light of First Peter. Peter is developing an ethic in his epistle that creates a godly assimilation into the community (1 Pet. 2:17). However, there is explanation for their suffering. The Jews did not like Christians as they found belief in Christ to be blasphemy against Yahweh (Mt. 9:2-8, cf. Mk. 2:1-12, Lk. 5:17-26; Mt. 26:63-66, cf. Mk. 14:61-64, Lk. 22:67-71; Jn. 5:17-18; Jn. 8:58-59; 10:30-33). The Romans, while generally favorable to the Jews and their religion, did not like new religions being formed in the empire. As time went on, the Jews were separating themselves from Christianity, and Christianity was largely becoming a new religion. The Christians' refusal to honor the gods of Rome and the emperor cult actually made them the atheists in society.<sup>93</sup> By the time of writing, Christians had already been martyred (Stephen, Acts 7:60; James the brother of John, Acts 12:2) and placed in prison (Peter, Acts 12:3-5) because of their faith. Thus, it seems that Peter is

---

<sup>91</sup> Shaw, "Called to Bless," 162.

<sup>92</sup> Ibid., 170.

<sup>93</sup> Ward, Heichelheim and Yeo, *A History of the Roman*, 355.

writing to a community of believers who are social outcasts of society due to their faith in Jesus, and Peter is exhorting them to remain as functional citizens in their culture in order to glorify God.<sup>94</sup>

### Summary

The critique shows that the evidence found within First Peter and the social-historical situation of the audience can be argued in various directions. Arguments are based on conjecture and how one reads the text. Thus, even in the majority opinion of a predominantly Gentile audience, one is left with unsatisfying arguments for the position. This leads to the study of Peter's life and witness to see if there is any evidence in the remaining canon of Scripture that may lend support to identifying the audience of First Peter. Before heading into Chapter 3, a quick study on Peter's use of *παρεπίδημος* (1 Pet. 1:1; 2:11) and *πάροικος* (1 Pet. 2:11) will assist in the study.

### ***παρεπίδημος* (1 Pet. 1:1; 2:11) and *πάροικος* (1 Pet. 2:11)**

First Peter teaches that based on a believer's election and sojourn in this world, he is to be a blessing to those he interacts with in the world. Sojourning is a specific definition chosen for this study. It comes from the word *παρεπίδημος* (1 Pet. 1:1; 2:11). The only other use of this word in the New Testament is in Hebrews 11:13. The Greek word means "residing in a country that is not one's own, a sojourner; stranger."<sup>95</sup> Peter joins *παρεπίδημος* with *πάροικος* in First Peter 2:11. *Πάροικος* is defined as "a neighbor" or "a sojourner, temporary resident, stranger."<sup>96</sup> See the chart below for the various English translation of *παρεπίδημος* and *πάροικος*:

---

<sup>94</sup> Chapter 4 will develop this theme further.

<sup>95</sup> William D. Mounce, ed., *Mounce's Complete Expository Dictionary of the Old & New Testament Words* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2006), 12, 1236.

<sup>96</sup> *Ibid.*, 12, 1237.

Translation	Παρεπίδημος (1 Pet. 1:1)	Πάροικος (1 Pet. 2:11)	Παρεπίδημος (1 Pet. 2:11)
ESV	<i>exile</i>	<i>sojourner</i>	<i>exile</i>
CSB	<i>exile</i>	<i>stranger</i>	<i>exile</i>
NASB20	<i>stranger</i>	<i>foreigner</i>	<i>stranger</i>
NASB95	<b><i>alien</i></b>	<i>aliens</i>	<b><i>stranger</i></b>
KJV	<b><i>stranger</i></b>	<i>stranger</i>	<b><i>pilgrim</i></b>
NKJV	<i>pilgrim</i>	<i>sojourner</i>	<i>pilgrim</i>
NIV	<i>exile</i>	<i>foreigner</i>	<i>exile</i>
ASV	<b><i>sojourner</i></b>	<i>sojourner</i>	<b><i>pilgrim</i></b>
ERV	<b><i>sojourner</i></b>	<i>sojourner</i>	<b><i>pilgrim</i></b> <sup>97</sup>

As is seen in the translations above, there are differences in the English equivalents of παρεπίδημος and πάροικος between the translations, which is to be expected. What is interesting is the NASB95, KJV, ASV, and ERV change the English translation for παρεπίδημος. They use the same English translation for παρεπίδημος in First Peter 1:1 and πάροικος in First Peter 2:11 and a different English word for παρεπίδημος in First Peter 2:11. The other translations keep both uses of παρεπίδημος the same and use a different English word for πάροικος.

The use of παρεπίδημος in 2:11 is to establish the connection back to 1:11. Peter uses a double title in 2:11 for his readers to emphasize their distinction as the people of God as they are to be distinct from the “Gentiles” (2:12).<sup>98</sup> This study avoids the use of the translation of “exile”

---

<sup>97</sup> The differences are in bold lettering for emphasis.

<sup>98</sup> Keener, *1 Peter*, 148.

opting for “sojourn” instead.<sup>99</sup> The use of “sojourn” is chosen because it fits within the overall narrative of Israel that Peter is pulling from to exhort his readers to bless the world around them.<sup>100</sup> Peter identifies his audience with the elect people of Israel, and as God’s elect, they are called to bless the world as the priesthood of God (1 Pet. 2:5, 9).

While “exile” is an acceptable translation, it may not give the correct connotation of Peter’s exhortation in the English language.<sup>101</sup> “Sojourning” identifies Peter’s audience with ancient Israel better than “exile.” Exile occurred when the people of God disobeyed the Lord’s commands and were forced into another land. Nowhere does Peter suggest that his readers were forced into the land in which they dwell for spiritual unfaithfulness. Nonetheless, they do find themselves as sojourners in a strange land that is not their home.<sup>102</sup> Peter identifies his recipients with Abraham, who was a sojourner in the land of Canaan. In First Peter 2:11, the phrase *πάροικος καὶ παρεπίδημος* is the same as Genesis 23:4 in the LXX.<sup>103</sup> Abraham describes himself as a *πάροικος καὶ παρεπίδημος* to the sons of Heth when looking to purchase land to bury Sarah (see Gen. 23:1-20 for context). Identifying his audience with Abraham allows for Gentiles to be included in First Peter’s recipients as they are spiritual descendants of Abraham.<sup>104</sup> As spiritual

---

<sup>99</sup> Grudem, *1 Peter*, 52. He also supports the phrase “those who reside as aliens.”

<sup>100</sup> See Shaw, “Called to Bless,” 165-167.

<sup>101</sup> Neither does the translation “stranger” as it suggests that Peter’s readers were unknown to their neighbors. See Grudem, *1 Peter*, 52.

<sup>102</sup> Elliott sees this as a literal description of the recipients’ social life in Rome as societal exiles. *1 Peter*, 101-102

<sup>103</sup> *παρεπίδημος* is also used in Psalm 39:13 in the LXX (Ps. 39:12 in the English Bible). Psalm 39 is a lament of David where he pleads to God to rescue him from the suffering he faced because of his sin. David describes himself as a stranger and a sojourner like his ancestors. Tremper Longman III, *Psalms: An Introduction and Commentary*, TOTC (Downers Grove, IL: IVP Academic, 2014), 183-186; see also, Keener, *1 Peter*, 148-149.

<sup>104</sup> Keener, *1 Peter*, 149.

descendants, believers can also identify with the mission of Israel as they are also Abraham's physical descendants.<sup>105</sup> The history of Israel becomes the history of those who are in Christ.

Paul also teaches New Covenant believers today are the spiritual descendants of Abraham. In Romans 11:1-32, Paul writes about the current situation of the church being Gentiles grafted into the elect of God as a part of the natural branch of Israel, which has been partially broken off. But not all were broken off, for it was by unbelief that Israel was broken off, and those of Israel who are faithful to Christ remain in the tree (Rom. 11:20). Now, in the place of those who do not believe, God has grafted Gentiles into His elect, but the same fate can happen to the Gentile if they too do not believe (Rom. 11:21). Peter is building upon this idea in First Peter. All who place their faith in Christ are a part of God's elect people. They are elect in a world in which they sojourn because they are waiting for an inheritance found in heaven (1 Pet. 1:4). If First Peter were not attributed to the Apostle Peter and was written anonymously, its similarity to Paul's teaching would likely bring a unanimous consensus that the Gentiles were included in its recipients. Peter's choice in language serves a key role in understanding his first epistle. The readers find themselves in a world in which they are sojourners, and Peter exhorts them to godly living during their time on earth.

### **Summary**

The majority opinion in scholarship today believes First Peter is written to a predominately Gentile audience that also includes a Jewish portion as well. However, the main arguments for the predominantly Gentile view are unsatisfactory. Chapter 3 will examine Peter's life and witness as shown in the Gospels, Acts, and Pauline Epistles. Examining Peter's life and witness may provide further evidence that supports a predominately Gentile audience

---

<sup>105</sup> Chapter 4 will develop the sojourn theme further.

who are sojourners. So far, the author of First Peter has been identified as the apostle himself in line with conservative biblical scholarship. Further studies on authorship were footnoted in the authorship section above and are seen in the summary of Elliott's Socio-Scientific approach. This is not to throw out critical views of Petrine authorship, but the scope of this thesis is not to provide a full critique of authorship. Since the apostle is the assumed author in this thesis, the date for the epistle is likely in the early AD 60s. This leaves the question of the audience of the epistle. Four views of the audience were summarized above and will continue to be referenced where relevant. Chapter 3 will overview the pertinent passages in the Gospels, Acts, and Pauline Epistles that are relevant to his first epistle that may show further evidence to a predominantly Gentile audience.

### CHAPTER 3: Peter's Life and Ministry

Chapters 1 and 2 have introduced the scholarship of First Peter. It was shown that the majority of scholarly opinion seems to favor a predominantly Gentile audience, but that does not come without doubt. The internal evidence of First Peter does not provide enough convincing support for the audience's identity. If Peter is indeed writing to a predominantly Gentile audience, it is plausible to assume that what is known of Peter in the Gospels, Acts, and epistles would give evidence to Peter as a champion for Gentile inclusion in the New Covenant community of believers. This chapter will investigate Peter's ministry to the Gentiles and lead into the analysis in Chapter 4 on how his Gentile ministry relates to First Peter.

Peter's role in the early church is not directly addressed in Scripture. He seems to be that of a guide and leader over the early community of believers. He was not the chief shepherd of a church as James the brother of Christ was in Jerusalem. Nor is there biblical evidence he was a missionary as Paul was, going from town to town preaching the gospel and establishing churches, but Acts and the Pauline epistles do show that Peter did travel (Acts 9:32; 1 Cor. 1:12; 9:5; Gal. 2:11). Scholars have described Peter as "the universal 'foundation' for all the churches;"<sup>106</sup> the "pastor and practical theologian of the earliest church," "a point person for the great commission, especially among the Jews;"<sup>107</sup> and "a successful organizer of the early churches, a mission strategist to Jews and Gentiles, and a bridge-builder among factional divides."<sup>108</sup> This chapter will show that Christ called Peter to a leadership role in the Gospels which is reflected in the remainder of the New Testament. As evidenced from the Gospels, his

---

<sup>106</sup> PHEME PERKINS, *Peter: Apostle for the Whole Church* (Minneapolis, MN: Fortress Press, 2000), 184.

<sup>107</sup> HELYER, *The Life and Witness*, 302, 305.

<sup>108</sup> WRIGHT AND BIRD, *The New Testament in*, 758.

speeches in Acts, and Paul's epistles, Peter becomes a point person in growing New Covenant community across the Roman Empire.

### **Peter in the Gospels**

The Gospels show Peter being molded into the leader Jesus called him to be which is seen later in the book of Acts. Aside from Christ, the Gospels spend a considerable amount of time on the life of Peter. The details of his life are what make Peter one of the most relatable New Testament characters. Peter was called by both a Greek and Aramaic name, *Simōn* and *šim'ōn*, respectively. His name probably relates to the tribe of Simeon and can mean "hearing" or "obedient."<sup>109</sup> Ironic, as it seems more times than not the Gospels rarely show Peter doing either. Nonetheless, the dual names indicate that Peter was likely bilingual and heavily influenced by the Hellenistic culture of the day.<sup>110</sup> He was not called *Petros* (*kephas* in Aramaic) until Christ gave him the name (Mark 3:16). Christ likely gave him the name due to the character traits Peter exhibited, especially in the Gospels.<sup>111</sup>

Christ giving Simon the name Peter could indicate the importance of Peter's role in the divine plan. God changed Abram's name to Abraham, and he became the father of the chosen nation (Gen. 17:5). God changed Jacob's name to Israel, and he became the father of the Twelve Tribes of Israel (Gen. 35:10-11). In a way, Peter became the earthly father or shepherd of the church. It was based off Peter's testimony Christ said He will build His church (Matt. 16:17-19). It was also Peter who stood up on the day of Pentecost and proclaimed the Gospel to the Jews, leading about three thousand to salvation, which many scholars believe is the inauguration of

---

<sup>109</sup> Helyer, *The Life and Witness*, 19. Helyer suggests that more likely refers to "God has heard."

<sup>110</sup> Ibid.

<sup>111</sup> Ibid.

the church age (Acts 2:14-42).<sup>112</sup>

Each Gospel puts Peter's calling as the first along with his brother Andrew (Mt. 4:18-20; Mark 1:16-17; Luke 5:1-11; John 1:35-42).<sup>113</sup> The Gospels of Matthew, Mark, and Luke each specifically reference Christ calling Peter to be a fisher of men (Matt. 4:19; Mark 1:17; Luke 5:10). The Gospels set the stage early that Peter was a leader from placing his calling first, Christ changing his name to Peter, and his calling to be a fisher of men. Luke's Gospel provides the most detailed calling of Peter. When Peter realized the presence of Jesus, he fell at His feet proclaiming, "Go away from me Lord, for I am a sinful man!"<sup>114</sup> This expression is echoing the proclamations of Moses (Exod. 3:5-6), Isaiah (Isa. 6:5) and Ezekiel (Ezek. 1:28).<sup>115</sup>

Peter is the leader of the twelve apostles of Christ and a part of the inner circle of Christ.<sup>116</sup> Many scholars view the appointment of the twelve apostles of Christ as a reconstitution of the twelve tribes of Israel.<sup>117</sup> The Gospels and history show that many in Israel

---

<sup>112</sup> I. Howard Marshall, *Acts: An Introduction and Commentary*, TNTC Vol. 5 (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1980), 59. Helyer calls Pentecost the "birthday of the church." *The Life and Witness*, 70. Bird contends that Pentecost is not the beginning of the church, but the church is the renewal of the Mosaic Covenant and a fulfillment of the Abrahamic Covenant. *Evangelical Theology: A Biblical and Systematic Introduction* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2013), 713. As it will be seen in Chapter 3, Peter exhorts the community of believers in light of the Abrahamic and Mosaic Covenants indicating some level of continuation of God's elect people going back to Abraham.

<sup>113</sup> John's narrative has Peter as the third named disciple but introduces Andrew as Peter's brother showing the importance of Peter.

<sup>114</sup> Unless otherwise noted, all biblical passages referenced are in the New American Standard Version 1995 edition.

<sup>115</sup> Helyer, *The Life and Witness*, 33. Moses (Exod. 3:5-6), Isaiah (Isa. 6:5), and Ezekiel (Ezek. 1:28) also experience a theophany in their prophetic calls.

<sup>116</sup> There are many instances where only these three were permitted to be with Christ: the healing of Jairus' daughter (Mark 5:37); the transfiguration (Mark 9:2-13; Luke 9:28-36); and the Garden of Gethsemane (Mark 14:33). These events most assuredly impacted Peter as he grew in his relationship with Christ as he became the leader Christ called him to be.

<sup>117</sup> Helyer, *The Life and Witness*, 36.

reject Christ, and God in turn rejects them, cutting them out of His elect (Rom. 11:20). Only a faithful remnant of Israel who place their faith in Christ remains. Christ establishes a New Covenant community that is fulfilling the ancient prophecies and represents a spiritual remnant of Israel (Jer. 31:31-34; Ezek. 34:25-31; 36:24-28; cf. Luke 22:20; 1 Cor. 11:25).<sup>118</sup> The New Covenant is the natural and expected continuation of the Old Covenant (cf. Jer. 31:31; Luke 22:20; 1 Cor. 11:25). Peter does not see a separate religion being formed in Christianity but connects it to the prophecies of Israel's prophets (1 Pet. 1:10-12).<sup>119</sup> This is not to say that the Church has replaced Israel, but that it currently functions in the role to bless the nations under the New Covenant as an expansion of the calling of Israel. This calling comes from Christ, who accomplished what Israel failed, and has charged the Church to proclaim His kingdom and be a light to the nations.<sup>120</sup> The Church's role to bless the nations will be further developed in Chapter 4.

Peter's leadership qualities are seen early on in the Gospels as he found himself as the apostles' spokesperson (e.g., Matt. 14:28; 15:15; 18:21; 26:35, 40; Mark 8:29; 9:5; 10:28; Luke 8:45; 9:20; John 6:68).<sup>121</sup> Physically, he had the outward appearance of a leader. As a fisherman, he was in good health and physical shape.<sup>122</sup> He was bold and quick to speak; dedicated to his faith in Christ but often acted by emotion rather than rationality and humility, leading to rebuke

---

<sup>118</sup> Helyer, *The Life and Witness*, 36; Bird, *Evangelical Theology*, 713-716.

<sup>119</sup> Davids, *A Theology of*, 127-128.

<sup>120</sup> Craig G. Bartholomew and Michael W. Goheen, *The Drama of Scripture: Finding Our Place in the Biblical Story* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2014), 215.

<sup>121</sup> Helyer calls Peter "the prince of the apostles." *The Life and Witness*, 305.

<sup>122</sup> For information on the fishing industry of that day and how it pertains to Peter's life see *ibid.*, 21-30.

and correction from Christ.<sup>123</sup> There is not enough time to analyze Peter's entire life in the Gospels.<sup>124</sup> There are two stories to emphasize for this study: Peter's confession and Peter's denials.

Peter was the first of the disciples to declare Jesus as the Christ (Matt. 16:16). It is out of this confession that Christ says the Church will be built and Peter will have the keys to the kingdom (Mt. 16:18-19). This is an establishment that Peter will be a leader for the New Covenant community, a role that is seen played out in Acts. Despite his call to lead, Peter was not yet molded to be the leader Christ called him to be. He was too proud and did not yet fully yield to God. The story of Peter's denial of Christ is a pivotal moment in Peter's life that molds him into the leader Christ called him to be. It is here Peter is humbled to the lowest point of his ministry, but Christ does not forsake him (Luke 22:31-32; John 21:15-23). While Christ was on trial, Peter failed to yield to God's plan, denying that he was ever associated with Christ (Matt. 26:69-75; cf. Mark 14:66-72; John 18:25-27). After His resurrection, Christ restores and forgives Peter for his denials, reaffirming the call he gave to him to lead the sheep in front of his fellow apostles (John 21:15-23). It is here that Christ tells him of the future suffering Peter will endure in his death that would glorify God (John 21:18). Christ asks Peter to follow Him. Unfortunately, John does not record what Christ says to Peter on their walk together, but one can only imagine the grace Christ shows to Peter in that moment preparing him to lead His Church.

---

<sup>123</sup> Walking on water: Matt. 14:28-32; Rebuking of Christ: Matt.16:21-23; Rich young ruler reaction: Mark 10:28-31; Denial of Christ: Matt. 26:33-35, 69-75; cf. Mark 14:27-31, 66-72; Luke 22:31-34, 54-62; John 18:25-27; 21:15-17; Cuts off slaves ear: John 18:10-11.

<sup>124</sup> For studies on Peter and the gospels see Helyer, *The Life and Witness*, 32-89; Jack J. Gibson, *Peter Between Jerusalem and Antioch: Peter, James and the Gentiles*, WUNT 2. Reihe 345 (Tübingen, GR: Mohr Siebeck, 2013), 19-81; Timothy Wiarda, *Peter in the Gospels*, WUNT 2. Reihe 127 (Tübingen, GR: Mohr Siebeck, 2000).

The Gospels show Peter as a dedicated follower of Jesus who fails in critical moments to yield to Christ. Perhaps this is why many believers today can identify with Peter. However, Peter's failures ought not to be why he is remembered. His reverence for Christ echoed that of the prophets reverence for the Lord (Exod. 3:5-6; Isa. 6:5; Ezek. 1:28). His divinely given name echoes the way God called Abraham and Jacob. Christ invited him to be a fisher of men (Matt. 4:19; Mark 1:17; Luke 5:10) and to lead His New Covenant community. The remainder of the New Testament details Peter's leadership in the earliest days of the Church as he fulfills Christ's calling on his life.

### **Peter in Acts**

Luke's account of Acts is often dubbed as the "Acts of the Apostles." However, it may be best understood as the "Acts of Peter and Paul" due the amount of focus placed on them.<sup>125</sup> Peter and Paul perhaps have the largest influence on the New Testament Church.<sup>126</sup> The church is indebted to their faithfulness for the growth that happened in the First Century. Many scholars focus on Paul's work in the early church and rightfully so, but Peter's role ought not be discounted because of Paul's. Peter was trained by Christ to be the leader of the Church, and Peter becomes the clear leader and point person of the early Church in Acts (Acts 1:15; 2:14, 38; 3:4, 12; 5:4, 29).

A looming question over the book of Acts is whether or not the stories are correct representations of what transpired, or if Luke took liberty in the stories for the benefit of his

---

<sup>125</sup> The title "The Acts of the Apostles" does not fit as the book does not cover all twelve apostles. Peter and Paul are the main characters of the book. Naymond H. Keathley, *The Church's Mission to the Gentiles: Acts of the Apostles, Epistles of Paul* (Macon, GA: Smyth & Helwyns Publishing, Inc., 1999), 4.

<sup>126</sup> James also had a great influence in the Jerusalem church (Acts 15:13-21; Gal. 2:9).

narrative.<sup>127</sup> The methodology of Chapter 1 established that the New Testament does give an accurate gist of the historical event.<sup>128</sup> Luke was a proper historian of his day pulling from both apostolic sources as well as secular sources to compile both his Gospel and the book of Acts.<sup>129</sup> Acts can be understood as a reliable account for historical events that transpired.<sup>130</sup> However, Luke did take liberty in certain aspects of the story, specifically in the speeches. Approximately one-third of the Book of Acts consists of speeches.<sup>131</sup> They play a significant role in Acts as they develop the early teaching of the apostles as they build the Church. The two main positions surrounding authenticity are that Luke used the speeches as literary devices to support his narrative and they are not historical, or Luke summarized what was said and they are historical. The likelihood of the speeches being exact replicas is unlikely. However, to argue that there is no historical basis to the speeches fails to consider the sources Luke uses to formulate Acts. What is written in Acts is Luke's portrayal of the original event that transpired, written as a

---

<sup>127</sup> Assuming the tradition of Luke being the author of Acts is correct. This thesis affirms that tradition. For discussion on the authorship of Acts see Darrell L. Block, *Acts*, BECNT (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2007), 15-19. Traditional dates of Acts range from the mid-60s through the 80s in the first century. Dean Pinter, *Acts*, SGBC (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2019), 23.

<sup>128</sup> See again, Licona's methodology in *The Resurrection*, 29-132 and the discussion in the Methodology section in Chapter 1 of this study.

<sup>129</sup> See Dunn, *Beginning From Jerusalem*, 80-81.

<sup>130</sup> F. F. Bruce writes, "I stand convinced that in Luke-Acts we have a history of Christian origins compiled by an heir of the tradition of Greek historiography, based on the best sources of information that were available to him—written, oral or otherwise. The work of such a man must receive respect in any historical inquiry into persons or events falling within his scope." "Galatian Problems 1: Autobiographical Data," *BJRL* 51, no 2 (1968): 293-294.

<sup>131</sup> Block, *A Theology of Luke and Acts: God's Promised Program, Realized for All Nations* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2012), 51.

theological and historical narrative.<sup>132</sup> Much work has been done on Peter's speeches in Acts.<sup>133</sup>

The goal here is to pull general themes from Peter's speeches in Acts to understand the tradition

Luke ascribes to Peter's teaching and to connect his speeches to First Peter.<sup>134</sup>

### Upper Room (Acts 1:12-26)

Upon the ascension of Christ, the Apostles found themselves waiting for the giving of the Holy Spirit. They were gathered in an upper room amongst a crowd of one hundred and twenty brethren.<sup>135</sup> The word ἀδελφῶν (Acts 1:16) is used to describe members of the same religion.<sup>136</sup> Luke lists the eleven apostles, along with the women, Mary, and Jesus' brothers.<sup>137</sup> Of that list, it can be assumed they are all Jewish, but Luke does not account for the remainder of the one hundred and twenty gathered.

The apostles were down a member after the betrayal and death of Judas. Peter stands to speak to those gathered, thus fulfilling the role Christ gave to him to strengthen the brethren

---

<sup>132</sup> See Dunn, *Beginning From*, 87-90. Perhaps Helyer says its best, "I include the sermons and speeches attributed to [Peter] as an adequate representation of his thought, even though they are now incorporated into the work of another author who has his own theological perspective and agenda." *The Life and Witness*, 15. In terms of biblical teaching, Dunn supports Martin Hengel's suggestion that there are three teachings that should be understood to come from Peter: John the Baptist's baptism for the forgiveness of sins; the interpretation of Psalm 110:1 as messianic and an early attempt to explain what happened to Christ; and the use of Isaiah 53 as a reflection of Christ's death. Dunn, *Beginning From*, 414.

<sup>133</sup> For study on the tradition Luke used to formulate the speeches see Dunn, *Beginning From*, 87-98. For analysis on the speeches' impact in First Peter see Selwyn, *The First Epistle*, 33-36; and Witherington, *Letters and Homilies*, 122-126. For further reading on the speeches in Acts see Bruce, *The Acts of the Apostles: Greek Text with Introduction and Commentary* (Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1990), 27-40, esp. 35-40; and Joseph A. Fitzmyer, *The Acts of the Apostles: A New Translation with Introduction and Commentary*, AB (New York, NY: Doubleday, 1998), 80-88.

<sup>134</sup> For a similar study on the theology of Peter's speeches in Acts versus First Peter see Selwyn, *The First Epistle*, 73-74.

<sup>135</sup> According to Paul, this is only a part of the early Christian community (1 Cor. 15:6).

<sup>136</sup> Bruce, *The Acts of*, 108. See also Fitzmyer, *The Acts*, 222.

<sup>137</sup> The list of apostles is identical to Luke 6:14-16 but differs from Matthew and Mark. Likely, Simon the Zealot in the Gospel of Luke is Simon of Cananean in the Gospels of Matthew and Mark, and Judas the son of James in Luke and Acts is Thaddaeus (Matt. 10:2-4; Mark 3:16-19).

(Lk. 22:32).<sup>138</sup> In the speech, Peter addresses the need to find a replacement for Judas by referencing the words of the Spirit spoken through David (Acts 1:16).<sup>139</sup> Luke includes this story to show the formation of a new spiritual Israel.<sup>140</sup> The twelve disciples realized their position as the leaders for the New Covenant community. As there were twelve tribes of Israel, there are twelve apostles of Christ representing the covenant tradition of ancient Israel.<sup>141</sup> The disciples at this time were in an in-between phase of their ministry. Christ had ascended and told them to wait for the giving of the Spirit.<sup>142</sup> Peter shows his confidence in the hope of the promised Spirit by attesting what Christ has done in the past as they wait for the Spirit's arrival on Pentecost.

Peter combines Psalm 69:25 and 109:8 into a compound prophecy about Judas. Psalm 69 is a lament of David over the experience of unjust suffering. In verse 25, David curses his enemies for their unjust attacks, a curse he connects to Judas. Peter is also comparing David's situation to the unjust suffering faced by Christ.<sup>143</sup> Psalm 109 is a lament of David over false accusations against him. David calls on the Lord for justice on those who have falsely accused him. The Law of Moses called for anyone who falsely accuses a person to suffer the fate

---

<sup>138</sup> Keathley, *The Church's Mission*, 15.

<sup>139</sup> Peter's recognition of a need to replace Judas may show his knowledge of Scripture and the Jewish tradition. Jewish rule stated there must be one hundred and twenty men in a city to allow for a council, and there was an expectation that there would be one leader for every ten people. The number of twelve apostles could also reflect the twelve tribes of Israel. This, of course, could be one of Luke's artistic ways of connecting the New Covenant in continuity to the Old Covenant. See Charles H. Talbert, *Reading Acts: A Literary and Theological Commentary on the Acts of the Apostles*, RNT (New York, NY: Crossroad Publishing Company, 1977), 30. See also Helyer, *The Life and Witness*, 70n3. For rebuttal see Block, *Acts*, 80-81; Beverly Gaventa, *The Acts of the Apostles*, ANTC (Nashville, TN: Abingdon, 2003), 69.

<sup>140</sup> Janusz Konicki, *The Function of the Speeches in the Acts of the Apostles* (Boston, MA: Brill, 2018), 304.

<sup>141</sup> Helyer, *The Life and Witness*, 70.

<sup>142</sup> It would have been fifty days between Christ's ascension and the giving of the Spirit. The Day of Pentecost occurs fifty days after Passover (Deut. 16:9-10).

<sup>143</sup> See Longman, *Psalms*, 262-267 for analysis of the Psalm and its New Testament usage.

intended for the one falsely accused (Deut. 19:16-21).<sup>144</sup> In the same way, Christ was falsely accused by Judas leading to His death on the cross. The use of the two psalms shows Peter's knowledge of Scripture interpreting them as Messianic and applying them in the context of Judas and his apostasy. He establishes that Judas' death was required by the Law, and his descension from Christ required him to be replaced.<sup>145</sup> If the audience is predominately Jewish in the Upper Room, the references to Psalms would have connected immediately.

Two connections can be garnered in relation to the Petrine Epistles. The suffering of the righteous is a theme of First Peter (1 Pet. 2:19-20; 3:14, 17; 4:15-16). This speech of Peter shows that unjust suffering is a theme in his message early in his ministry that continued through his first epistle. The second is Judas' apostasy. Judas' betrayal of Christ probably affected Peter for the remainder of his life. Judas betrayed Christ for thirty pieces of silver (Matt. 26:15). Peter describes the faith of a true believe as "more precious than gold" (1 Pet. 1:7) and their redemption being by the blood of Christ and not by gold and silver (1 Pet. 1:18). Perhaps in writing Second Peter, he has Judas in mind as he describes the fate of false teachers who become entangled by the things of the world, despite their knowledge of Christ (2 Pet. 2:19-22). In First Peter 2:1-2, Peter exhorts to put aside malice, deceit, hypocrisy, envy, and slander (v. 1). Each of these terms can describe Judas' attitude towards Christ in his betrayal. Rather, believers are to long for the Word of God in order to grow in their salvation (v. 2). Peter never mentions Judas in his epistles, but one can imagine that he likely has the experience of Judas in mind as he writes to his fellow believers in Christ. His heart is for believers to continue

---

<sup>144</sup> Longman, *Psalms*, 378-381.

<sup>145</sup> Bruce, *The Book of the Acts*, NICNT (Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1988), 47.

in their faith and not to run after the enticements of the world.

### Pentecost (Acts 2:1-47)

Peter's second speech in Acts is addressed directly to the Jews (Acts 2:14-40; see v. 5 for audience).<sup>146</sup> Luke states that the Jews were visiting from various nations of the earth but specifically mentions Cappadocia, Pontus, and Asia, three of the five provinces Peter writes to in First Peter. The feast of Pentecost—originally known as the Feast of Weeks (Deut. 16:10)—was a harvest celebration that became a celebration of the giving of the covenant at Mount Sinai that occurred fifty days after Passover (Deut. 16:9-10).<sup>147</sup> Jews of the diaspora would have returned to Jerusalem to celebrate the feast, as it was a feast that was to be celebrated by all, including foreigners in Israel. It is during this celebration of the Old Covenant God chooses to fully institute the New Covenant with the giving of the Holy Spirit. In celebration for God's providence for all people, He gives His Spirit for all people.<sup>148</sup>

Upon the indwelling of the Spirit, Peter addresses the crowd gathered in amazement at what has transpired. Peter references a prophecy from Joel 2:28-32. The prophecy is a call to

---

<sup>146</sup> Acts 2:5 states "devout men from every nation under heaven." The implication is devout Jews, not Gentiles. Fitzmyer believes the implication is diaspora Jews who came to Jerusalem for the feast and renders the English translation as "Now there were sojourning in Jerusalem devout men, Jews of every nation under the heavens." *The Acts*, 236, 239. Bruce Chilton argues that this is an early indication by Luke of the Gentiles being a part of the people of God. "James, Peter, Paul, and the Formation of the Gospels," in *The Missions of James, Peter, and Paul: Tensions in Early Christianity*, ed. Bruce Chilton and Craig A. Evans (Boston, MA: Brill, 2005), 4. One could view this as one of Luke's artistic liberties to Peter's original speech. However, Pentecost is for the Jews as there are separate Spirit moments for the Samaritans (Acts 8:4-25) and the Gentiles (Acts 10:1-48) later in Acts.

<sup>147</sup> Keathley, *The Church's Mission*, 16. See also Fitzmyer, *The Acts*, 233-235.

<sup>148</sup> Some have argued for a bigger implication of Pentecost being the time of the Spirit's indwelling on the Church. However, it could have just been a time marker given by Luke to signify that it has been fifty days after the crucifixion. It could be that Luke's sources believed in deeper significance to Pentecost and not Luke himself. This study has elected to stay with general connections rather than specific connections to Pentecost and the indwelling of the Spirit. For an overview on the discussion see Keener, *Acts: An Exegetical Commentary: Introduction and 1:1-2:47*, vol. 1 (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2012), 784-794.

repentance to receive divine forgiveness for all on earth who call on the name of the Lord.<sup>149</sup> Peter identifies this moment as the beginning of the last days and God's invitation for all people to come to His salvation.<sup>150</sup> In verses 22-36 Peter connects Joel's prophecy to Christ. Peter references Psalm 16:8-11 and 110:1 as prophetic testament to Christ's death and resurrection and ascension to the Father's right hand. In verse 38, Peter returns to Joel to give the proper response to the Jews in attendance. The speech looks back to the Scriptures and points forward to the future of God's people, showing that the new church age has been in the plans of God.<sup>151</sup>

God used Peter's speech at Pentecost to bring the Spirit to many Jews. A major part of his speech is the calling for repentance and a turn away from the perverseness of the day (Acts 2:37-42). Similarly, Peter calls his readers to turn from their former lusts and to continue to strive after Christ (1 Pet. 1:13-16). The difference is that in First Peter, the readers are already assumed to be believers in Christ (1 Pet. 1:1-3; 22), but the call to daily sanctification in Christ remains to all who place their faith in Christ.

#### Peter at the Temple (Acts 3:1-26)

The next sermon of Peter is at the Temple in the portico of Solomon, and it is addressed to the Jews (Acts 3:12-26). This happens after the people of Israel were amazed upon Peter's healing of the lame man (Acts 3:1-11). Peter speaks and first gives testament to Christ before turning to the prophets. Peter quotes Deuteronomy 18:15-19 and Genesis 22:18 (cf. Gen. 12:3; 18:18 and 26:4). It is in this sermon that Peter begins to show that the New Covenant

---

<sup>149</sup> Bruce, *The Acts of*, 61.

<sup>150</sup> Marshall, *Acts*, 78.

<sup>151</sup> Keathley, *The Church's Mission*, 18.

Community of believers will not be constituted of only ethnic Israel.<sup>152</sup>

Deuteronomy 18:15-19 prophesied of a future Moses. This long sought for prophet (cf. Deut. 34:10) is identified as Christ by Peter. The prophets of the Old Testament never lived up to the prophecy of Deuteronomy 18:15-19 (cf. 1 Pet. 1:10-11). The warning of not listening to Christ will lead to being cut off from the people of God (cf. Rom. 11:1-32). Peter's use of Genesis 22:18 shows that the entire earth is welcomed into Christ's blessing through Abraham. He hinted this as well in the quotation of Joel 2:32 in his previous speech.<sup>153</sup> Upon Christ's death and resurrection, non-believing Jews now stand as enemies of God (cf. Rom. 11:28-32).

This speech offers an early tradition of Peter beginning to understand the transformation the New Covenant brings to the people of God. Christ is the center of the covenant and available to all who come to Him. It was by His suffering that the prophets have been fulfilled (Acts 3:18). In First Peter, Peter builds upon Christ's suffering making it an example for the suffering of believers (1 Pet. 1:10-11; 2:21-25).

#### Before the Rulers and Elders (Acts 4:1-22)

After their speech at the temple of Solomon's portico, Peter and John were arrested and brought before the high priest and other elders (Acts 4:3). When they were questioned, Peter testified that it was by the power of Christ he healed the lame man. Ironically, the elders did not

---

<sup>152</sup> God said that Abraham's descendants will be as numerous as the stars (Gen. 15:5) which cannot be understood as physical descendants only, but with the addition of those who place their faith in Christ as spiritual sons and daughters of Abraham. This is also in line with the modern view that Peter is writing to a mixed audience of predominantly Gentile ethnicity. Thus, the New Covenant community is not constituted of the descendants of Abraham only, but a spiritual remnant made up of all peoples who will be a part of the kingdom of God that Christ brings (cf. Acts 1:8; 10:34; Rom. 11:1-32; 1 Pet. 2:10).

<sup>153</sup> It is important to keep in mind that this is Luke's way of describing the early days of the Church. The connections are easy to make today, as well as when Luke wrote Acts. In Peter's life, the inclusion of the Gentiles seems to be a process that is fully affirmed to him in his encounter with Cornelius and the Council of Jerusalem. This will be further discussed below.

initially realize they were disciples of Christ (Acts 4:13). Peter describes Christ from Psalm 118:22 as the rejected and the chief cornerstone. This is a psalm that Christ has used about Himself previously to the chief priests and elders (Matt. 21:42; Mark 12:10; Luke 20:17).<sup>154</sup> The original context of the psalm is about Israel being rejected, but the New Testament applies it to Christ's rejection.<sup>155</sup> Unlike at Pentecost, Peter gives no call to repentance to the chief priests and elders. He only gives the state of their hearts because he has nothing to prove to them and identifies them as the builders who have rejected the Messiah.<sup>156</sup>

In First Peter 2:4-8, Peter combines Psalm 118:22 with Isaiah 28:16. In the epistle, Peter uses these references to show the rejection of Christ by the Jews and exhorts his readers to accept Christ and be a part of His people.<sup>157</sup> However, the psalm is not used to prove Christ to the Jews but rather to show that salvation is now available to the Gentiles. They are now part of the people of God due to the Jews' rejection of their Messiah (Rom. 11:11). The significance of the passage is that it establishes Christ as the cornerstone of the new living temple built up by His followers regardless of ethnicity.

#### Peter and the Hellenists and Samaritans (Acts 6:1-7; 8:4-25)

The study has so far shown the progression of Peter understanding the doors to the kingdom are not reserved for the Jews only but for all who place their faith in Christ. Acts 6:1-7

---

<sup>154</sup> It seems best to understand Peter learned to use this passage from Christ himself. Witherington, *Letters and Homilies*, 116.

<sup>155</sup> Bruce, *The Book of*, 93.

<sup>156</sup> Perhaps Peter views the false teachers in the same light as Judas (2 Pet. 2:19-22).

<sup>157</sup> Peter changes the wording of the Septuagint to emphasize Christ in this passage. See, Paul A. Himes, "Why did Peter Change the Septuagint? A Reexamination of the Significance of the use of *τῆθῆμ* in 1 Peter 2:6," *BBR* 26, no. 2 (2016): 237-240. See also, Jocelyn A. Williams, "A Case Study in Intertextuality: The Place of Isaiah in the "Stone" Saying of 1 Peter 2," *RTR* 66, no. 1 (April 2007): 43-45.

does not specifically name Peter, but the passage mentions the twelve apostles were present (v.2) and as the leader of the apostles, it is logical to assume that he had influence on the apostles' decisions. Acts 6:1 reveals Hellenists have joined the community of believers and received mistreatment by native Jews.<sup>158</sup> This prompts the disciples to establish seven leaders who would help resolve this situation. The church chose seven Hellenists to lead and serve the Hellenist Christians. It is a logical decision to let the Hellenists lead the Hellenists.<sup>159</sup> What stands out is that they did not feel the need to include non-Hellenist Jews among the seven.<sup>160</sup>

In Acts 8:4-25, Phillip has evangelized in Samaria where many have come to faith in Christ. The apostles hear of this and send Peter and John to Samaria so those in Samaria may receive the Holy Spirit. Upon their return journey to Jerusalem, Peter and John continued to preach the gospel throughout the villages of Samaria. This event is the second instance of Peter using the keys to the kingdom to open the door for Samaritans to receive salvation and is understood as the Samaritan's Pentecost.<sup>161</sup>

While there are no speeches by Peter given in the two passages about the Hellenists and Samaritans, they are important steps in the early days of the church showing that there was acceptance by the apostles for the Hellenists and Samaritans. It is evidenced in Peter's message to the rulers and elders (Acts 4:1-22) that they have been rejected, and God's elect is made up by all who place their faith in Christ. Peter may not have hesitated with Samaritans, perhaps recalling Christ's interaction with the Samaritan woman. However, as will be seen in the visit to

---

<sup>158</sup> Hellenists were Greek speaking Jews. Marshall, *Acts*, 133-134.

<sup>159</sup> Block, *Acts*, 261.

<sup>160</sup> Marshall remarks that this is not to say that there are two separate movements within the early Church. *Acts*, 133. For a discussion of the suggested implications of Hellenists Jews see Fitzmyer, *The Acts*, 347-348.

<sup>161</sup> Helyer, *The Life and Witness*, 73

Cornelius, Peter still has an inward struggle on the Law's relationship to the Jew and Gentile in the New Covenant.

#### Peter at Cornelius' Home (Acts 10:1-48)

Peter's interaction with Cornelius accounted in Acts 10 gives insight to the struggle in Peter's heart. Peter understands that salvation was not held to ethnic Israel alone, but it was a process for him to fully accept Gentiles. After all, Peter was a zealous Jew. He expected Christ to bring the kingdom during His time on earth, but that did not happen in the first coming. The encounter with Cornelius shows that Peter was still struggling with how the Law applies to the New Covenant community of believers. If it were not for the vision from God in verses 10-16, Peter may not have gone into Cornelius' house as it was not the custom of the Jews to enter into the house of Gentiles (Acts 10:28).<sup>162</sup> Cornelius was a God-fearing man, and he gathered a large Gentile crowd to meet with Peter (Acts 10:2, 27). Verses 34-47 give account of Peter's message to the Gentiles. In his message, Peter makes no Old Testament reference other than stating that the prophets bear witness to Christ (Acts 10:43). Rather, Peter preached the gospel message and the Holy Spirit fell on the Gentiles listening to his message (Acts 10:44). The arrival of the Spirit gave the Gentiles affirmation of their inclusion in the New Covenant community as well as affirmed to Peter that salvation was indeed for all people as God shows no partiality between Jew and Gentile (Acts 10:34).<sup>163</sup> The issues of the Law and its relation to the New Covenant Community however still continued to be debated after this event.

Luke does not cite any specific passages concerning Christ in Peter's speech to the

---

<sup>162</sup> Bruce, *The Book of*, 205.

<sup>163</sup> Richard Bauckham writes, "both the distinction between pure Israel and impure Gentiles and the distinction between the holy people Israel, separated for God, and the profanes peoples, separated from God, have been abolished." "James, Peter, and the Gentiles," in *The Missions of James, Peter, and Paul: Tensions in Early Christianity*, ed. Bruce Chilton and Craig A. Evans (Boston, MA: Brill, 2005), 115.

Gentiles. When speaking to a Jewish audience, Peter cites the words of the prophets as evidence for the gospel. However, he does not do that at Cornelius' house, rather he just says the prophets bear witness to Christ (Acts 10:43). Peter uses a similar style in First Peter (1 Pet. 1:10-11, 20).<sup>164</sup> There is not enough evidence in Scripture to prove Peter made a habit of not citing the prophets directly to Gentile audiences, however, it may offer insight into Luke's perception of Peter's tradition in preaching the gospel. Nonetheless, the speeches of Peter have shown a gradual inclusion of Gentiles into his ministry.

#### Council of Jerusalem (Acts 15:1-30)

The final speech of Peter is found in Acts 15:7-11. There had been a disagreement amongst the early believers as to whether the Gentiles ought to observe the commands of the Mosaic Law or not (Acts 15:1; cf. Gal. 2:11-14). This prompted the gathering of the apostles and the elders to discuss the issue. Here, Peter is the first to stand up and defend Gentile salvation by faith alone, arguing that the yoke of the Law should not be placed on them (Acts 15:7-11). Peter affirms that this comes from God's command given to him, and he testifies to his own experience at Cornelius' house (Acts 15:7).<sup>165</sup> At the end of the council, the apostles commanded three things for Gentile believers to follow: not to eat of animals sacrificed to idols, not to eat the blood of things strangled, and to abstain from fornication (Acts 15:29). These regulations have hints of the Noahic Covenant as well as the laws for Gentiles in the Mosaic Covenant. God condemned the practice of eating the life blood of animals, and this applied to all peoples of the earth (Gen. 9:4). Under the Mosaic Covenant, the sojourner who lived in Israel was to bring their sacrifices to the tent of meeting to offer to the Lord (Lev. 17:8-9), was not to

---

<sup>164</sup> Bruce, *The Acts of*, 61.

<sup>165</sup> Marshall, *Acts*, 264.

eat the blood of animals (Lev. 17:10-13) and was to live by God's sexual ethic and not do what the nations practice to defile their land (Lev. 18:1-30). Thus, the apostles declared that the ethic of the Gentiles in the Mosaic Covenant was to continue into the New Covenant.<sup>166</sup>

The council of Jerusalem sets the stage for the theological battle the apostles would face for the rest of their lives in the ministry of the Gospel. While the leaders of the church declared the Law was not required for salvation in Christ, that did not stop zealous Jews from placing the Law over the Gentile believers.<sup>167</sup> Paul's letters are evidence that many of the Jews did not accept that Gentiles could be full members of God's people apart from adherence to the Law (specifically the law of circumcision, see Rom. 2:29; 1 Cor. 7:18-20; Col. 2:8-14; cf. Deut. 10:16; 30:6. See also Gal. 1:6-9; 2:15-21). In his epistle, Peter does not focus on the requirements of the Law but rather the ethic and mission of the Law that continues into the New Covenant, for both Jews and Gentiles. Peter likely understands the issue of the Law and salvation has been adequately addressed in his ministry, or that it was not as important as exhorting his readers to continue to strive in their sanctification.

### Summary

Luke's accounts of Peter's speeches show the tradition of Peter's teaching in his ministry. Many of his teachings in Acts are seen in his first epistle as noted above. The significant take away from his speeches is that God used his ministry to bring the Spirit to the Jews, Samaritans, and Gentiles. His ministry paved the way for Paul's mission to the Gentiles. The Gospels and Acts give the most detail on Peter's life and ministry. It is seen in these five

---

<sup>166</sup> See Bauckham, "James, Peter," 119-120; Carl R. Holladay, *Acts: A Commentary*, NTL (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox Press, 2016), 307.

<sup>167</sup> Block understands this passage to be an indication that the early church believed that Gentiles are now fully incorporated into the community of God if they fear God and do righteousness. *A Theology of*, 298. The Jerusalem Council will be discussed more below in the Paul section.

books that Peter did, while perhaps slowly, come to acknowledge Gentile inclusion into the New Covenant Community by faith. He continues that belief in his First Epistle. Based on the evidence of the Gospels and the speeches of Acts, it is reasonable to conclude that Gentiles were a major emphasis in Peter's ministry and supports the possibility of First Peter being written to a predominantly Gentile audience.

### **The Gap Years**

Despite the large focus of Peter in the Gospels and the first third of Acts, Scripture goes almost silent on the apostle's remaining life. This has intrigued a number of scholars and has ultimately led conclusions on Peter's life to be developed out of silence. This section will focus on the location of Peter's ministry, who he interacts with in his ministry, and his relationship with the apostle Paul as found in the New Testament epistles.

#### **The Location of Peter's Ministry: Did He Reside in Rome?**

The tradition of Peter living in Rome was first introduced by Irenaeus in A.D. 190 (*Haer.* 3.3.2) and was widely accepted for hundreds of years. It was not until the thirteenth century that the position was called into question by the Waldensian sect. The Waldensians believed Scripture was the only authority of the Faith, and the lack of reference to Peter residing in Rome was evidence that it never happened.<sup>168</sup> The essence of their argument is valid and is still argued today by those who do not hold to the Catholic tradition. The challenge of studying Peter's residence in Rome is that both positions argue from a position of silence. The remainder of this section will examine the evidence surrounding Peter's whereabouts prior to his traditional death in Rome in the AD 60s.

---

<sup>168</sup> O'Connor, *Peter in Rome*, 3.

## Canonical Evidence

If there is any literary evidence to Peter being in Rome, the assumption would be that Paul's epistles, or the books of Acts would provide the evidence. However, Paul is silent on Peter's whereabouts, as is Luke in Acts. Paul wrote Second Timothy when he was imprisoned in Rome, yet there is no mention of Peter in 4:21. Colossians 4:10-18 also fails to mention Peter.<sup>169</sup> While there was no requirement for Paul to mention Peter, it seems unlikely that he would skip over Peter, whom Paul considered to be a pillar of the Church (Gal. 2:9).

Paul's epistle to the Romans provides more evidence against Peter's residence in Rome. Romans is clear that there is an established church in Rome (1:8), and that Paul was not the one who founded it (15:20). Many assume that the church of Rome must have been founded by an apostle, and with Paul not available, they assume Peter is that apostle.<sup>170</sup> If the assumption is true, Paul would seem to be breaking his own rule of not building on the foundation of another man (Rom. 15:20). There are two possibilities around this. Romans is more of a letter to gain support of the believers there in future ministry to Spain rather than trying to establish a ministry in Rome.<sup>171</sup> Paul could also get around his statement if Peter was not the founder of the Roman church. Jobes correctly suggests that just because Peter resided in Rome does not mean that he founded the church.<sup>172</sup> Peter's residence in Rome does not automatically support the

---

<sup>169</sup> It would depend on where Paul was imprisoned when writing the epistle to the Colossians. If Paul was imprisoned in Rome and writing in the AD 60s, it would perhaps seem odd that he does not mention Peter if Peter had resided in Rome. Some argue that Paul was writing during an earlier imprisonment and there would have been no need to mention Peter. For discussion on Paul's imprisonment and Colossians, see McKnight, *The Letter to the Colossians*, NICNT (Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 2018), 64-66.

<sup>170</sup> O'Connor, *Peter in Rome*, 8.

<sup>171</sup> Bird, *Romans*, SGBC (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2016), 6-12 *esp.* 11-12.

<sup>172</sup> Jobes, *1 Peter*, 49. Jobes does support the theory of Peter's residence in Rome.

Catholic tradition of Peter being the first Bishop of Rome. However, it would make sense that if Peter were in Rome ministering with the church, Paul would have mentioned him at some point in the epistle. Romans has no mention of Peter, especially in Chapter 16 where Paul gives sixteen specific names and alludes to many more people.<sup>173</sup> Thus, it seems best to understand that prior to the writing of the Epistle to the Romans (AD 56-59),<sup>174</sup> Peter had not been in the city of Rome.<sup>175</sup>

The book of Acts also provides no information of Peter's location after Acts 12:17, except for his attendance at the Council of Jerusalem in Acts 15. Acts is presumably written after Paul's arrival in Rome. It would seem odd for Luke not to mention Peter was in Rome, but the narrative was not concerned with Peter's ministry at that point.

With the lack of biblical support that Peter resided in Rome, some have taken Paul's explanation of the Antioch incident in Galatians 2 to be an indication that Paul and Peter did not get along and thus Paul refused to name Peter in his epistles.<sup>176</sup> Arguing for this position requires one to read into the text of Paul's epistles leading to other hypotheses that cannot be proven.<sup>177</sup>

Karl Heussi argues that Galatians 2:6 is implying that Peter has already died. The argument is that Paul's use of ποτε ἦσαν is him saying that Peter was no longer a pillar of the

---

<sup>173</sup> Eduard Lohse believes this is an absolute compelling reason to conclude that Peter had never been in Rome prior to the writing of Romans. "St. Peter's Apostleship in the Judgment of St. Paul, the Apostle to the Gentiles: An Exegetical Contribution to an Ecumenical Debate," *Gregorianum* 72, no. 3 (1991): 421.

<sup>174</sup> This is a conservative date for the Epistle to the Romans. Bird, *Romans*, 4-5.

<sup>175</sup> It is important to note again Jobes' displacement theory. While she does not hold to the Catholic view that Peter was the first Bishop of Rome, she does suggest that Peter resided in Rome prior to the displacement of the Jews by Emperor Claudius between AD 41-54 from the city of Rome. She believes that many were displaced to the regions Peter writes to in First Peter. For a full description of Jobes' theory see *1 Peter*, 44-55. In the end, the internal evidence of Scripture seems to indicate that Peter had not been in Rome prior to the writing of Romans.

<sup>176</sup> Helyer, *The Life and Witness of Peter*, 94-95.

<sup>177</sup> O'Connor, *Peter in Rome*, 9.

church or that he was dead.<sup>178</sup> In Heussi's view, Peter would have died in between the writing of First Corinthians and Galatians (cf. 1 Cor. 9:5).<sup>179</sup> The benefit of Heussi's interpretation is that it would explain the lack of information on Peter in Acts and the New Testament Epistles, especially Romans. However, if Peter were dead, it is unlikely that Paul would have mentioned him three times in Galatians and spoken of him in such harsh terms without the ability for Peter to defend himself.<sup>180</sup> Heussi has provided an interesting position to consider, but it lacks validity.<sup>181</sup>

### **Three Views of ἐν Βαβυλῶνι (1 Pet. 5:12)**

Scholars have debated if the text of First Peter implies Peter was in Rome. Scholars point to the phrase ἐν Βαβυλῶνι as a cryptic reference to Rome (1 Pet. 5:13). There are three main views of interpretation for what ἐν Βαβυλῶνι means. The first is that it is a literal reference to the ancient city of Mesopotamia. The second view is that it is a reference for the city of Rome. The third is that it is used as a metaphor to further his exile theme of the epistle. The three views will be considered below.

#### **Literal Interpretation**

Babylon could be a literal reference to the city of Babylon of that day.<sup>182</sup> This is the least

---

<sup>178</sup> Peter's death then would have occurred around AD 55-56, a view not in line with his traditional death in the AD 60s. O'Connor, *Peter in Rome*, 12. James the Son of Zebedee's death is recorded in Acts 12:2 and traditionally occurred around A.D. 44.

<sup>179</sup> As will be shown below, this thesis understands an early date for Paul's epistle to the Galatians which would not allow for Heussi's view.

<sup>180</sup> O'Connor, *Peter in Rome*, 13.

<sup>181</sup> One could not make this argument in line with Peter's traditional death either. If that was the case, Galatians would have to have been written after Romans which seems unlikely due to the omissions of the Jerusalem Council of Acts 15.

<sup>182</sup> Another suggestion by Reinach is that Babylon refers to the military outpost on the Nile delta near Memphis. However, there is no merit to this suggestion. See O'Connor, *1 Peter*, 15-16.

popular opinion, and it is scarcely found after Irenaeus wrote that Peter resided in Rome in A.D. 190 (*Haer.* 3.3.2). Nonetheless, there are some who have suggested it as the correct implication of First Peter 5:13. Erasmus and Calvin<sup>183</sup> both believed that this was a reference to Babylon in Mesopotamia.<sup>184</sup> Likely, as members of the reformation, they were looking to distance themselves from the Roman church's tradition of Peter's role of bishop in the church. The earliest reference found of Peter being near Babylon is the *Acts of Philip* in A.D. 400 stating he was in Parthians written (*Act Phil.* 3.1). However, Philip's claims are disputable.<sup>185</sup> Both Pausanias and Pliny claim that the city of Babylon was more of an unsuspecting solitude in that day and not a major city.<sup>186</sup> The assumption that Peter's reference requires it to be the city is not necessary either. The region in that time was still referred to as Babylon. Peter very well could be referring to the believers who were in the region greeting those whom he is writing. There were Jewish synagogues in the region of Babylon in the early First Century A.D.<sup>187</sup> Peter, being the apostle to the circumcised, could very well have connected with the Jews in the area at some point in his life, even if it is unverifiable, but it seems unlikely due to the insignificance of the city in the first century. The reference to Babylon does not have to mean Peter was there at the time of writing. A prior connection to the people of Babylon, no matter the implication, could have been the prompt to send greetings to First Peter's recipients. Nonetheless, to understand

---

<sup>183</sup> John Calvin, *Commentaries on the Catholic Epistles*, trans. John Owen (Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1948), 22-23.

<sup>184</sup> O'Connor, *Peter in Rome*, 15.

<sup>185</sup> Elliott, *1 Peter*, 883; O'Connor, *Peter in Rome*, 16.

<sup>186</sup> O'Connor, *Peter in Rome*, 16.

<sup>187</sup> Aharon Oppenheimer, *Between Rome and Babylon: Studies in Jewish Leadership and Society* (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2020), 394. Keener argues that it was unsafe for Jews to be in Babylon during that day. *1 Peter*, 404.

Peter referencing the city or region of Babylon is unlikely due to the amount of unverifiable speculation required to hold that position.

### Cryptic Reference to the City of Rome

The second view is that Peter is referring to the city of Rome.<sup>188</sup> The logic is that John used Babylon as a reference to Rome in Revelation and the assumption is that Peter used the same method. Revelation is an apocalypse which incorporates many symbols in its writing. First Peter is a letter of exhortation. There is no use of apocalyptic styles in Peter's writings, and no other New Testament epistle identifies the location of its author in apocalyptic terms. To base an argument solely on John's use of Babylon would indicate a late writing of First Peter after Peter's death. However, if Peter is the author of the epistle, there is no evidence that the church used Babylon in place of Rome prior to A.D. 64.<sup>189</sup> John seems to be using Babylon as a cover for Rome due to the negative attitude to the empire.<sup>190</sup> At the time of First Peter's writing, there was no need to avoid mentioning Rome, especially when Peter writes about honoring the emperor (1 Pet. 2:13-17).<sup>191</sup>

The Catholic tradition cites Acts 12:17 and First Peter 5:13 as evidence for Peter being in Rome.<sup>192</sup> However, any interpretation of Acts 12:17 is an argument from silence and cannot

---

<sup>188</sup> Two recent commentators who support this position are Keener, *1 Peter*, 404; and Dennis R. Edwards, *1 Peter*, SGBC (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2017), 213.

<sup>189</sup> One study finds no evidence that Rome was replaced with Babylon in Christian writing prior to A.D. 96. E. Schuyler English, "Was St. Peter Ever in Rome?" *Bibliotheca Sacra* 124 no. 496 (Oct. 1967): 317.

<sup>190</sup> Brian K. Blount says there is an "obvious assignment of the name Babylon to the city and empire of Rome" and that "John clearly intends a critical correspondence between the two imperial forces." Blount, *Revelation: A Commentary*, NTL (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox Press, 2009), 8.

<sup>191</sup> O'Connor came to similar conclusions on why First Peter's Babylon cannot be understood as a reference to the city of Rome. However, O'Connor does believe that is the best interpretation of the text. *Peter in Rome*, 17-18.

<sup>192</sup> English, "Was St. Peter," 314-315.

be proven.<sup>193</sup> Many proposals for the place Peter went have been given, yet none can be proven without a doubt. What is known is that Peter did return to Jerusalem a few years later for the Council of Jerusalem in Acts 15:7. Depending on when one dates the Antioch incident in Galatians 2:11-14, Antioch is the opposite direction of Rome. However, Antioch would be a land route one could take in a journey from Israel to the regions Peter is writing to in First Peter, but that is an unlikely route due to the superiority of sea travel.<sup>194</sup>

A more convincing argument for the city of Rome comes from Witherington. He argues that Peter is in Rome writing after the death of Paul. This would also explain why Silvanus and Mark are with Peter.<sup>195</sup> At this point, if Nero has killed Paul, Peter may have wanted to keep a low profile and use Babylon as a cryptic reference to Rome. However, this may be difficult to date in that order, especially if Peter authored Second Peter as well.

#### Metaphorical Use

The third view is that Peter is using Babylon as a metaphor for the diaspora. This view goes along with the consistent use of the Old Testament in First Peter. The Babylonian captivity was a major event in the history of the people of Israel. Heussi argued that Peter's use of Babylon ties back to First Peter 1:1 and the use of *διασποράς*.<sup>196</sup> This would create a bookend metaphor that opens and closes the book describing the exile of the Christians life.<sup>197</sup> Babylon represents a city that is against God. The city goes back to the Tower of Babel in Genesis 11:1-9

---

<sup>193</sup> Jobes, *1 Peter*, 50.

<sup>194</sup> *Ibid.*, 51.

<sup>195</sup> Witherington, *Letters and Homilies*, 248.

<sup>196</sup> Chapter 4 will develop the sojourn imagery of First Peter.

<sup>197</sup> Edwards suggests that it could be Peter referencing his own life being exiled out of Jerusalem by the Jews. *1 Peter*, 214. Witherington believes this is a possible interpretation as well. *Letters and Homilies*, 24.

through John's apocalypse as a city against God that exiled His people into the diaspora.<sup>198</sup> In light of the imagery Peter uses, it seems best to understand Babylon not as a reference to the cities of Babylon or Rome, but to the diaspora theme that bookends the epistles.<sup>199</sup> Babylon then is a symbol of the great exile of the Old Testament that Peter's readers still find themselves living.

## Summary

In the end of surveying the evidence for Peter's life in the city of Rome, the most that can be stated as certainty is that he was there near the end of his life, just prior to his martyrdom. Any argument for Peter residing in the city of Rome prior to A.D. 60 cannot be affirmed and is an argument from silence. Peter likely resided primarily in the greater Judean area for the majority of his apostleship, but that is all up to conjecture. The church of Rome was not started by Peter, nor did he have a major personal impact on the growth of that church. It seems best to understand Babylon as figurative sojourn imagery to the mission and ethic of the Christian life as arguing for the identification of Rome cannot be historically affirmed, even if it is a likely assumption.<sup>200</sup> What can be clearly seen in the text of First Peter is that he bookends the epistle with similar language.<sup>201</sup> As "a point person for the Great Commission"<sup>202</sup> of the early Church, it would seem unlikely that he would move so far away from Jerusalem for an extended period of time when he was a vital piece in the establishment of the growing Church.

---

<sup>198</sup> Jim Samara, *James, 1 and 2 Peter, and Jude*, TTCS (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books, 2018), 188.

<sup>199</sup> For further support of this position see Jobes, *1 Peter*, 33. Edwards, while believing that it does refer to literal Rome, does see exilic ties in the use as well. *1 Peter*, 213-214.

<sup>200</sup> Chapter 4 will explore sojourn imagery further.

<sup>201</sup> See Witherington, *Letters and Homilies*, 245; and Jobes, *1 Peter*, 285.

<sup>202</sup> Helyer, *The Life and Witness*, 305

## Peter, Paul, and Antioch

The Antioch incident between Peter and Paul is a crucial moment in the early Church. The general takeaway from reading the passage is that Peter and Paul did not like each other and did not agree on Gentile inclusion in the community of believers.<sup>203</sup> As this study has shown, Peter was one of the earliest advocates for Gentiles being fully incorporated into the New Covenant community of believers. In order to understand what transpired at Antioch, one must survey the lives of Peter and Paul leading up to that event.

Paul's name is synonymous with the Gentile mission of the church. Paul's ministry has often overshadowed Peter's role in the Gentile mission. Peter is often understood as the apostle to the Jews (Gal. 2:7), but Scripture shows that he was also an apostle to the Gentiles.<sup>204</sup> In Galatians, it is important to remember that Paul is defending his own ministry to the church of Galatia when defining the roles of the apostles.<sup>205</sup> Consideration must be taken that Paul is writing from his own perspective.<sup>206</sup> There is no record of Peter describing his apostleship as one only to the circumcised, and the biblical accounts of Peter's ministry show him ministering to both Jews and Gentiles.<sup>207</sup> Christ said Peter will have the "keys of the kingdom of heaven," (Mt. 16:19). Christ gave Peter the authority to announce the terms of admittance and establish the

---

<sup>203</sup> Perkins, *Peter*, 109. Helyer does see some ambivalence between Paul and Peter. *The Life and Witness*, 94-95. Witherington argues that the silence of Paul on Peter's response means that Paul lost the argument and stood alone among the apostles in his position on Gentile inclusion. *Grace in Galatia: A Commentary on Paul's Letter to the Galatians* (Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1998), 159. Some go as far to say that Peter is no longer a true apostle by the end of his life. See Robert Gundry's work. *Peter: False Disciple and Apostle According to Saint Mathew* (Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 2018).

<sup>204</sup> Edwards writes, "Jesus called Peter as an apostle to minister to both Jews and Gentiles." *1 Peter*, 29.

<sup>205</sup> See also the Lord's description of Paul's ministry to the Gentiles and the sons of Israel in Acts 9:15.

<sup>206</sup> Elliott, *1 Peter*, 325; Bauckham, "Peter, James," 125.

<sup>207</sup> Donald P. Senior and Daniel J. Harrington, *1 Peter; Jude and 2 Peter*, Sacra Pagina (Collegeville, MN: Liturgical Press, 2008), 5-6.

limits of behavior in the New Covenant community.<sup>208</sup> To view Peter as an apostle to only the Jews does not line up with the role Christ gave Peter.

The book of Acts shows three instances where Peter uses the “keys to the kingdom” given to him by Christ for the admittance of the New Covenant community.<sup>209</sup> Peter opens the door to Israel upon the Holy Spirit’s indwelling of the believers at Pentecost (Acts 2:14-47). In Acts 8:14-17, Peter opens the door to the Samaritans so that they would receive the Holy Spirit. In Acts 10:34-44, Peter opens the door to the Gentiles to receive the Holy Spirit. All three events happen prior to the Antioch incident where Paul confronts Peter for ignoring the Gentile believers.

Developing a timeline for Peter and Paul’s lives is a challenging task as Scripture is not always clear on where certain events happened as the biblical writers were not necessarily concerned about a historical timeline.<sup>210</sup> As established above, the receiving of the Holy Spirit by Jewish, Samaritan, and Gentile believers occurred prior to the Antioch incident. After the Cornelius event, Peter returned to Jerusalem to report what happened to the brethren (Acts 11:1-18). There were some who took issue with Peter eating with uncircumcised men (v 3). Peter defended his actions as well as the inclusion of Gentiles in the New Covenant community. To the Jews, Gentiles represented what was profane, but Peter remarks that the Gentiles have received the very same gift of the Spirit the Jews received (v. 17).<sup>211</sup> At the end of the meeting, those

---

<sup>208</sup> The authority of admittance comes from Christ, but humanly speaking, Peter plays a key role in the new covenant community being open to all people. Acts shows other apostles using the “keys” to open the kingdom to peoples as well (e.g., Philip in Acts 8:4-40). See Helyer, *The Life and Witness*, 43-45.

<sup>209</sup> The limits of acceptable behavior will be addressed in a later section.

<sup>210</sup> The timeline of events this study suggests is adapted by Bauckham. “James, Peter,” 135-139.

<sup>211</sup> *Ibid.*, 114-116.

gathered agreed that God had extended salvation to the Gentiles, though Luke does not mention any agreement on the Law and the Gentiles (v. 18), especially circumcision.

By this time, Paul has already had his encounter with Christ on the road to Damascus and had begun to preach Christ in the synagogues (Acts 9:1-22). Paul had also spent time in Arabia before he met with any of the apostles in Jerusalem (Gal. 1:17). Paul states that three years after he returned to Damascus he went to Jerusalem and met Peter and James, the brother of Christ (Gal. 1:18). This could be the same trip Acts 9:26-27 describes. The context of Acts shows the apostles feared Paul, and that could explain why Peter and James are the only two who met with Paul. At this point, Peter and Paul met for fifteen days. This length of time is more than adequate for Peter and Paul to discuss various theological issues and to establish their gospel message.<sup>212</sup>

After Paul departed from his first trip to Jerusalem, he did not return for fourteen years (Gal. 2:1). It is likely that his return to Jerusalem was inspired by the famine of Acts 11:27-29, and this was the same trip to bring relief to the churches of Judea.<sup>213</sup> Upon his return to Jerusalem, Paul wanted to be reacquainted with Peter and James, as well as John. The reason he sought them out was because he feared that his message may have been in vain (Gal. 2:2) and was seeking affirmation from the pillars of the Church that his gospel message to the Gentiles was correct. Peter, James, and John affirmed Paul's gospel and gave him and Barnabas the right hand of fellowship (Gal. 2:9). Thus, we have an established gospel that affirms Gentile inclusion by faith that does not require circumcision. The meetings may explain why Paul and Peter have

---

<sup>212</sup> Bauckham, in reference to the previous meetings, writes, "at least in Paul's impression and reporting of the Jerusalem consolation, there was no question of a middle way, according to which uncircumcised Gentiles could be Christians but still profane, excluded from the messianically renewed Israel." "James, Peter," 122.

<sup>213</sup> Ibid., 135-136.

similar messages in their epistles.<sup>214</sup> It also shows Paul's respect for Peter and the other leaders in Jerusalem. Paul visited them to affirm that his gospel had not been in vain by giving Peter, James, and John a report of his fourteen years of ministry to Gentiles. Paul did not necessarily need to affirm his gospel, because it came from Christ, but affirming a common message in the New Covenant Community would be beneficial to his ministry and ensured there would not be a divide within the growing New Covenant community.<sup>215</sup>

The next chronological event is debated. Either Paul's confrontation of Peter at Antioch happened prior to the council of Jerusalem (Acts 15:4-21) or the council occurred prior to the Antioch incident (Gal. 2:11-14). It seems best to understand Acts 15:1-2a as Luke's description of the Antioch incident thus placing it prior to the Council of Jerusalem and is the reason why the council occurred.<sup>216</sup> The lack of mention of a second meeting in Galatians could be indication that Paul wrote Galatians after the Antioch incident but prior to the Council of Jerusalem.<sup>217</sup> Paul, having already evangelized to the southern Galatian churches, would have wanted to quickly dispel the false teaching about Gentiles as soon as he had heard of the heresy. He had witnessed

---

<sup>214</sup> Their connections of John Mark and Silvanus could also explain the similar messages. MacDuff believes that Silvanus came to Peter with some of Paul's epistles in hand, allowing Peter to read what Paul had written. While unprovable, this would explain the similarities in Peter and Paul's message. *The Footsteps*, 596-597. Nonetheless, it seems best to understand a common message amongst the apostles, especially between Peter and Paul as they had previous meetings together to discuss their gospels.

<sup>215</sup> Bruce, *The Epistle to the Galatians*, NIGTC (Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1982), 108-111; *ibid.*, "Galatian Problems: 1," 303.

<sup>216</sup> It is generally assumed that the Antioch incident occurred after the council of Jerusalem. See Francis Watson, *Paul, Judaism, and the Gentiles: Beyond the New Perspective* (Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 2007), 106. However, it does not make sense if the council occurred first if it is the men of James who cause Peter to turn from the Gentiles when James gives the final word at the council supporting the Gentiles (Acts 15:13-21). Joseph Lightfoot suggests that the men of James misrepresented James' position and abused the authority given to them. *St. Paul's Epistle to the Galatians. A Revised Text with Introduction, Notes, and Dissertations*, 4th ed. CCGNT (London: Macmillan and Co., 1874), 112. Bruce believes that even if the men of James are imposters, it would be difficult for them to invoke James' authority after the Council of Jerusalem. "Galatian Problems: 4. The Date of the Epistle," *BJRL* 54, no. 2 (1971): 265.

<sup>217</sup> Bauckham, "James, Peter," 136.

the effect of the heresy in Antioch, and it evidently had made its way to other churches in the area. In Paul's mind, salvation by faith alone for Gentiles is a settled debate. By the time of the meeting at Antioch, Peter and Paul had already met twice to affirm they were teaching the same gospel to the Gentiles. Paul reacts because he perceives Peter to be going against what they have already established and what Peter himself does not believe.<sup>218</sup> He rebukes Peter because he believes Peter is retracting from their common gospel. The necessity of the Council of Jerusalem was to establish it as the official position of the Church.<sup>219</sup>

Scholars have proposed this passage is an indication of Peter and Paul disliking each other.<sup>220</sup> However, Paul states that it was the arrival of the men of James that caused Peter to stop eating with the Gentiles (Gal. 2:12). It seems that James was slower than Peter and Paul to accept that Gentiles did not have to be circumcised. Some have suggested that James held higher authority in the church than Peter did.<sup>221</sup> If that is the case, then that could explain why Peter deferred to the Jews, but there is no canonical support to that position. Peter has previously defended that in the New Covenant community there is no distinction between Jew and Gentile (Acts 10:34-35; cf. 11:4-17). Paul is not lecturing Peter on Gentile inclusion into the church. Paul is upset that the leader of the New Covenant community is not leading by example. Paul's statement about the men of James indicates that the Jerusalem church may still struggle with this issue, but the men did arrive without the support of the church (Acts 15:24). Peter seems to be in

---

<sup>218</sup> Bruce, "Galatians Problems 1," 308.

<sup>219</sup> For further defense of this timeline of events see Bauckham, "James, Peter," 135-139, esp. 135n87.

<sup>220</sup> Helyer states Paul may have "harbored some envy of this 'acknowledged pillar.'" Helyer, *The Life and Witness*, 95. For possible implications of the incident see Martin Hengel, *Saint Peter: The Underestimated Apostle*, trans. Thomas F. Trapp (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2010), 63-79.

<sup>221</sup> Keathley, *The Church's Mission*, 44.

an intermediary role in this situation. He fully supports the association with Gentiles, but he does not want to offend his brethren from Jerusalem.<sup>222</sup> However, his concession alienated the Gentile believers in Antioch and led others into hypocrisy (Gal. 2:13). This is why Paul calls him out. Paul views this as a reinstatement of the social boundary between ethnic Jews and Gentiles and a compromise of their gospel message, even if that was not Peter's intention.<sup>223</sup> Peter is a pillar of the Church and failed in this instance to be an example to lead his Jewish brethren to the truth of the gospel.

What transpired at Antioch showed the necessity of the Jerusalem Council (Acts 15:2b-29). Here, the gospel is established for the entire church, not just Peter and Paul. Peter, Paul, Barnabas, and James speak at the council. James' interaction is interesting given the context of Galatians 2:12 as it was James' men that caused the debate at Antioch, and James corrects his followers. In the end, the apostles and elders send a letter back to Antioch establishing that the Gentiles do not have to be circumcised and to only follow a few essentials: not to eat from things sacrificed to animals, not to eat the blood of things strangled, and to abstain from fornication (Acts 15:28-29).<sup>224</sup>

Understanding Antioch in its context shows that there is no need to see animosity between Peter and Paul.<sup>225</sup> Paul was discouraged by Peter's actions, but Peter offers no excuse

---

<sup>222</sup> Hengel, *Saint Peter*, 60-61.

<sup>223</sup> Bauckham writes that Peter may have viewed fellowship with Gentiles as permissible for Jewish Christians, but Paul viewed it as mandatory. "Peter, James," 127-128. See also Bruce, "Galatians Problems 1," 308.

<sup>224</sup> For a detailed defense of the Antioch Incident being the precursor to the Council of Jerusalem with Galatians being written in between see Bruce, "Galatian Problems 1," 292-309; "Galatian Problems 4," 250-267.

<sup>225</sup> Markus Bockmuehl believes that the incident caused initial animosity between Peter and Paul that did not linger until the end of their lives. Markus Bockmuehl, *Simon Peter in Scripture and Memory: The New Testament Apostle in the Early Church* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2012), 28-29, 31.

and receives Paul's critique. They call the council of Jerusalem so that the leaders of the early church are of one mind when it comes to Gentile inclusion. Peter is still human, and in this instance, he relapsed into his past cowardness and was not as zealous for the Gentiles as Paul was. Paul calls Peter to stand up for what he knows is the truth of the gospel and not to water it down for the sake of those who are yet weak in their faith. First Peter displays the humility of Peter near the end of his life. Rather than giving himself recognition, he focuses his epistle on the person of Christ and the salvation that is found in Him to all who place their faith in Him. He exhorts his readers to live a life that will bring glory to Christ in the world. Perhaps Peter has Antioch in mind when he writes these words of exhortation remembering in his own life a time where he failed to bring glory to Christ through his actions.

### **Chapter Summary**

The goal of this chapter was to analyze Peter's life and ministry as described in the Gospels, Acts, and the Pauline Epistles to look for evidence to support the popular opinion that First Peter is written to a predominately Gentile audience. The hypothesis was that if Peter were an apostle to the Gentiles, there would be canonical evidence that lends support to Peter being a champion of Gentile inclusion into the New Covenant community of believers. A brief review to emphasize the key points is below.

The Gospels establish Peter as a leader. In the analysis of the Gospels, connections were made with the Old Testament in Peter's calling and name change that gives early indication of the significant role he will play in the establishment of the Church. Despite the accounts of his failures, Christ gives Peter the keys to the kingdom, and it is through his ministry that the Spirit is given to the Jews, Samaritans, and Gentiles as described in Acts.

Acts details the progression of Peter's ministry as he lives out the leadership role given to

him by Christ. Understanding that the speeches attributed to Peter in Acts are based on the tradition of his teaching, Acts shows that Peter progressed to his understanding that the New Covenant community would be open to all by faith alone and apart from the works of the Law, especially as it pertained to Gentiles inclusion. The speeches also showed similarity to his teaching in First Peter, lending support to a common teaching by a common teacher.

The gap years of Peter's life provide little insight into his ministry. It was concluded that Peter had not visited Rome prior to Paul writing the epistle to the Romans, but Scripture suggests that Peter did travel to preach the gospel and his role is that of a guide and point person for the growing community of believers within the Roman empire. The discussed chronology of Peter and Paul's relationship shows that they had met and established a common gospel that was established on salvation by faith alone. The Antioch incident showed Peter's role as the mediator between the Jews and Gentiles, but in Paul's eyes, Peter was betraying their gospel that they had established.

Peter ministered to both Jews and Gentiles. Based on the evidence shown in this chapter—that Peter was a champion for Gentile inclusion in the church and also served as an apostle to the Gentiles—it is reasonable to conclude based on the evidence of the Gospels, Acts, and Pauline Epistles, a predominantly Gentile audience is a valid identification of First Peter's initial readers. First Peter is an epistle to all who are in the New Covenant community of believers, regardless of ethnicity. Chapter 4 will focus on the implication of Peter's exhortations to a predominantly Gentile audience in light of the Old Testament sojourn imagery as it relates to the lives of the believers living in the Roman Empire.

## CHAPTER 4: THE MISSION AND ETHIC OF FIRST PETER

History has so far shown Peter was not a prolific writer. Only two canonical epistles are attributed to him. It may never be known if he wrote more epistles. Scripture and the writings of the early church fathers are the main sources to the life and ministry of Peter.<sup>226</sup> The Petrine Epistles give a glimpse into the mind of Peter near the end of his life. A man who was once rebuked by Christ for being presumptuous, is a man of humility in his first epistle. The goal of the previous chapters is to show that Peter was an apostle to the Gentiles just as much as he was to the Jews and that evidence from his life supports the theory that First Peter is written to a predominately Gentile audience. This chapter will look into the implications of First Peter's audience and the application of Peter's exhortation to his readers. The issue of the heavy use of the Jewish Scriptures to the Gentile readers still needs to be addressed. Jobs writes that Peter is addressing his audience "indiscriminately from within the traditions of biblical Israel, in which the author was thoroughly steeped."<sup>227</sup> The epistle does assume a knowledge of the Jewish Scriptures.<sup>228</sup> However, it is important to understand that Peter is not writing to a Jewish audience only. His message applies to all who have placed faith in Christ and have joined the New Covenant community of believers and the elect of God.<sup>229</sup>

Peter writes to those who are suffering for their faith in Christ. They have become sojourners in the world, looking forward to the hope found in Christ. The epistle applies to the

---

<sup>226</sup> For references on early fathers and Peter see Gerald Bray, editor, "The First Epistle of Peter," in *James, 1-2, 1-3 John, Jude*, Ancient Christian Commentary on Scripture (Downers Grove, IL: IVP Academic, 2000), 118-127; Eastman, *The Ancient Martyrdom*.

<sup>227</sup> Jobs, *1 Peter*, 42.

<sup>228</sup> Keener, *1 Peter*, 31; Elliott, *1 Peter*, 12-17.

<sup>229</sup> Craig Blomberg, *From Pentecost to Patmos: An Introduction to Acts through Revelation* (Nashville, TN: B&H Academic, 2006), 450.

Jews because they identify with the language of sojourn and exile in their own personal history. For Gentiles, they become sojourners as they are rejecting the world they grew up in, rejecting the gods of Rome, and rejecting their household, alienating themselves from the community standards of their day. They no longer can call their community a home because they no longer live in their old pagan ways.<sup>230</sup> The implication is that Peter writes to the entire community of believers and the message is not exclusive to Jews only. This opens the letter to be applicable to the Church today. Peter calls his readers to be a blessing in this time of sojourn on earth. All who place their faith in Christ are called to a mission and ethic to bless the nations they find themselves in so that all may come to glorify Christ and may enter into His kingdom.<sup>231</sup>

The goal of this chapter is to show how the Old Testament covenants influenced First Peter's exhortation to the New Covenant community of believers. A key theme of First Peter is sojourning.<sup>232</sup> The term *παρεπιδήμιος* can be understood as relating to exile or sojourning. This study finds sojourning as the best rendering of the term in the context of First Peter.<sup>233</sup> To see how sojourn language applies to the New Covenant community, the Old Testament must be properly understood.

The interpretation of *παρεπιδήμιος* has been a vibrant discussion among scholars. Chapter 1 showed Elliott's proposal of a social application describing social exiles within the

---

<sup>230</sup> Edwards writes "The moral estrangement Christians experienced in their society was a consequence of not sharing society's values and customs." *1 Peter*, 102.

<sup>231</sup> Bird writes "the church at present is a community of exiles...but we are journeying on toward the heavenly kingdom." *Evangelical Theology*, 236.

<sup>232</sup> It is the sojourn language that brings some to conclude that the audience is predominantly Jewish, as they would best understand the arguments. Dunn, *Beginning From*, 1158.

<sup>233</sup> Grudem, *1 Peter*, 52. See the Introduction as well.

Roman Empire and views that were influenced by his arguments.<sup>234</sup> Many who read Peter's epistle could have been exiles in the Roman empire. However, he does not leave room for a spiritual application for the language in the epistle.<sup>235</sup> On the other side, some see no social or literal basis for the sojourn language and see it as purely figurative.<sup>236</sup> This view comes with doubt as well, as it fails to counter Elliott's thesis. Peter is not making an eschatological point of how the Christian is to be so "heavenly minded" that you lose focus on your sojourn on earth.<sup>237</sup> In order to apply a spiritual application to *παρεπιδήμοις* beyond the social implication, one must understand the theology and mission of the Old Testament covenants—a call to God's elect people to bless the nations.

## **The Covenants**

### The Noahic Covenant

Noah is made famous for his role in the flood narrative found in Genesis 6:1-10:32. There is not a direct command for Noah to bless the nations, but there are similarities to Noah's life to what is experienced by God's elect. Genesis 6:5-8 states the heart of man was intent on evil desires only, leading the Lord to declare judgment of man in the form of the flood, sparing only Noah and his family. Verses 1-4 show the evil of man was influenced by the sons of God and the Nephilim. The identity of the sons of God and the Nephilim is debated. The modern consensus is

---

<sup>234</sup> See section "History of Interpretation" in Chapter 1 in review of Elliott's proposal and the views he influenced.

<sup>235</sup> Elliott, *1 Peter*, 101.

<sup>236</sup> Will Robinson and Stephen R. Llewelyn take a more figurative approach to First Peter citing that if the author is not actually Peter, then the audience should not be understood as literal as well. "The Fictitious Audience of 1 Peter," *HeyJ* LXI (2020): 939-950.

<sup>237</sup> Keener agrees stating, "Peter does not envision exile as so heavenly minded that they are no earthly good." *1 Peter*, 47-48.

that they are fallen spiritual beings.<sup>238</sup> It is beyond the scope of this study to identify the beings, but what is important for this study is that God will judge both man and spirit when they fail to be faithful to His command.<sup>239</sup> The language of the sin in Genesis 6:2 is the same language used in Genesis 3:6. Eve *saw* (הִרְאָה) the fruit and *took* (הִקְלָחַת) the fruit (Gen. 3:7). In the same way, the sons of God *saw* (הִרְאָה) the daughters of men and *took* (הִקְלָחַת) for themselves wives (Gen. 6:2).<sup>240</sup> The implication is that what God has made good (Gen. 1:31) man has distorted for his own desires. The flood narrative shows that without God, people will be driven by their sinful desires influenced by the evil spirits who are against God.

Despite the evils of the world, Noah became a preacher (lit. ‘herald’) of righteousness (2 Pet. 2:5; see also *Ant.* 1.74 (1.3.1); *b. Sanh.* 108a; *Sib. Or.* 1.155-161; *1 Clem.* 7:6; 9:4). Noah was the only person who found favor with the Lord prior to the declaration of the flood judgment, for every other man was corrupt in the eyes of the Lord (Gen. 6:8-13). In the days leading to the flood, Noah and his family were a persecuted minority who remained faithful to the Lord.<sup>241</sup> A theme of First Peter is to remain in fear of the Lord and live faithfully to Him and to put aside the futile ways of the world despite the pressure to partake (1 Pet. 1:6-7, 14-18; 2:4-8, 11-12, 15-17; 4:3-4). Peter compares the flood waters to the waters of baptism (1 Pet. 3:20-

---

<sup>238</sup> For a recent discussion on the topic see Keener, *1 Peter*, 269-279. See also Thomas Keiser, “The ‘Sons of God’ in Genesis 6:1-4: A Rhetorical Characterization,” *Westminster Theological Journal* 80, no. 1 (Spring 2018): 103-120.

<sup>239</sup> It is likely fallen angels that Peter is referencing in First Peter 3:19-20. There is similarity to Peter’s use of the flood narrative to *1 Enoch* 6-22 which seems to support an angelic interpretation. The flood narrative is a widespread story in many ancient myths, and Gentiles would likely be able to understand Peter’s implication. It seems that Peter could be using the narrative and the connection of *1 Enoch* to show that Christ has authority over “the angels, authorities and powers” (1 Pet. 3:22). See Helyer, *The Life and Witness*, 151-152.

<sup>240</sup> See Carol Kaminski, “Beautiful Women or ‘False Judgement’? Interpreting Genesis 6.2 in the Context of the Primaevial History,” *JSOT* 32, no. 4 (June 2008): 464.

<sup>241</sup> Helyer, *The Life and Witness*, 157.

21). For Noah, the flood represented salvation.<sup>242</sup> The salvation found through the flood signified Noah's faithfulness to the Lord. In a comparable manner, the waters of believer's baptism become a sign of a believer's faithfulness to Christ. Baptism represents Christ's work of salvation for all who believe and the believer's commitment to remain faithful to the Lord. Those who are not faithful to the Lord receive judgment from the waters. The waters of the flood brought judgement on all flesh on earth whereas those who do not place their faith in Christ cannot identify with His work in believer's baptism. God is a righteous judge. Condemnation will come to those who are unfaithful to Him.<sup>243</sup> Failure to yield to God's grace will lead to death. The people of Noah's day perished in the waters of the flood, but their death did not come without warning. For one-hundred and twenty years, God delayed the flood (Gen. 6:3), but only Noah and his family yielded to the Lord (Gen. 7:13-16). Those who fail to place their faith in Christ will also find death being outside of Christ's salvation, but every breath man receives is an act of mercy by the Lord to man to turn to Him. In Second Peter, the flood serves as a reminder of the judgment that will come to those who fail to follow the Word of the Lord.<sup>244</sup> False teaching had influenced the church and Peter uses the flood in addition to the judgment of fallen angels and the cities of Sodom and Gomorrah as examples that God will spare the righteous even among those who are wicked.

When the flood subsided, God made a covenant with Noah that applies to all mankind. God promised to never judge the earth again by the waters of the flood, and the rainbow became

---

<sup>242</sup> Keener notes that Peter's salvation theme with the flood is not found in Genesis but is used in Jewish sources. *1 Peter*, 277-278

<sup>243</sup> Edwards, *1 Peter*, 164-165.

<sup>244</sup> Michael Green, *2 Peter and Jude: An Introduction and Commentary*, TNTC (Downers Grove, IL: IVP Academic, 1987), 122-123.

the sign of this promise (Gen. 9:11-12). God gave Noah and his family the command to be fruitful and multiple upon the earth (Gen. 9:2, 7; cf. Gen. 1:28). Noah receives no direct command to bless the nations as there were no nations of the earth to bless, but through Noah's seed, every race and nation of mankind are born. Noah blesses by becoming the father of all nations. Despite a new line of mankind, evil still prevailed in the world. Genesis 9:20-27 describes the sin of Ham which brings a curse upon Canaan, and Genesis 11:1-9 shows man again disregarding the command of the Lord straying further from Him. Peter identifies the flood as proof that God will judge evil. Second Peter 3:7 says the present world is reserved for a judgment of fire that will one day come. As Noah remained faithful to the Lord in the days of the coming flood, so too are believers to remain faithful in the days leading to the judgment of fire.<sup>245</sup> The Gentiles in Peter's audience can relate to Noah because Noah himself was not a Jew but was called by God and blessed the world through his faithfulness. Noah's descendants were marred by sin, but believers today are called to go into all the world, to bless the nations and to bring the new birth found in Jesus Christ to all descended from Noah.

### The Abrahamic Covenant

The background of the Abrahamic Covenant begins with Genesis 1-11. God created the universe and placed man in the garden to work and subdue it and to multiply upon the earth (Gen. 1:28). The earth was God's, but man decided to ignore God by bringing sin into the world (Gen. 3:1-24). This act of man started a downward spiral. Any effort to return to God on man's part was futile. As man became corrupt, so too did the spirits (Gen. 6:2-4). Deuteronomy 32:8-9 and Psalm 82:1-8 say that God handed the earth over to the sons of God, and they ruled the earth

---

<sup>245</sup> For further connection of Noah and the recipients of First Peter see Helyer, *The Life and Witness*, 157-158.

corruptly. Even with the judgment of the flood (Gen. 7:1-8:13), sin still prevailed in the earth (Gen. 9:18-25). The only thing that could save man from his sin would be an intervention from God.

In Genesis 12, God intervenes. He calls a man named Abraham<sup>246</sup> out of the world ruled by the corrupt sons of God, from his country and from his father's house to be a blessing to all the families of earth (Gen. 12:3). The identity of Abraham is a mystery. He is first introduced at the end of Genesis 11, and a few verses later, God makes a covenant with him. Abraham did not earn this election by God. God chose him to be the blessing to the world. Prior to his calling, Abraham lived the life of a pagan outside of God's blessing.<sup>247</sup> If not called by God, he would have died living the futile life of a pagan. God's covenant with Abraham came with a promise, "To your descendants I will give this land" (Gen. 12:7).<sup>248</sup> Abraham had a future hope that one day his descendants would inherit the land promised, but he was to be a sojourner of the world until the promise was fulfilled.<sup>249</sup> In the narrative, two verses after the land promise, Abraham is on his way to Egypt to live as a sojourner (Gen. 12:10).

God gave Abraham no covenant mandate in order for the promises to be fulfilled. It was

---

<sup>246</sup> For the sake of clarity, the name "Abraham" will be used. At the time, he was called "Abram" (Gen. 12:1) and did not receive the name Abraham until Genesis 17:5.

<sup>247</sup> Genesis 31:19 says that Jacob's wife Rachel stole her father Laban's idols. Laban was the grandson of Abraham's brother Nahor (Gen. 29:5; cf. Gen 11:26). Abraham was unwilling to send Isaac to his father's household in fear that he would be tempted by their lifestyle and sent his servant to find Isaac a wife instead (Gen. 24:1-10). Isaac did not heed his father's fear and sent Jacob to find himself a wife causing Jacob to delay his return to the land of promise (Gen. 28:1-31:55). For a brief description of the religion of Abraham before his calling see John H. Walton, "Comparative Exploration: Religion of Abraham," in *Ancient Near Eastern Thought and the Old Testament: Introducing the Conceptual World of the Hebrew Bible* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2006), 150-151.

<sup>248</sup> Thus, we see God setting a new place for His presence to dwell as Eden was to be.

<sup>249</sup> Sojourn language is found throughout Genesis 12: "went forth" (Gen. 12:4); "set out" (Gen. 12:5); "passed through" (Gen. 12:6); "pitched his tent" (Gen. 12:8); "journeyed on" (Gen. 12:9); "sojourn" (Gen. 12:10); see also "stranger and sojourner" (Gen. 23:4).

an unconditional covenant. Even when Abraham tried to fulfill the promise of descendants on his own terms, God still fulfilled the covenant in His own way (Gen. 16:1-16).<sup>250</sup> Despite there being no mandate for Abraham, he did have a role to bless those around him in his sojourn (Gen. 12:2). In summary, Abraham is a sojourner chosen by God to be a blessing to the world.

The background of the Abrahamic Covenant shows resemblance to the mission of First Peter. In First Peter 1:1-2, Peter calls his audience the elect sojourners of God. In verse four, Peter says there is an inheritance that is reserved for them in heaven (cf. Gen. 12:7; 15:13-16). As Abraham was called out of the futile pagan life, Peter's readers too were called out of a futile life (1 Pet. 1:14, 18; 4:3; cf. Gen. 12:1). As Abraham was given a hope of a future inheritance so too are Peter's recipients (1 Pet. 1:4). As Abraham was called to bless those around him, so too are Peter's readers called to bless (1 Pet. 3:9). Peter sees the Church as embodying the call of Abraham to bless the world in their role as elect sojourners in the world.<sup>251</sup>

### The Mosaic Covenant

The Mosaic Covenant was made with the descendants of Abraham's grandson, Jacob. The Mosaic Covenant was not one of sojourn. It was the fulfillment of the promise that God made to Abraham to bring his descendants to the land He promised (Gen. 12:7). It was a national covenant made between the Lord and his elect nation. Unlike the Abrahamic Covenant, there were covenant mandates for the nation of Israel as a community. They were to be faithfully

---

<sup>250</sup> Abraham's actions did come with consequences in the overall history of the Israelite people as they battled with the descendants of Ishmael. Despite it not being God's way, God still honored the covenant, blessed the line of Ishmael, and made him the father of a great nation (Gen. 17:20). God also blessed Abraham's other descendants as Esau became the father of Edom (Gen. 36:9). Abraham also had other children as well who likely became the fathers of other unnamed nations in the east (Gen. 25:1-6). However, it was through Jacob's descendants God chose to continue His covenant.

<sup>251</sup> Shaw, "Called to Bless," 165; Christoph Stenschke, "Reading First Peter in the Context of Early Christian Mission," *Tyndale Bulletin* 60, no. 1 (2009): 113.

obedient to the Lord, follow the Torah, and bless the nations. The failure to fulfil the covenant mandates would result in a removal from the promised land.<sup>252</sup>

The Mosaic Covenant centralized the worship of Yahweh. Through Tabernacle and Temple, this was the location where the Spirit of the Lord resided. Those who wanted to worship Yahweh must do it at the centralized location where sacrifice occurred. Thus, we see the creation of a nation of God's own inheritance (Deut. 32:9), to be holy, and to be a blessing in the world as a kingdom of priests (Exod. 19:6). To be a holy nation meant to be set apart from the world. God set Israel apart as His own possession in the world (Exod. 19:5). The word *שְׁגֻלָּה* (*səgullā*) indicated Israel is God's "treasured possession" as the personal treasure of a king (cf. 1 Chron. 29:3; Eccles. 2:8).<sup>253</sup> The election of Israel was also not by any merit of their own. They were the least of the peoples of the world (Deut. 7:7-8). Their role of priesthood was to bless the world and be a mediator between God and the Gentile nations.

The tribe of Levi was called to be the priesthood of the nation of Israel. The role of a priest meant there was no earthly inheritance held by the Levites (Deut. 10:9; 18:1-2; see also Josh. 13:14, 33). The Levites represented the firstborn of all families of Israel given to the Lord (Num. 3:12). The priest interceded as a mediator between Yahweh and the people of Israel. Their role was to bless. In the same way, the nation was called to be a kingdom of priests to the nations in order to bless.<sup>254</sup> Israel mediated between Yahweh and the nations and between the nations and

---

<sup>252</sup> Note, the failure of Israel to remain faithful did not nullify that covenant. The covenant continuance is based in God's faithfulness to His people. The sin of Israel led to the loss of the covenant blessings.

<sup>253</sup> Robin Routledge, *Old Testament Theology: A Thematic Approach* (Downers Grove, IL: IVP Academic, 2008), 170.

<sup>254</sup> Being a "kingdom of priests" meant not only to be representatives of Yahweh to the world, but also being set apart as God's possession, to serve Him and to have access to Him. R. Alan Cole, *Exodus: An Introduction and Commentary*, TOTC (Downers Grove, IL: IVP Academic, 1973, 2008), 152-153.

Yahweh making Yahweh accessible to the world.<sup>255</sup>

The Lord promised Abraham that through his descendants all the people of earth would be blessed (Gen. 12:2-3). The Mosaic Covenant was an early fulfillment of this promise. As Israel entered the land of promise and became a nation, their faithfulness to Yahweh would in turn bring blessing to the nation.<sup>256</sup> As representatives of Yahweh, Israel was to live lives distinct from the Gentiles that would show who Yahweh is. Witness was based on covenant faithfulness (cf. Jer. 4:1-2).

As Israel fulfilled its role as priests to the nations, they would draw in the Gentiles to Yahweh. The point was to bring the Gentiles out from under the rule of the corrupt sons of God into the kingdom of Yahweh via Israel—God’s inheritance on the earth (Deut. 32:8-9). This is seen at its fullest during the reign of Solomon when the queen of Sheba visits Jerusalem (2 Chron. 9:1-12). In this story, The queen had heard of the wisdom of Solomon, but she did not believe what she had heard until she met Solomon and saw all he had and experienced his wisdom. In the visit, Solomon blessed the queen of Sheba, answering all her questions, leading her to praise Yahweh. Through the experience, a Gentile nation heard the name of Yahweh because of the faithfulness of Israel and Solomon.

In the same way, Peter establishes the New Covenant believers as a priestly nation, called to be holy.<sup>257</sup> The only difference is that worship and sacrifice are not centralized to a physical temple of stone, nor is the covenant bound to a nation of borders. New Covenant believers make up a spiritual temple whose cornerstone is Christ Jesus (1 Pet. 2:4-8; cf. Rev. 21:22). Jesus is the

---

<sup>255</sup> Shaw, “Called to Bless,” 166.

<sup>256</sup> Compared to the New Covenant church (Mt. 28:19-20; Mk. 16:15-16), Israel’s role to the nations was mainly passive. Routledge, *Old Testament Theology*, 172.

<sup>257</sup> Shaw, “Called to Bless,” 166.

atonement sacrifice, and the believers' role as priests is to offer spiritual sacrifices. The spiritual sacrifices reflect who God is in order that the Gentiles may glorify God (1 Pet. 2:12). Here is seen a greater fulfillment of the promise to Abraham. God promised that his descendants would be as numerous as the stars in the sky (Gen. 15:5). The intent of God was never to save Abraham's descendants through Jacob only, but to save the entire world. The number of the descendants of Israel is limited and cannot be described as numerous as the stars. Thus, a larger fulfillment is in mind here. The Mosaic Covenant worked through Abraham's ethnic descendants, but the New Covenant works through Abraham's spiritual descendants. One can become a spiritual descendant of Abraham through Christ. The Mosaic Covenant led to the Davidic Covenant which led to Christ.<sup>258</sup> Christ is the true Israel and the ideal Israel. He accomplished what the nation failed to do. Through Christ, all can become a descendant of Abraham and fellow heirs to the blessing of Christ (Gal. 3:6-9; Eph. 3:6).

#### Covenant Exile

In light of the Abrahamic and Mosaic Covenant, the background of Peter's sojourn imagery becomes clear. His recipients are elect sojourners of God called to bless. As Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob sojourned looking for this promise, so too is the New Covenant community of believers sojourning on this earth for their future inheritance reserved in heaven (1 Pet. 1:4). The New Covenant contains no earthly land promise for the Church, and the national borders of the nation of Israel developed through the Mosaic Covenant are no more under the New Covenant. The Mosaic Covenant came with covenant mandates that Israel had to follow to maintain the promise of the land (Deut. 28:15-68). Unfaithfulness of the people of God would lead to the

---

<sup>258</sup> Shaw points out that David's life also reflects the life of Peter's audience in that he too found himself in various trials as he lived between his promise of kingship and the inheritance of the crown. "Called to Bless," 166-167.

disinheritance of the land of promise (Deut. 28:49-52). Israel disobeyed God and found themselves under his judgment. God used Babylon as the tool of judgment against His elect people. However, unfaithfulness did not nullify the covenant, nor did it change their mission and ethic in the world. Consider the words of Jeremiah as Judah faced the Babylonian exile:

*Build houses and live in them; and plant gardens and eat their produce. Take wives and become the fathers of sons and daughters, and take wives for your sons and give your daughters to husbands, that they may bear sons and daughters; and multiply there and do not decrease. Seek the welfare of the city where I have sent you into exile, and pray to the Lord on its behalf; for in its welfare you will have welfare (Jer. 29:5-7, emp. added).*

The key here is that amongst the nations, the covenant roles did not cease. They are sojourners in exile returning to the life that Abraham lived. They are to live in the land and build houses, to marry and multiply (cf. Gen. 1:28), to seek the welfare of the Babylonians and be a blessing to them (cf. Gen. 12:2-3). This is best exemplified in Daniel's life. Daniel became the second most influential person in Babylon after King Nebuchadnezzar (Dan. 2:48). This happened because of Daniel's faithfulness to Yahweh. His faithfulness allowed the name of Yahweh to be heard by the King of Babylon who laid siege on the city of Jerusalem. Later in Daniel, King Nebuchadnezzar worships Yahweh as Lord (Dan. 4:34-37).

As the roles of the covenant applied to the Jews in exile, Peter applies them to the New Covenant believers.<sup>259</sup> In First Peter 2:11-12, Peter exhorts his readers to remain excellent among the Gentiles, abstaining from any lust of the flesh so that the Gentiles may glorify God. This is exactly what is seen in Daniel's life. He did not give in to the lusts of the Gentiles during his stay in Babylon. The same can be said for Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-nego (Dan. 3:1-30). Their refusal to live like the Gentiles brought glory to the name of Yahweh from the king (Dan. 4:1-3). Peter exhorts his readers not to repay evil with evil, but to return with a blessing (1 Pet. 3:9).

---

<sup>259</sup> Keener, *1 Peter*, 48.

Humanly speaking, Daniel, Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-nego had every right to hate King Nebuchadnezzar for what he did to Judah, but they understood their call to be a blessing to the nations did not cease at the fall of Jerusalem. Peter calls his readers to suffer only for the Lord's sake, and not to suffer for doing what is wrong (1 Pet. 2:19-20; 3:14, 17). Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-nego suffered for their refusal to worship the image of King Nebuchadnezzar and were cast into the furnace (Dan. 3:8-23). Daniel faced the lion's den for refusing to obey the king's command to pray only to him (Dan. 6:10-16). His faithfulness to the Lord led to King Darius glorifying the Lord (Dan. 6:26-27). In light of Deuteronomy 32:8-9 and Psalm 82:1-8, the suffering for Christ's sake makes sense. The nations are still corrupted by the sons of God, and sin continues to corrupt mankind, but God's Spirit is no longer manifested in a physical temple but within each believer (1 Cor. 3:16; 2 Cor. 6:16-18; Eph. 2:19-22; 1 Pet. 2:5). Believers live amongst the nations ruled by sin, facing spiritual warfare for their salvation in Christ. Thus, the suffering is of no surprise to the Christian (cf. 1 Pet. 4:12-19). Peter exhorts his recipients to remain faithful despite their suffering because it is for the sake of Christ.

At the time of Peter's writing, the temple was still standing in Jerusalem.<sup>260</sup> This does not cause issues with interpreting First Peter in light of the Babylonian Exile. The books of Ezra and Nehemiah describe the return to Jerusalem and the rebuilding of the temple and the walls of the city. However, Scripture never states that the Spirit and presence of the Lord returned to the temple upon its completion in Ezra 6:15 after It had left Solomon's temple (Ezek. 10:18-19).<sup>261</sup>

---

<sup>260</sup> Assuming the date of early to mid-AD 60s is correct for the writing of the epistle, the temple did not fall until AD 70.

<sup>261</sup> Ezekiel 43:1-9 describes the future return of the Lord to a future temple. It seems unlikely the temple rebuilt in Ezra is in view here. It is likely a reference to a future temple yet to come if the prophecy is to be understood as literal. For discussion on Ezekiel's temple vision see Christopher J. H. Wright, *The Message of Ezekiel: A New heart and a New Spirit*, BST (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2001), 315-368.

The new temple paled in comparison to Solomon's temple, and the restored relationship between God and His people as described in Ezekiel's vision was never realized.<sup>262</sup> Peter would know this as a student of the Jewish Scriptures. The presence of the Lord returned with Christ as the cornerstone of the temple (1 Pet. 2:4-8; Mt. 21:42-44; Acts 4:11; cf. Rom. 9:33; Eph. 2:19-20), and His Spirit indwelt all believers at Pentecost (Acts 2:2-4). After Pentecost, Peter witnessed the Spirit indwell the Samaritans (Acts 8:14-17) and the Gentiles (Acts 10:44). This does not mean that the worship at the temple was obsolete. The early church continued to attend the temple and synagogues after their conversion to Christ (Acts 3:1, 11; 5:12; 13:5; 14:1),<sup>263</sup> but Peter understands that the role the temple played under the Old Covenant has ceased with what Christ has accomplished. Everything now revolves around Christ, and those who place their faith in Christ function as the temple housing of the Spirit of the Lord (1 Pet. 2:5; cf. 1 Cor. 3:16-17; 6:15-20; 2 Cor. 6:14-18; Eph. 2:19-22).

#### First Peter and Ethnic Israel

It is important to take time to address the role of ethnic Israel in light of First Peter's teaching. Opponents of Gentile recipients of First Peter will argue that it negates the future of ethnic Israel. This section will show that this is not the case. If First Peter is compared solely to the Mosaic Covenant, then a case could be made for supersessionism. However, even Gentiles were able to bring themselves into covenant with God and live as an Israelite (Ex. 12:48; Num. 9:14).<sup>264</sup> The supersessionism debate has its roots in covenant theology and dispensational

---

<sup>262</sup> Wright, *The Message of Ezekiel*, 338-339.

<sup>263</sup> Just because they attended the temple and synagogues does not mean the early church used them as their main meeting place. They also met in each other's homes (Acts 2:46; 5:42). The worship at the temple and synagogues probably had a more evangelistic purpose as seen in Paul's missions. Dunn, *Beginning From*, 180-181.

<sup>264</sup> Keener, *1 Peter*, 148-149.

theology. In simple terms, Covenant theology teaches that there is one people of God, the elect. Dispensational theology teaches there are two, ethnic Israel and the Church. Whereas covenant theologians see the church as a continuation of God's elect, dispensationalists believe God still has a future plan for his elect people.<sup>265</sup>

Jim Sibley argues for a Jewish audience of First Peter on the basis that Gentile recipients would create a supersessionist reading of First Peter.<sup>266</sup> He argues that the heavy use of the Old Testament would resonate only with a Jewish audience. There are aspects of his argument that are agreeable. Sibley argues that the inclusion of Gentiles cannot overlook the fact that Christianity was inherently Jewish in the first century and did not quickly disappear.<sup>267</sup> To this point, Sibley cites Witherington, arguing that the Pauline churches and the Jewish churches continued their own distinct existence beyond the writing of the New Testament.<sup>268</sup> While Witherington may be correct in some respect, it also seems unlikely that every Pauline and non-Pauline church would have kept themselves distinct from each other as they preached a common gospel. Peter is also not writing to churches but to believers as a whole (1 Pet. 1:1). Thus, it seems better suited to understand that this is a letter that would have reached people throughout the region, including those who may have had previous connection to Paul.<sup>269</sup>

The New Testament offers some sense of continuity between the Old Covenant people

---

<sup>265</sup> For an overview of both Dispensational and Covenant theologies Bird, *Evangelical Theology*, 719-727.

<sup>266</sup> Sibley, "You Talkin'," 59-75.

<sup>267</sup> In fact, he writes "we have done a disservice to Jewish Christianity if we think that it quickly disappeared." *Ibid.*, 63.

<sup>268</sup> Witherington, *Letters and Homilies*, 17.

<sup>269</sup> There was precedent to sending a general letter to a wide geographic area by both political and religious circles. Keener, *1 Peter*, 44. Elliott takes the later date for First Peter to allow for evangelism to spread throughout the providences named, and the letter is not primarily addressed to Pauline Churches. *1 Peter*, 316.

and the New Covenant people, but Sibley does not acknowledge this.<sup>270</sup> The fact remains that in the present age, ethnic Israel does not function as the priesthood they were called to be in the Mosaic Covenant. Jesus, the true Israelite, has become the better high priest, sacrificing Himself once for all (Heb. 5:1-10; 7:26-28). New Covenant believers now make up the priesthood who are called to be a blessing to the world through spiritual sacrifices (1 Pet. 2:4-10).

Acknowledging the present role of the church does not diminish the promises given to ethnic Israel and Judah. The promise of the land restoration (Jer. 30:3) and the return of the Davidic throne (Jer. 30:9) have both yet to be fully realized and will not be until Christ's return in the Second Coming. Peter is concerned with the present state of Israel and the Church, and his teachings are not to be understood as replacement theology.

Paul also struggles with the current state of Israel in Romans 9-11. Paul laments over his fellow Jews who have not come to faith because they were God's elect (Rom. 9:2-5) and they are currently standing outside of His election (Rom. 11:28), but one day Israel will be saved (Rom. 11:26-27). Sibley cites Paul's warning to the Gentiles not to become conceited as reason for a Jewish audience. Paul gives this warning so the Gentiles would not be cast aside in their role in God's elect as ethnic Israel had been (Rom. 11:13-31).<sup>271</sup>

Peter's life shows that he struggled coming to grips with ethnic Israel not being at the forefront of God's plan. Paul struggles with it as well, wishing himself to be accursed rather than to see ethnic Israel fall away (Rom. 9:1-5). But Christ, being what Israel failed to be, has opened up the door for all to be in His priesthood. Some have suggested that there has been a spiritual

---

<sup>270</sup> He ultimately labels Witherington as a supersessionist. Sibley, "You Talkin'," 63. Sibley's view would be in line with classic dispensationalists. Covenant theologians and some progressive dispensationalists understand the New Testament is the continued story of Israel. See Bird, *Evangelical Theology*, 719-720.

<sup>271</sup> Sibley's argument falls flat by his slippery slope argument "a failure to heed [Paul's] warning leads to supersessionism, and in addition, may lead to anti-Semitism." Sibley, "You Talkin'," 59.

reapplication of the terms for Israel and Gentiles. Believers in Christ presently serve as the priesthood to the nations as Israel one did, and anyone who does not place their faith in Christ is a Gentile (i.e., a nonbeliever), regardless of ethnicity.<sup>272</sup> The benefit of understanding First Peter in sojourning terms does not conflict with the future of ethnic Israel as it is Abraham's spiritual descendants who are fulfilling the role of priesthood in the present age.

Max Botner writes against a supersessionist view of First Peter as well.<sup>273</sup> Botner fears too much emphasis is placed on the Dead Sea Scrolls leading to a misinterpretation of the community of believers becoming the temple. Botner is not so concerned with the ethnic identity of the audience of First Peter but argues that the interpretation that believers physically replace the temple would be supersessionism.<sup>274</sup> To Botner, the correct identity of the temple is Christ. Thus, Peter is focused on the heavenly temple, not the earthly one.<sup>275</sup> Christ, currently residing in heaven, provides access to the Father that the Jewish Temple once did. To Botner, that is the emphasis of Peter's temple passage (1 Pet. 2:4-8).

Botner is correct in that Christ has provided the access to the Father that the old temple once did (Heb. 9:1-28). However, the community of believers do have a role in Christ's temple as living stones and priests. The temple was the location of God's presence on earth in the Old Covenant. In the New Covenant, God's presence resides in all believers via the Holy Spirit.

---

<sup>272</sup> The Greek word for Gentile is ἔθνεσιν, which means nations or pagan, implying those who are unbelievers. Edwards, *1 Peter*, 102. See also Elliott, *1 Peter*, 466.

<sup>273</sup> Max Botner, "The Essence of a Spiritual House: Misunderstanding Metaphor and the Question of Supersessionism in 1 Peter," *JBL* 139, no. 2 (2020): 409-425.

<sup>274</sup> He does seem to suggest that he agrees that it is written to a predominantly Gentile audience after the destruction of the temple but ultimately defers to other scholars and their arguments for the recipients' identity. *Ibid.*, 417.

<sup>275</sup> *Ibid.*, 422.

Scripture teaches believers do make up a part of the temple in the New Covenant (cf. 1 Cor. 3:16-17; 2 Cor. 6:14-18; 1 Pet. 2:4-8). Botner does receive credit for his emphasis on Christ being the temple, which is Peter's point as well. Without Christ, no believer could have the presence of God dwelling in him. Thus, Christ is the cornerstone of the temple that believers build up (cf. 1 Cor. 6:15-20; Eph. 2:19-22; 1 Pet. 2:4-8). The temple and tabernacle were to reflect the heavenly temple of the Lord on earth (Heb. 8:5). In the same way, believers reflect Christ who is seated in heaven here on earth as the temple.

### Summary

This section has shown that the mission to bless in the Noahic Covenant, Abrahamic Covenant and Mosaic Covenant given to ethnic Israel applies to Gentiles in the New Covenant community of believers in the church age. The examples of Noah, Abraham, Solomon, Jeremiah 29:5-7, Daniel, Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-nego all show that no matter the state of the covenant, God's elect is called to bless. Through analyzing Sibley and Botner's articles, a Gentile readership of First Peter does not create a supersessionist interpretation, as Christ is the one who replaces the temple (cf. Jn. 2:19) and believers are built up in that temple. Christ is the center of Peter's mission ethic. Through Christ, continuity between the Old and New Covenants exists in First Peter without casting ethnic Israel aside. Under the New Covenant, the Church functions in the role to bless the nations, not as a nation itself, but as the living temple of God going to all the nations to preach the kingdom of Christ until He returns.

### **The Mission and Ethic of First Peter**

What remains in this thesis is the application of this study. Chapters 1 and 2 introduced the study, overviewing the various interpretations of the audience of First Peter and establishing the scope of the study. It was argued that Peter's life in the Gospels, Acts, and Pauline Epistles

would give support to the predominantly Gentile audience view. This chapter has overviewed the mission of the Noahic, Abrahamic, and Mosaic Covenants—a call to God’s elect people to bless the nations. It was necessary for God to choose Abraham and Israel out of Noah’s descendants so that He could send His Son to redeem the world through the new birth. Peter utilizes the same mission of the old covenants and applies it to the lives of the New Covenant believers. In his epistle, Peter gives examples of how the mission and ethic is to be lived out by believers during their stay on earth. The importance of the identification of the audience shows that God’s plan does not run through the Jews only in the church age, but that the mission and ethic apply to all who are a part of the New Covenant community of believers. The remainder of this chapter will show Peter’s strategy to bless the nations.<sup>276</sup> It will start with a commentary on Peter’s missional strategy to the believers as they lived with the social code of the Roman Empire and the chapter will conclude with how the missional strategy applies to believers in the twenty-first century.

#### Called to Covenant with God (1 Pet. 1:1-2)

In the beginning of his epistle, Peter establishes that believers in Christ are in covenant with the Lord. As Abraham was an elect sojourner called by God, so too are followers of Christ. Peter references Exodus 24:3-8 where Moses sprinkles the blood of the covenant onto the Israelites identifying them as the covenant people of God. Believers in Christ are figuratively sprinkled with the blood of Christ signifying themselves as a part of God’s election (1 Pet. 1:2c). By the blood of Christ, believers are cleansed and sealed into covenant with God and are to follow His commands.<sup>277</sup>

---

<sup>276</sup> Much of the inspiration behind this section comes from Shaw’s work in First Peter. See Shaw, “Called to Bless,” 161-173. See also his dissertation: Shaw, “A People Called: Narrative Transportation & Missional Identity in 1 Peter” (PhD diss., University of Exeter, 2017).

<sup>277</sup> Edwards, *1 Peter*, 32

As God's elect, the believer is to obey Jesus (1 Pet. 1:2b). Peter's epistle is centered on Christ. Christ is the example Peter exhorts his readers to imitate. They have the ability to obey Christ by the work of the Spirit and the foreknowledge of God (1 Pet. 1:2a).<sup>278</sup> Nothing that happens to a believer comes as a surprise to God. Before the creation of the universe, the Father had a plan to bring redemption to man through the Son. The opening verses of First Peter serve as an encouragement to the believers as they face trials of suffering for their faith in Christ.<sup>279</sup> They can stand firm on their faith because of their election into the covenant people of God by the power of Christ's blood.

#### The Fearful Life (1 Pet. 1:13-25)

Those who find themselves in covenant with the Lord ought to live in fear during their sojourn on earth because of His impartial judgment. Believers have received the gift of salvation and are expected to be faithful to the covenant in which God called His elect to be Holy (1 Pet. 1:16) and not to be conformed to their former and futile life (1 Pet. 1:14, 18). The sojourn life of a believer is a life of suffering that occurs in a world that will one day fade away. Before faith in Christ, people place their hope in silver or gold which will perish (1 Pet. 1:18). In Christ, hope is found in His Word which is imperishable (1 Pet. 1:23-25). The believer can endure through suffering because of the hope of salvation and the future inheritance because of Christ's Word.

One becomes a sojourner in the world by his faith in Christ. Living the Christian ethic does not line up with the world. Peter exhorts believers to remain as functional citizens in society, but their lives will be distinct from the unbeliever. Here is where the social interpretation

---

<sup>278</sup> Notice the trinitarian work at play in these verses. Edwards, *1 Peter*, 31-33.

<sup>279</sup> Stenschke writes, "Peter's readers share not only in the spiritual privileges of Israel, they also experience the trials and the testing of God's people in the world." "Reading First Peter," 122.

and the spiritual interpretation of First Peter intersect.<sup>280</sup> There is validity to the social situations of the readers, but Peter seems to be mainly focused on their sojourn caused by faith in Christ where believers no longer partake in the lifestyle of the Gentiles (1 Pet. 4:2-4).<sup>281</sup> Peter acknowledges the ethnic identity of the readers, but also develops a new spiritual identity the believers share based on their faith in Christ. Some of Peter's readers do find themselves as social exiles by the situation of their life.<sup>282</sup> Others become exiles by their faith in Christ. Each are seen as dishonorable in the Greco-Roman society.<sup>283</sup> Beyond their social life, they become spiritual sojourners because of their decision to follow Christ, making them citizens of Christ's kingdom and members of His priesthood. The earth remains their current home, but they no longer long for what the earth offers but the hope that is found in Christ. As Abraham and Israel sojourned longing for the promised land, and the Jews in exile longed to return to the Holy Land, believers long for their future inheritance reserved in heaven (1 Pet. 1:4). But while in the sojourn, believers continue in their earthly lives, building homes, becoming married, having children, and cultivating the earth to bless the communities in which they live.

#### The Excellence of Behavior (1 Pet. 2:11-3:9)

Despite living upright lives out of fear of the Lord, the believers suffer. Thus, Peter writes to give practical discussion on how believers are to properly react to the social structures of the day and the suffering faced in it.<sup>284</sup> If one is in covenant with God, their actions ought to reflect

---

<sup>280</sup> See Green's discussion in his commentary. *1 Peter*, 14-21.

<sup>281</sup> Williams, *The Doctrine of*, 50-51.

<sup>282</sup> This is Elliott's and Jobes' argument. See Elliott, *A Home for the Homeless*, 48-49; Jobes, *1 Peter*, 38-41.

<sup>283</sup> Ward, Heichelheim, and Yeo, *A History of*, 355.

<sup>284</sup> Davids, *A Theology of*, 135.

the character of God. He calls the believer to be holy in their behavior (1 Pet. 1:16), to keep behavior excellent among the Gentiles that they may glorify God (1 Pet. 2:12), to do what is right in order to silence ignorance (1 Pet. 2:14-15), and not to return evil with evil but to bless (1 Pet. 3:9). Faith is not just word but also action. The actions of a believer are in response to God's holiness (1 Pet. 1:16; cf. Lev. 11:44-45, 19:2; 20:7, 26). Suffering is not an excuse to live an unholy life. True belief will bring sensitivity to sin and true believers will desire to live faithfully obedient unto the Lord. Suffering is expected in the life of a Christ follower because Christ also suffered (1 Pet. 2:21), but because of God's holiness, the believer is compelled to ethical living in the world that brings slander and persecution from society.

The call of the priesthood of believers relates to the call to holiness. The priests of Israel were holy and set apart. The purpose of the priesthood is to "proclaim the excellencies" of God (1 Pet. 2:9). Believers serve as the mediator between God and the world. As believers live their lives offering spiritual sacrifices and proclaiming God's excellence, the world will see Him and come to glorify Him (1 Pet. 2:12). That is the spirit of Peter's mission and ethic he exhorts his readers to, that the world sees Christ through the lives of every believer.

Historically, Rome was not supporting of the rise of Christianity. The exhortation to excellent behavior is based in the historical situation these believers face in their community. Concerning the historical origin of Christian suffering, Allen Ward, Fritz Heichelheim and Cedric A. Yeo write, "Their rigid monotheistic rejection of other gods and their refusal to participate in traditional activities with their pagan neighbors were an offense to those around them and bred personal hostility toward them. This hostility was fed by the normal human fear of the unfamiliar. Accordingly, people were quick to blame Christians for all manner of misfortunes

that befell them individually or collectively.”<sup>285</sup> In light of the historical origin for suffering, Peter’s exhortation in 1 Peter 2:12 becomes clear: “Keep your behavior excellent among the Gentiles, so that in the thing which they slander you as evildoers, they may because of your good deeds, as they observe them, glorify God in the day of visitation.” Peter believes the honorable deeds of the believer will one day be vindicated despite the Gentiles seeing them as evil.<sup>286</sup>

Peter offers an ethical code for the believers to live by in the relationships in which they will find themselves. Peter writes about the relationship to unbelievers, the relationship to government, the relationship of slave and master, and the relationship of marriage. The historical precedent may have come from Aristotle’s household codes addressing the male’s relationship with his wife, child, and slave (*Pol.* 1.1253b).<sup>287</sup> Peter’s use of the ethical code is a strategical way for believers to win the nations to Christ through their action and word. The example of how to live within the household code is based in Christ’s example.<sup>288</sup> Peter does not diminish the household codes of the Roman culture but calls the believers to live according to an even higher ethic within society.<sup>289</sup> Peter does not promise that following Christ’s example will promise an end to suffering but offers a strategy to win others to Christ.<sup>290</sup>

---

<sup>285</sup> Ward, Heichelheim, and Yeo, *A History of*, 355.

<sup>286</sup> The Gentiles here would be those who are outside of the New Covenant Community. To be a part of God’s people makes one an outsider to the world. Thus, the term is not purely ethnic but a matter of identity. One either identifies with Christ or as a Gentile. Keener, *1 Peter*, 146.

<sup>287</sup> See *Ibid.*, 167-169.

<sup>288</sup> Elliott details two other theories of Peter’s use of the traditions found in First Peter 2:13-17. *1 Peter*, 503-510.

<sup>289</sup> Helyer, *The Life and Witness*, 132.

<sup>290</sup> Keener, *1 Peter*, 162.

## **The Believer and the Unbeliever (1 Pet. 2:11-12)**

Peter again stresses the situation of the believers as *παρεπίδημος* and *πάροικος* (cf. Gen. 23:4). Sojourners are to respect the customs of the nations they live within, but that does not mean the sojourner must partake in every aspect of the culture. Peter calls the believer to abstain from fleshly lusts (v. 11). This is likely referring to lusts of the body, such as the ungodly sexual temptation that was prevalent among the Gentiles and wages war against the soul of man.<sup>291</sup> When the Council of Jerusalem met, their instructions to the Gentiles were to live by God's sexual ethic (Acts 15:29). When Israel entered into the land, God commanded them not to defile the land through sexual perversion, as that was the reason God was driving out the Gentiles (Lev. 18:24; also applied to the sojourner and natives to the land, v. 26). Peter exhorts his readers to this same ethic.

The reason for abstaining from the lusts of the flesh was to win nonbelievers to Christ that they may glorify Him (1 Pet. 2:12). The ethic of the believer reflects Christ's holiness which will be evident to those outside of Christ's community. The believer's conduct is uncommon to the pagan and will initially draw criticism from them, but when they see the honor of God in the believer's conduct, it will draw praise from them when Christ appears.<sup>292</sup> This is what was seen in Daniel, Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-nego's lives with King Nebuchadnezzar. This same calling applies to the believer today. The mission of the Christian's life is to live in a God

---

<sup>291</sup> Keener, *1 Peter*, 150.

<sup>292</sup> Peter's statement of the "day of visitation" (1 Pet. 2:12) is connected to Isaiah 10:3's statement "the day of punishment." If that is so, the implication could mean that they will honor God in this life, but it could be at the time of their judgment. Either way, the unbeliever will be without excuse. Either in this life the sinner will become a saint, or he will at the time of his judgment see that the Christian is the one who lived the honorable life, and he lived a shameful life. He will then understand that the honorable life is defined by Christ and bring glory to Him. Davids, *1 Peter*, 136. Isaiah's day of punishment could also mean Christ's exaltation in addition to judgment (Wis. 3:7).

honoring way so that unbelievers have no excuse in their own lives.

### **The Believer and the Government (1 Pet. 2:13-17)**

Living in a world controlled by human institutions will leave people disappointed. While government is ordained by God, it does not mean that government will be godly. Peter calls believers to honor “every human institution” if only for the sake of the Lord (1 Pet. 2:13). Peter is writing this to believers under the Roman empire. While there was no direct political persecution of Christians at that time, local persecution was happening to Christians for their faith.<sup>293</sup> Nonetheless, the Roman government was no friend to the new Christian religion forming out of Judaism.<sup>294</sup> Despite the suffering, Peter exhorts his readers to honor the emperor of Rome out of fear of the Lord (1 Pet. 2:17).

Peter also calls on his readers not to use God as an excuse to defy the government. Believers are free in Christ and use their freedom to respect the civic authority because it is the will of God. Believers are free in Christ, but that freedom is not to be used as a license or an excuse to do evil (cf. 1 Cor. 6:12-13; Gal. 6:13; Jude 4).<sup>295</sup> Only when the civil authority’s demands are contrary to God’s institutions, can the believer defy the government.<sup>296</sup> This is an implied teaching from Scripture as no verse directly gives instruction on civil disobedience. Peter’s inclusion of “for the Lord’s sake” implies only submit to what is honorable in the Lord’s sight and does not violate His commands (1 Pet. 2:13).<sup>297</sup> In Acts 5:29 (cf. Acts 4:19) Peter responds to the Jewish religious leaders that he must obey God over man. This statement is the

---

<sup>293</sup> See note 27 above.

<sup>294</sup> Ward, Heichelheim, and Yeo, *A History of*, 355-356. See also Keener, *1 Peter*, 163-166.

<sup>295</sup> Keener writes that this is a concept well understood in the ancient world. *1 Peter*, 172.

<sup>296</sup> Davids, *1 Peter*, 138.

<sup>297</sup> Keener, *1 Peter*, 170.

strongest statement in the New Testament for disobedience to leadership when it is contrary to God's instruction. However, it must be considered that this is in religious discourse, not civil discourse. For an example of civil discourse, the examples of Shadrach, Meshach, Abed-nego, and Daniel can be considered once more. King Nebuchadnezzar specifically told his people to worship the image of himself (Dan. 3:1-30), a direct violation of God's commands (Exod. 20:3-5). In this instance, they disobeyed the king's command and honored God. In a comparable situation, Daniel was told he could only pray to the king (Dan. 6:1-28). Daniel refused and prayed to the Lord. The result of their actions brought suffering, but in turn, both King Nebuchadnezzar and King Darius glorified the Lord. In another example, the midwives of the Israelites defied the orders of the Pharaoh and did not kill the children born to the Israelite women (Exod. 1:15-22). While Pharaoh did not glorify God himself, God's glory was displayed in all of Egypt and beyond through the plagues (Exod. 7:1-12:32; cf. Josh. 2:9; 6:1). Christ instructs to give to Caesar what is Caesar's and to God what is God's (Matt. 22:21; Mark 12:17). It is not the role of the government to tell its people who they can and cannot worship; that is God's reign. But God has given the governing authorities the power to punish evil and reward good (1 Pet. 2:14). As the government abides by God's institution, so shall believers abide by the government's authority.

Believers are to use their freedom in Christ to honor God.<sup>298</sup> The call is to be a good citizen honoring the authority of civil authorities. Scripture is clear that believers are to respect the rule of civil authorities (Prov. 24:21-22; Matt. 22:21; Rom. 13:1-7; Titus 3:1; Heb. 13:17; 1 Pet. 13-17) but gives no explicit instruction to civil disobedience. The implication is that rather than the church looking to find every way to defy the civil authorities placed on this world, the

---

<sup>298</sup> For a reading on a Greek understanding of freedom see Keener, *1 Peter*, 172-174.

church should seek to live in harmony and be a blessing so that the rulers of the world may one day glorify God. The life of a believer is a life of sojourn not bound to an elect nation of God as seen in the Mosaic Covenant but closely resembles the sojourn life of Abraham and the exiles of the Old Testament. Believers today are to respect the authority of the nations where they live and be a blessing to them.

### **The Believer and Slavery (1 Pet. 2:18-20)**

Slavery in the Greco-Roman world was nothing compared to the evils found in Europe and the Americas with the enslavement of Africans, nor that of the sex-trafficking enslavement of today. Slaves were not necessarily subject to lifelong servitude, but one usually became a slave to pay off a debt.<sup>299</sup> Rather than receive payment for their work, their payment went to the debt owed. Roman Law limited abuse of slaves, and slaves could seek their freedom.<sup>300</sup> Despite the laws, unruly slave masters existed. A portion of Peter's readers found themselves in this situation. In the context, Peter seems to be specifically addressing household slaves.<sup>301</sup> Peter exhorts these slaves to be submissive to the masters and not to retaliate.<sup>302</sup>

Peter is not denying that the suffering of the slaves was wrong or unjust. Their suffering was unmerited because of their faith in Christ.<sup>303</sup> However, retaliation on the part of the slaves

---

<sup>299</sup> Perhaps more so in the early republic time than the empire. Those captured in war were also brought into slavery. Ward, Heichelheim, and Yeo, *A History of*, 45.

<sup>300</sup> For more on slavery in the Greco-Roman world see Keener, *1 Peter*, 179-190. See also Edwards, *1 Peter*, 113-126. For a historical perspective on Roman Slavery see Ward, Heichelheim, and Yeo, *A History of*, 45, 236-237.

<sup>301</sup> Keener, *1 Peter*, 178.

<sup>302</sup> Keener writes believers in these situations are "to respond with grace rather than retaliation." *1 Peter*, 147.

<sup>303</sup> One reason they may be suffering is that the head of the house determined the religion of those in the household. If a slave no longer followed the religion of their master, it was dishonoring to him. See Davids, *1 Peter*, 139n150.

would have brought more suffering from the hand of the master, and that suffering would be justified. Peter looks to Christ's example as the ultimate one who suffered unjustly (cf. Mark 8:34). Peter's recipients can find hope in Christ's suffering amidst their own. They are set free because of Christ's suffering on the cross.<sup>304</sup> Christ has given them a life and community of brethren here on earth and a hope for an inheritance in heaven (1 Pet. 1:4).

### **The Believer and Marriage (1 Pet. 3:1-7)**

Peter calls wives to be submissive to their husbands who are unbelievers.<sup>305</sup> Peter employs the same missional strategy to wives as he does with government and slave masters. A wife coming to faith in Christ would present a difficult position at home because the husband determined the family religion.<sup>306</sup> Wives are to respect the authority of their husbands. In the Roman household code, wives submitting to husbands was as important as citizens submitting to civil authorities and slaves submitting to their masters. All three were interconnected and understood to be keys to a properly functioning society.<sup>307</sup> Peter's missional strategy was not to topple the societal norms of the day, but to work within them to promote the gospel of Christ.<sup>308</sup>

Peter exhorts women to have their behavior win their husbands to Christ (v. 1-2). The idea is that what is inward ought to be visible outward in action. They should not win the appeal of their husbands by external jewelry and dress alone, but by their spirit. The spirit of a woman is imperishable where jewelry will perish (cf. 1 Pet. 1:7, 23). By her gentle submission to her

---

<sup>304</sup> Davids, *1 Peter*, 141.

<sup>305</sup> This is not an affirmation of being unequally yoked in marriage, but Peter is likely writing to wives who were converted after they married or were forced into marriage. Keener, *1 Peter*, 222.

<sup>306</sup> Davids, *1 Peter*, 142.

<sup>307</sup> Keener, *1 Peter*, 208-210.

<sup>308</sup> *Ibid.*, 225.

husband, it will bless him and may win him over to Christ by her actions. Peter does not mention anything of abuse. He does not even state the wife is suffering in her marriage. Peter simply is speaking to women who are living with an unbelieving husband in harmony. He exhorts them to live peacefully and win them to Christ by being an honorable wife.<sup>309</sup>

Peter also calls for husbands to honor their wives in the same manner. There is no need for Peter to reference submission for the husband as that is not necessary within the Roman household code.<sup>310</sup> However, in Christ, both the husband and wife will inherit the same salvation. They are on equal ground biblically speaking. However, in Greco-Roman society, wives are the weaker member of the marriage relationship.<sup>311</sup> Husbands are to honor their wives and not take advantage of the social structures to dishonor them. Peter references an Old Testament ethic in not hindering prayers by keeping the commands of God (e.g., Prov. 15:8, 29; 28:9; Ps. 34:15-17 cf. Gen 4:4-7).<sup>312</sup>

### **Summary of Ethical Code (1 Pet. 3:8-9)**

Through his exhortation in the household codes, Peter exhorts these Gentile believers to live as law-abiding and functional citizens in society and not to isolate themselves from society.<sup>313</sup> To make an impact on sinners, one must interact with them. The ethical code is not exclusive to Peter's teaching only. Paul also exhorts his readers to an ethical code of living (Eph. 5:22-6:9; Col. 3:18-4:6; 1 Thess. 4:1-12; 5:12-22). The importance of Peter's ethical code is that

---

<sup>309</sup> For a description of marriage in the Greco-Roman society see Keener, *1 Peter*, 210-222.

<sup>310</sup> Keener, *1 Peter*, 244.

<sup>311</sup> Ibid., 245. For a discussion on why the ancients viewed women as weaker see Ibid., 247-250.

<sup>312</sup> Ibid., 251.

<sup>313</sup> Helyer, *The Life and Witness*, 303.

all four relational ethics are to be represented in the believer's life. As the household code was interconnected for a prosperous Greco-Roman society, so too should a believer be harmonious within the household code for the sake of Christ. Peter never questions the validity of the social codes. He understands that they are in place for the prosperity of society.<sup>314</sup> Ultimately, there was nothing the common man could do to change the structures of the day, but they can be strategically used to glorify Christ. Peter sums up his ethical code saying, "Be harmonious, sympathetic, brotherly, kindhearted, and humble in spirit; not returning evil for evil or insult for insult, but giving a blessing instead; for you were called for the very purpose that you might inherit a blessing" (1 Pet. 3:8-9). These are the attributes of Christ. Believers are called to imitate Christ (cf. Rom. 8:29). The ethic of the believer's life imitates the ethic of Christ.

#### Peter's Missional Strategy in the Twenty-First Century

Peter's exhortation is based on the social code of the Roman empire (see *Pol.* 1.1253b). This study has emphasized that Peter's application applies to all who are a part of the New Covenant Community of believers, and that includes those today living in the twenty-first century. While social codes have changed as kingdoms of earth have risen and fallen, Peter's exhortation to live harmoniously among the nations of earth, in order to be a blessing, still remains the mission of believers. Chapter 2 argued that Shaw's approach to First Peter's exhortation to the believers to remain as functional citizens in their society with godly assimilation into the community, was the correct approach to the epistle.<sup>315</sup> Christians are not to remove themselves from society, but to engage their community in a godly way that gives persecutors no excuse as to why they cause suffering.

---

<sup>314</sup> Elliott, *1 Peter*, 502.

<sup>315</sup> Shaw, "Called to Bless," 169-171.

The Church today has spread throughout the world according to the mission of Christ (Matt. 28:18-20). In the world, believers are still sojourners who have temporarily found a home among the nations of the world, but await their future inheritance reserved in heaven (1 Pet. 1:4). While living in the nations, believers are to respect the authorities who are in place as they are ordained by God (Rom. 13:1).<sup>316</sup> The United States of America has no emperor but there are elected officials who are ordained by God. The Church should seek to live in harmony with the elected officials through their behavior. Peter does not say believers cannot disagree with the governing authorities or must blindly follow them, but rather than respond in defiance, believers ought to be a blessing that they may silence the ignorance of foolish men (1 Pet. 2:16). A key aspect of Peter's exhortation is for the actions of believers not to be the cause of their suffering (1 Pet. 2:11-12, 15-16, 19-20, 23; 3:1,7, 8-9, 13-14). Believers represent their true King, Jesus Christ. Christ did not come to destroy the earthly governments but died in place of sinners. This is the same ethic employed in the exile of Israel (Jer. 29:5-7). Suffering in the flesh for the sake of another to come to Christ is a worthwhile sacrifice in the mind of Peter.

A modern equivalent to Peter's exhortation to slaves would be the employee's relationship to an employer. The modern employee has freedom to leave a workplace that they find unsatisfactory and find employment elsewhere. It is unlikely that Peter would argue that believers should not use that freedom. However, during the time of employment, believers ought to be hospitable to their co-workers and employer. At some point in life, everyone is likely going to have an unruly boss or work environment that leads to suffering. Peter's exhortation to slaves not to give reason for suffering applies here. Peter is not arguing that believers should seek suffering on behalf of Christ, but the expectation is that suffering will occur. Believers are to live

---

<sup>316</sup> See Edwards application to American believers. *1 Peter*, 111-112.

in a way that by their actions, they bless those around them in the midst of suffering. Believers should consider how they can be a blessing in their workplace for the sake of Christ.

Marriage in twenty-first century America has different social applications than that of the first-century AD. If writing today, Peter would likely focus more on the husband's relationship to his wife. The exhortation of First Peter 3:1-7 is based on the social situation of wives being the weaker vessels in society.<sup>317</sup> In the United States, wives and husbands have equal standing in society. Peter's exhortation is to a believing spouse living with an unbelieving spouse.<sup>318</sup> Believers ought to still live in harmony with an unbelieving spouse to win him or her to Christ. Peter is not referencing an abusive marriage relationship, but if harmony can be obtained, the marriage should remain intact.

The purpose of missional living is to function within the societal roles of the day but to filter them through Christ in order to avoid further unnecessary conflict with society.<sup>319</sup> Peter's exhortation is action based. The example of Christ ought be noticeable in the believer's life. Peter never says that he agrees with the social code, but he develops a missional strategy for believers to function within society that places Christ at the center. When asked as to why they do not partake in the sins of the world, believers are to give account to the hope that Christ has given them (1 Pet. 3:15). Faith comes by hearing and people hear by the preaching of the Messiah (Rom. 10:17).

---

<sup>317</sup> See again Keener's discussion. *1 Peter*, 247-250.

<sup>318</sup> The implication being that salvation came for one of them after they had been married. This passage is not an argument for unequally yoked marriages which is prohibited in Scripture (1 Cor. 7:39; 2 Cor. 6:14-15; cf. Gen. 24:3; 27:46-28:1; Deut. 7:3-4; Josh. 23:12; 1 Kings 11:1-11).

<sup>319</sup> Edwards, *1 Peter*, 135.

## Christ Our Example

Christ is the center of First Peter.<sup>320</sup> The mission and ethic of the believer is to bless the nations so that all may come to glorify God. The sufferings of Christ become the reason Peter exhorts his readers to endure in the faith despite their suffering.<sup>321</sup> Christ suffered for the sins of humanity, despite having no sin (1 Pet. 12:22; Is. 53:9) and brought salvation to all who place their faith in Him. He did not return evil for evil but left judgment to the Father (1 Pet. 2:23). It is God who says, “Vengeance is mine” (Deut. 32:35). God will repay all who rise against His people (cf. Gen. 12:3). Ultimate judgment will come when a person passes from this world to face the Father, but as long as a person lives, God’s grace is revealed. Christ came to die for the sins of all humanity. Salvation is available for all to receive until their final breath. The role of the believer is not to revile or repay evil but to bless so that all may inherit this salvation. Everyone in Christ at one point was an enemy of Christ, but His suffering was a blessing that brought us out of darkness and into the light. Now the believer’s life can reflect Christ leading others to the same blessing.

The world does not accept Christians (cf. John 17:14, 18). Believers sojourn in a land that does not honor them. Peter warns that believers are not to be surprised when they face trials as it is the calling of the believer in this world (1 Pet. 4:12). Trials are the proof of faith that all believers will face so that they may rejoice and exalt Christ upon His revelation (1 Pet. 1:7; 4:13-14). Today, the Church continues to suffer in parts of the world for its identification with Christ. The example of Peter’s exhortation shows that believers ought to first look for how to bless

---

<sup>320</sup> Green sees a chiasm in Peter’s missional strategy within the household codes (1 Pet. 2:13-3:12) that is centered on Christ’s example. *1 Peter*, 72.

<sup>321</sup> Keener writes “Christ’s example of gracious response in the face of unjust suffering is central in a sense to Peter’s entire project, in that it grounds Peter’s counsel to believers who are suffering in the model of Christ.” *1 Peter*, 194.

within the social structures of the nations of earth.

Peter exhorts all to humility (1 Pet. 5:6). Humility comes from sharing in Christ's suffering and inheritance. Peter's exhortation shows the growth in his own life. One would hardly say Peter was humble in the Gospels, but he heeded Christ's teaching and was confident in his calling leading him to be a humble servant of Christ. Peter says believers can cast "all anxiety on Him, because He cares for you" (1 Pet. 5:7). In the Gospels, Peter fails to give his anxieties to Christ, choosing rather to rely on his own abilities that led him to disowning Christ three times (Matt. 26:69-75; Mark 14:66-72; Luke 22:54-62; John 18:25-27). But even in his failure, Christ still cared for Peter by restoring him and forgiving him for his denials (John 21:15-23). Peter experiences the full love of Christ in that moment. Christ calls Peter to "follow Me" (Jn. 21:19) for the first time in the Gospel of John. Peter is now ready to be the shepherd of Christ's flock on earth (cf. Jn. 21:15-17).<sup>322</sup> Peter being his curious self asks what was to happen to John, but Christ focuses his mission saying "If I want him to remain until I come, what is that to you? *You follow Me!*" (Jn. 21:22, *emp. added*). While it took three years of discipleship under Christ, this event propelled Peter to the leader he became for the New Covenant community of believers.

---

<sup>322</sup> Helyer points out that Christ's three commissions to Peter to "Tend My lambs" (Jn. 21:15), "Shepherd My sheep" (Jn. 21:16), and "Tend My sheep" (Jn. 21:17) are all indicators of Peter's role as pastor of the emerging church and is his inspiration for calling the elders to "shepherd the flock of God" in First Peter 5:1-2. *The Life and Witness*, 65-66.

## Conclusion

### Further Study

The goal of this thesis was to add to the ongoing study of Peter's ministry to the Gentiles and how Gentiles fit into his first epistle. This thesis focused on the mission and ethic of believers in the church age and was not concerned with eschatological implications of First Peter.<sup>323</sup> Second Peter was not considered in this thesis. Assuming that Peter is the author of Second Peter and is written to the same believers (2 Pet. 3:1), the implication of this study would be that Second Peter is written to both Jews and Gentiles as well.<sup>324</sup> Where First Peter focuses on the mission and ethic the New Covenant community is to display in the face of suffering, Second Peter is a letter of warning to the same believers to stay strong in the gospel preached to them and not to stray with the teachings of false prophets (2 Pet. 2:1-22). Second Peter also focuses on the eschatological hope believers have in Christ (2 Pet. 3:3-16). Beyond Second Peter, the further analysis on how Peter's mission and ethic interacts with the rest of the canonical New Testament is needed. This study interacted some with Paul's writings when necessary but did not directly focus on the similarities or differences in their epistles as well as the non-Petrine catholic epistles.

### Chapter Conclusions

#### Chapter 1

Chapter 1 introduced the study and identified the need for a further look into the view of a predominantly Gentile audience for the epistle of First Peter. The hypothesis of the study was

---

<sup>323</sup> For an eschatological study on First Peter see Kelly D. Liebengood, *The Eschatology of 1 Peter: Considering the Influence of Zechariah 9-14*, SNTSMS 157 (New York, NY: Cambridge University Press, 2014).

<sup>324</sup> For an overview of the introductory issues of Second Peter and recent scholarship see Davids, *A Theology of*, 190-208.

that if First Peter were written to a predominately Gentile audience, the external canonical evidence of First Peter would show that Peter was an apostle to Gentiles and included them in his ministry. The study took a canonical approach inspired by Michael Licona to First Peter understanding the Scripture as giving “an accurate gist, or an essentially faithful representation of what occurred.”<sup>325</sup>

## **Chapter 2**

Chapter 2 surveyed the fundamental issues surrounding the recipients of First Peter. The survey considered the views of John H. Elliott, Karen Jobes, Ben Witherington III, and Craig Keener.<sup>326</sup> It was shown that the majority opinion of scholarship today favors a predominantly Gentile view of First Peter but the evidence to support was not convincing to make an absolute claim. The chapter also concluded the best rendering of *παρεπίδημος* (1 Pet. 1:1; 2:11) and *πάροικος* (1 Pet. 2:11) was *sojourning over exile* and other translations in light of the mission and ethic Peter exhorts his readers to on the basis of the Old Testament covenants.

## **Chapter 3**

Chapter 3 covered Peter’s life and ministry in the Gospels, Acts, and the Pauline Epistles. The goal of the chapter was to find evidence of Peter being an apostle to Gentiles and a champion for their full inclusion into the New Covenant community by faith alone. It was concluded that the Gospel show Peter as Christ’s chosen leader for the New Covenant community by giving him the keys to the kingdom that he used when the Spirit was endowed unto the Jews, Samaritans, and Gentiles. The study analyzed Peter’s speeches in Acts and the

---

<sup>325</sup> Licona, “Are the Gospels “Historically Reliable?”” 148. See also the Research Method section in Chapter 1.

<sup>326</sup> See note 17 above for specific sources.

progression of his understanding of Gentile inclusion and how the speeches may relate to First Peter. Beyond the speeches, the chapter concluded that Peter and Paul were partners in the gospel mission to the Gentiles giving special attention to their interaction at Antioch as it led to the Council of Jerusalem. The analysis of the chapter concluded that based on the testimony of the New Testament, it is reasonable to conclude that First Peter could be written to a predominantly Gentile audience in support of the modern majority opinion.

#### **Chapter 4**

Chapter 4 analyzed the implication of First Peter being written to a predominately Gentile audience and how Peter's use of Old Testament Israelite imagery can apply to the New Covenant community. The chapter surveyed the mission and ethic of the Noahic, the Abrahamic and Mosaic Covenants, and how the mission and ethic still applies in the New Covenant. Peter has established, based on the Old Testament covenants, that the role of the New Covenant community in the church age was to bless the nations, just as it was Israel's role under the Old Covenant. Peter offers a missional strategy to work within the social structures of a person's society so that they may set an example of Christ and that He would be glorified among the nations. The importance of the mixed audience of Jews and Gentiles shows that this mission applies to all who are spiritual descendants of Abraham through Christ. The Church is formed by all who place their faith in Christ, regardless of ethnicity, and all in Christ are called to give a blessing to those around them.

#### **Final Thoughts**

In John 21:18, Christ says to Peter, "Truly, truly, I say to you, when you were younger, you used to gird yourself and walk wherever you wished; but when you grow old, you will stretch out your hands and someone else will gird you, and bring you where you do not wish to

go.” John connects this to the death Peter faced (Jn. 21:19). Church tradition holds that under the orders of Nero, Peter was crucified (*1 Clem.* 5.4; 6.1; *Apol.* 5.3; *Praesc.* 36.1-3; *Can. Epi.* 9; *Hist. eccl.* 2.25; 3.1).<sup>327</sup> Peter lived the life he preached. He suffered death, not by doing what was evil, but what was right in the eyes of God, and God was glorified through his death (Jn. 21:19).

From Christ’s crucifixion to his own, Peter exemplified a faithfully obedient life for Christ. For Peter, suffering on behalf of the gospel was a worthy price to pay for the future inheritance that is found in Christ. He was not perfect and stumbled along the way. Peter writes his first epistle to exhort his fellow believers to remain faithful to their calling as the elect sojourners of God, called to bless the nations in faithful witness of Christ. Perhaps Helyer concludes Peter’s impact in the New Testament best writing, “We who are attempting to follow in the footsteps of Jesus sense that in Peter we have a fellow traveler.”<sup>328</sup> To conclude, consider Peter’s final words of his exhortation to the New Covenant community of believers in 1 Peter 5:10-11 (*emp. added*): *After you have suffered for a little while, the God of all grace, who called you to His eternal glory in Christ, will Himself perfect, confirm, strengthen and establish you. To Him be dominion forever and ever. Amen.*

---

<sup>327</sup> See again, O’Connor, *Peter in Rome*, 53-89.

<sup>328</sup> Helyer, *1 Peter*, 303.

## Bibliography

- Bartholomew, Craig G., and Michael W. Goheen. *The Drama of Scripture: Finding Our Place in the Biblical Story*. Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2014.
- Bauckham, Richard. "James, Peter, and the Gentiles," in *The Missions of James, Peter, and Paul: Tensions in Early Christianity*, edited by Bruce Chilton and Craig A. Evans, 91-142. Boston, MA: Brill, 2005.
- Bird, Michael F. *Romans*. SGBC. Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2016.
- \_\_\_\_\_. *Evangelical Theology: A Biblical and Systematic Introduction*. Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2013.
- Block, Darrell L. *A Theology of Luke and Acts: God's Promised Program, Realized for All Nations*. Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2012.
- \_\_\_\_\_. *Acts*. BECNT. Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2007.
- Blomberg, Craig L. *From Pentecost to Patmos: An Introduction to Acts through Revelation*. Nashville, TN: B&H Academic, 2006.
- Blount, Brian K. *Revelation: A Commentary*. NTL. Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox Press, 2009.
- Bockmuehl, Markus. *Simon Peter in Scripture and Memory: The New Testament Apostle in the Early Church*. Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2012.
- Botner, Max. "The Essence of a Spiritual House: Misunderstanding Metaphor and the Question of Supersessionism in 1 Peter." *JBL* 139, no. 2 (2020): 409-425.
- Bray, Gerald, editor. "The First Epistle of Peter." In *James, 1-2, 1-3 John, Jude*. Ancient Christian Commentary on Scripture, 118-127. Downers Grove, IL: IVP Academic, 2000.
- Bruce, F. F. *The Acts of the Apostles: Greek Text with Introduction and Commentary*. Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1990.
- \_\_\_\_\_. *The Epistle to the Galatians*. NIGTC. Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1982.
- \_\_\_\_\_. *The Book of the Acts*. NICNT. Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1988.
- \_\_\_\_\_. "Galatian Problems: 1. Autobiographical Data." *BJRL* 51, no 2 (1968): 292-309.
- \_\_\_\_\_. "Galatian Problems: 4. The Date of the Epistle." *BJRL* 54, no. 2 (1971): 250-267.

- Calvin, John. *Commentaries on the Catholic Epistles*, trans. John Owen. William B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1948.
- Chilton, Bruce. "James, Peter, Paul, and the Formation of the Gospels," in *The Missions of James, Peter, and Paul: Tensions in Early Christianity*, edited by Bruce Chilton and Craig A. Evans, 3- 28. Boston, MA: Brill, 2005.
- Cole, R. Alan. *Exodus: An Introduction and Commentary*. TOTC. Downers Grove, IL: IVP Academic, 1973, 2008.
- Davids, Peter H. *A Theology of James, Peter, and Jude: Biblical Theology of the New Testament*. Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2014.
- \_\_\_\_\_. *The First Epistle of Peter*. NICNT. Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1990.
- Dunn, James D. G. *Beginning From Jerusalem, Christianity in the Making, Volume 2*. Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 2009.
- Eastman, David L. *The Ancient Martyrdom Accounts of Peter and Paul*. Atlanta, GA: Society of Biblical Literature, 2015.
- Edwards, Dennis R. *1 Peter*. SGBC. Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2017.
- Elliott, John H. *1 Peter: A New Translation with Introduction and Commentary*. AB. New York, NY: Doubleday, 2000.
- \_\_\_\_\_. *A Home for the Homeless: A Social-Scientific Criticism of 1 Peter, Its Situation and Strategy*. Minneapolis, MN: Fortress Press, 1990.
- \_\_\_\_\_. *Conflict, Community, and Honor: 1 Peter in Social-Scientific Perspective*. Eugene, OR: Cascade Books, 2007.
- \_\_\_\_\_. "The Rehabilitation of an Exegetical Step-Child: 1 Peter in Recent Research." *JBL* 95, no. 2 (June 1976): 243-254.
- \_\_\_\_\_. *What is Social-Scientific Criticism?* (Minneapolis, MN: Fortress Press, 1993).
- English, E. Schuyler. "Was St. Peter Ever in Rome?" *Bibliotheca Sacra* 124 no. 496 (Oct. 1967): 314-320.
- Fitzmyer, Joseph A. *The Acts of the Apostles: A New Translation with Introduction and Commentary*. AB. New York, NY: Doubleday, 1998.
- Gaventa, Beverly. *The Acts of the Apostles*. ANTC. Nashville, TN: Abingdon, 2003.

- Gibson, Jack J. *Peter Between Jerusalem and Antioch: Peter, James and the Gentiles*. WUNT 2. Reihe 345. Tübingen, GR: Mohr Siebeck, 2013.
- Green, Joel B. *1 Peter*. Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 2007.
- Green, Michael. *2 Peter and Jude: An Introduction and Commentary*. TNTC. Downers Grove, IL: IVP Academic, 2011.
- Grudem, Wayne. *1 Peter: An Introduction and Commentary*. TCNT. Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1988.
- Gundry, Robert H. *Peter: False Disciple and Apostate According to Saint Matthew*. Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 2015.
- Helyer, Larry R. *The Life and Witness of Peter*. Downers Grove, IL: IVP Academic, 2012.
- Hengel, Martin. *Saint Peter: The Underestimated Apostle*. Translated by Thomas F. Trapp. Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans Publishing Co., 2010.
- Hillyer, Norman. *1 and 2 Peter*. NIBC. Peabody, MA: Hendrickson Publishers, Inc., 1992.
- Himes, Paul A. "Why did Peter Change the Septuagint? A Reexamination of the Significance of the use of  $\tau\acute{\iota}\theta\eta\mu$  in 1 Peter 2:6." *BBR* 26, no. 2 (2016): 227-244.
- Holladay, Carl R. *Acts: A Commentary*. NTL. Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox Press, 2016.
- Jobes, Karen H. *1 Peter*. BECNT. Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2005.
- Johnson, Luke Timothy. *Among the Gentiles: Greco-Roman Religion and Christianity*. New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2009.
- Kaminski, Carol. "Beautiful Women or 'False Judgement'? Interpreting Genesis 6.2 in the Context of Primaeval History." *JSOT* 32, no. 4 (June 2008): 457-473.
- Keathley, Naymond H. *The Church's Mission to the Gentiles: Acts of the Apostles, Epistles of Paul*. Macon, GA: Smyth & Helwyns Publishing, Inc., 1999.
- Keener, Craig S. *Acts: An Exegetical Commentary: Introduction and 1:1-2:47*. Vol. 1. Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2012.
- \_\_\_\_\_. *1 Peter: A Commentary*. Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2021.
- Keiser, Thomas. "The 'Sons of God' in Genesis 6:1-4: A Rhetorical Characterization." *Westminster Theological Journal* 80, no. 1 (Spring 2018): 103-120.

- Konicki, Janusz. *The Function of the Speeches in the Acts of the Apostles*. Boston, MA: Brill, 2018.
- Kümmel, Werner Georg. *Introduction to the New Testament*. Translated by Howard Clarke Kee. Nashville, TN: Abingdon Press, 1975.
- Licona, Michael, R. "Are the Gospels "Historically Reliable"? A Focused Comparison of Suetonius's Life of Augustus and the Gospel of Mark." *Religions* 10, no. 3 (2019): 148-165.
- \_\_\_\_\_. *The Resurrection of Jesus: A New Historiographical Approach*. Downers Grove, IL: IVP Academic, 2010.
- Liebengood, Kelly D. *The Eschatology of 1 Peter: Considering the Influence of Zechariah 9-14*. SNTSMS 157. New York, NY: Cambridge University Press, 2014.
- Lightfoot, Joseph Barber. *St. Paul's Epistle to the Galatians. A Revised Text with Introduction, Notes, and Dissertations*, 4th ed. CCGNT. London: Macmillan and Co., 1874.
- Lohse, Eduard. "St. Peter's Apostleship in the Judgment of St. Paul, the Apostle to the Gentiles: An Exegetical Contribution to an Ecumenical Debate." *Gregorianum* 72, no. 3 (1991): 419-435.
- Longman III, Tremper. *Psalms*. TOTC. Downers Grove, IL: IVP Academic, 2014.
- MacDuff, J. R. *The Footsteps of St Peter: Being the Life and Times of the Apostle*. Minneapolis, MN: Klock & Klock Christian Publishers, Inc., 1876, 1982.
- Marshall, I. Howard. *Acts: An Introduction and Commentary*. TNTC Vol. 5. Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1980.
- McKnight, Scot. *1 Peter*. NAC. Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1996.
- \_\_\_\_\_. *The Letter to the Colossians*. NICNT. Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 2018.
- Michaels, J. Ramsey. *1 Peter*. WBC. Waco, TX: Word, Inc, 1988.
- Mounce, William D., ed. *Mounce's Complete Expository Dictionary of the Old & New Testament Words*. Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2006.
- O'Connor, Daniel Wm. *Peter in Rome: The Literary, Liturgical, and Archeological Evidence*. New York, NY: Columbia University Press, 1969.
- Oppenheimer, Aharon. *Between Rome and Babylon: Studies in Jewish Leadership and Society*. Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2020.

- Perkins, Pheme. *Peter: Apostle for the Whole Church*. Minneapolis, MN: Fortress Press, 2000.
- Pinter, Dean. *Acts*. SGBC. Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2019.
- Robinson, Will and Stephen R. Llewelyn, "The Fictitious Audience of 1 Peter," *HeyJ* LXI (2020): 939-950.
- Routledge, Robin. *Old Testament Theology: A Thematic Approach*. Downers Grove, IL: IVP Academic, 2008.
- Samara, Jim. *James, 1 and 2 Peter, and Jude*, TTCS. Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books, 2018.
- Schreiner, Thomas R. *1-2 Peter and Jude*, Christian Standard Commentary (Nashville, TN: B&H Publishing Group, 2020).
- Seeley, Robert Benton. *The Life and Writings of St. Peter*. Kessinger's Legacy Reprints. Whitefish, MT: Kessinger Publishing, LLC, 2010.
- Selwyn, Edward Gordon. *The First Epistle of St. Peter: The Greek Text with Introduction, Notes and Essays*. Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Book House, 1981.
- Senior, Donald P. and Daniel J. Harrington. *1 Peter; Jude and 2 Peter*. Sacra Pagina. Collegeville, MN: Liturgical Press, 2008.
- Shaw, David M. "A People Called: Narrative Transportation & Missional Identity in 1 Peter." PhD diss., University of Exeter, 2017. ProQuest (AAT 13911425).
- \_\_\_\_\_. "Called to Bless: Considering an Under-appreciated Aspect of "Doing Good" in 1 Peter 3:8-17." *Biblical Theology Bulletin* 50 no. 1 (2020): 161-173.
- Sibley, Jim R. "You Talkin' to Me?: 1 Peter 2:4-10 and a Theology of Israel." *SwJT* 59, no. 1 (Fall 2016): 59-75.
- Stenschke, Christoph. "Reading First Peter in the Context of Early Christian Mission." *Tyndale Bulletin* 60, no. 1 (2009): 107-126.
- Talbert, Charles H. *Reading Acts: A Literary and Theological Commentary on the Acts of the Apostles*. RNT. New York, NY: Crossroad Publishing Company, 1977.
- Walton, John H. "Comparative Exploration: Religion of Abraham." In *Ancient Near Eastern Thought and the Old Testament: Introducing the Conceptual World of the Hebrew Bible*, 150-151. Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2006.
- Ward, Allen M., Fritz M. Heichelheim, and Cedric A. Yeo. *A History of the Roman People*. Sixth ed. Abingdon, Oxon: Routledge, 2016.

- Watson, Francis. *Paul, Judaism, and the Gentiles: Beyond the New Perspective*. Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 2007.
- Wiarda, Timothy. *Peter in the Gospels*. WUNT 2. Reihe 127. Tübingen, GR: Mohr Siebeck, 2000.
- Williams, Jocelyn A. "A Case Study in Intertextuality: The Place of Isaiah in the "Stone" Saying of 1 Peter 2." *RTR* 66, no. 1 (April 2007): 37-55
- Williams, Martin. *The Doctrine of Salvation in the First Letter of Peter*. SNTSMS, 149. Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 2011.
- Witherington III, Ben. *Grace in Galatia: A Commentary on Paul's Letter to the Galatians*. Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1998.
- \_\_\_\_\_ *Letters and Homilies for Hellenized Christians Volume II: A Social-Rhetorical Commentary on 1-2 Peter*. Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2007.
- Wright, Christopher J. H. *The Message of Ezekiel: A New heart and a New Spirit*. BST. Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2001.
- Wright, N. T. and Michael F. Bird, *The New Testament in its World: An Introduction to the History, Literature, and Theology of the First Christians*. Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan Academic, 2019.