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I<sup>st</sup> & 2<sup>nd</sup>  
**PETER**

*Confirming the Faith*



UNDERSTANDING GOD'S WORD  
VERSE-BY-VERSE

1<sup>st</sup> & 2<sup>nd</sup> PETER—CONFIRMING THE FAITH  
by Practical Christianity Foundation

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Cover art: The Resource Agency, Franklin, Tennessee

Project Management by JJ Graphics

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International Standard Book Number: 978-1-60098-073-2

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# Introduction



These two epistles were penned by one of Jesus' most dynamic disciples. Peter was one of the original twelve disciples chosen by Jesus Christ at the beginning of His public ministry, and he continued with Jesus until His ascension. In the Gospels, Peter is mentioned more than any other disciple and was the predominant leader of this small group. Originally, he was known as Simon (in Greek) or Simeon (in Hebrew) until Jesus renamed him Peter, meaning "stone."

*<sup>41</sup>Andrew at once found his brother Simon and told him, "We have found the Messiah" (which means "Christ").*

*<sup>42</sup>Andrew brought Simon to Jesus. Jesus looked at Simon and said, "You are Simon, son of John. Your name will be Cephas" (which means "Peter"). (John 1:41–42)*

Peter originally lived in [Bethsaida \(view image\)](#) and later moved to a home in [Capernaum \(view image\)](#), which became the [Galilean \(view image\)](#) headquarters for Jesus and His disciples.<sup>1</sup> Peter's later denial of his Lord the night before Jesus' crucifixion marked the low point in this disciple's life. After the resurrection, Jesus restored him to His fellowship, and Peter became a bold leader in the early church.

Before he was chosen by Jesus to be a disciple, Peter was a fisherman. When Jesus commanded Peter to leave his business and follow Him to become a fisher of people, he did so immediately ([Matthew 4:18–20](#)). He

and his brother, [Andrew](#), were in the fishing business with [John](#) and [James](#) who also became disciples.

The first letter was penned around A.D. 64 during the time of [Nero's \(view image\)](#) persecution of Christians, who Nero accused of setting fire to [Rome \(view image\)](#). The intensity of this deadly confrontation was the motivation that drove Peter to pen this letter to the churches of [Asia Minor \(view image\)](#). One of the curiosities that may reflect the hostile environment in which this letter was written is Peter's indication that he was writing this letter from [Babylon \(view image\)](#) (*1 Peter 5:13*). There is no evidence from early church literature that would suggest that Peter ever went to Babylon. Although it is possible that he did venture to [Mesopotamia](#), it seems more likely that he was writing from Rome, the imperial city, but used the term Babylon as a code word in order to maintain the safety and anonymity of the Christians that were being pursued throughout the empire.<sup>2</sup> This term aptly fit the idolatrous character of the city (See John's use of Babylon in *Revelation 17–18*).

The theme of Peter's first letter is an exhortation to fellow Christians to remain true to their Savior despite their suffering at the emperor's hand. Christians were fleeing Rome, and Peter wrote to Christians who were scattered throughout Asia Minor. In these hard times, believers were encouraged to remain steadfast in the strength of the Holy Spirit. *"<sup>9</sup>Be firm in the faith and resist him, knowing that other believers throughout the world are going through the same kind of suffering. <sup>10</sup>God, who shows you his kindness and who has called you through Christ Jesus to his eternal glory, will restore you, strengthen you, make you strong, and support you as you suffer for a little while. <sup>11</sup>Power belongs to him forever. Amen"* (*1 Peter 5:9–11*).

Peter's second letter looks forward beyond the suffering that continued to plague the Christian community. He continued his call to develop strong Christian character that could prevail in spite of hostile circumstances. Then, he warned of the dangers presented when false teachers would further threaten the fortitude of the faithful. Through it all, Peter eagerly looked forward to the consummation of his faith in the second coming of Jesus Christ.

It is believed that Peter wrote this letter knowing that he would soon face his own executioners and join other victims of [Nero's \(view image\)](#) rage. He spent the final years of his life in [Rome \(view image\)](#). According to

tradition, Peter was crucified “with his head downwards, declaring himself unworthy to be crucified as his Lord, and was buried in the [Vatican](#), near the triumphal way.”<sup>3</sup>

Thus, it seems that Peter penned his second letter shortly after his first, possibly A.D. 65–66. Peter refers to his first letter in [2 Peter 3:1](#), confirming the authentic relationship between these two powerfully composed epistles. Even today, these letters provide much needed assurance to believers that, even though there continues to be persecution and suffering, there is always hope. They speak of suffering for the sake of the Lord and Savior and of allowing that suffering to count for His glory. Peter’s counsel provides profound insight and instruction to Christians throughout the ages who suffer for the name of Christ.

1. Practical Christianity Foundation, *Mark: Jesus Christ, Love in Action* (Holiday, FL: Green Key Books, 2003) 33.
2. *New Geneva Study Bible*, ed. R.C. Sproul (Nashville: Thomas Nelson Publishers, 1995), 1967.
3. Robert Jamieson, Andrew R. Fausset, and David Brown, *Jamieson, Fausset, and Brown’s Commentary* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan Publishing House, 1961), 1461.

## **Matthew 4:18–20**

<sup>18</sup>As he was walking along the Sea of Galilee, he saw two brothers, Simon (called Peter) and Andrew. They were throwing a net into the sea because they were fishermen. <sup>19</sup> Jesus said to them, “Come, follow me! I will teach you how to catch people instead of fish.” <sup>20</sup> They immediately left their nets and followed him.

## **1 Peter 5:13**

<sup>13</sup> Your sister church in Babylon, chosen by God, and my son Mark send you greetings.

## **2 Peter 3:1**

<sup>1</sup> Dear friends, this is the second letter I’m writing to you. In both letters I’m trying to refresh your memory.

**ANDREW** — A fisherman who followed John the Baptist and then became one of the first disciples of Jesus (*John 1:35–40; in lists of the apostles he appears among the first four; Matt. 10:2–4; Mark 3:16–19; Luke 6:14–16; Acts 1:13*). According to John, it was he who led his brother Simon Peter to Jesus (*vv. 41–42*). The Synoptic Gospels indicate that Andrew's call came as he and Simon were fishing at the Sea of Galilee near Capernaum with their business partners Zebedee and his sons James and John (*Mark 1:16–20; Luke 5:10*).

It was Andrew who informed Jesus about the boy with the loaves and fishes prior to the feeding of the five thousand (*John 6:8*). On another occasion he relayed to Jesus the inquiries of the Greeks concerning the Messiah (*12:22*). During the discourse at the Mount of Olives he was among those disciples who asked Jesus about the meaning of the destruction of Jerusalem and the end of time (*Mark 13:3*).

According to the apocryphal Acts of Andrew he died on a cross; various traditions developed regarding the disposition of his body. Andrew has come to be regarded as the patron saint of both Scotland and Russia.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Myers, Allen C. *The Eerdmans Bible dictionary* 1987 : 55. Print.

**ASIA MINOR** — great peninsula, approximately 250,000 sq mi (647,500 sq km), extreme Western Asia, Asian Turkey, also called Anatolia.

It is washed by the Black Sea in the north, the Mediterranean Sea in the south, and the Aegean Sea in the west. The Black and Aegean seas are linked by the Sea of Marmara and the two straits of the Bosphorus and the Dardanelles. Near the southern coast of Asia Minor are the Taurus Mountains; the rest of the peninsula is occupied by the Anatolian plateau, which is crossed by numerous mountains interspersed with lakes. In ancient times most Eastern and Western civilizations intersected in Asia Minor, for it was connected with Mesopotamia by the Tigris and Euphrates rivers and with Greece by the Aegean and Mediterranean seas.

The Hittites established the first major civilization in Asia Minor about 1800 B.C. Beginning in the 8th cent. B.C. Greek colonies were established on the coastlands, and the Greeks thus came into contact with Lydia, Phrygia, and Troy. The conquest (6th cent. B.C.) of Asia Minor by the Persians led to the Persian Wars. Alexander the Great incorporated the region into his empire, and after his death it was divided into small states ruled by various Diadochi (rulers). It was reunified (2nd cent. B.C.) by the Romans. After A.D. 395 the country was re-Hellenized and became part of the Eastern Roman, or Byzantine Empire. It was prosperous until the early part of the 6th cent. when it was successively invaded by the Persians (616–26), Arabs (668), Seljuk Turks (1061), and Mongols (1243). The Mongols obliterated almost all traces of Hellenic civilization. Asia Minor was then gradually (13th–15th cent.) conquered by the Ottoman Turks. It remained part of the Ottoman Empire until the establishment of the Republic of Turkey after World War I.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Paul Lagassé and Columbia University, *The Columbia Encyclopedia*, 6th ed. (New York; Detroit: Columbia University Press; Sold and distributed by Gale Group, 2000).

**BABYLON IN THE NEW TESTAMENT** — In the Book of Revelation the world in rebellion against God is called “Babylon.” The Old Testament prophets often prophesied the fall of Babylon, the capital of an empire that destroyed God’s city, Jerusalem, and carried His people away as captives. So in Revelation Babylon is a word-picture for a society that persecuted God’s people but that God will eventually destroy.

When the Book of Revelation was written, Babylon may have been a kind of code name for pre-Christian Rome, which was built on seven hills (*Revelation 17:9*) and which was already persecuting the church. Since that time, generations of Christians have been able to identify their own Babylons and have found reassurance in Revelation’s message.

In Revelation 14:8 Babylon’s power to make people resist God’s claims in the gospel is admitted, but its doom is certain. In Revelation 16:19 Babylon is a “great city” that falls because God remembers its sin and brings His punishment. Throughout chapters 17–18 Babylon is prominent, pictured as a prostitute because it seduces people away from God with its glamor. But it is a false union that cannot satisfy.

“Babylon” stands over against the church, the “New Jerusalem” (*Revelation 21:2*), which is “the bride, the Lamb’s wife” (*Revelation 21:9*). God reveals the “mystery” or divine truth (*Revelation 17:5*) about it and all such manmade societies that are organized independently of God. Its fall is celebrated by God’s people (*Revelation 18:20; 19:1–5*).

In Matthew 1:11–12, 17, Judah’s captivity in Babylon is mentioned in Jesus’ genealogy. In Acts 7:43 Babylon appears in Stephen’s famous speech about the history of the Jewish people. In 1 Peter 5:13 “Babylon” probably refers to the city of Rome.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Youngblood, Ronald F., F. F. Bruce, and R. K. Harrison, Thomas Nelson Publishers, eds. *Nelson’s new illustrated Bible dictionary* 1995 : n. pag. Print.

**BALAAAM** — a non-Israelite prophet known from both biblical and extra-biblical sources as a person from the region of Transjordan. [... **READ MORE**] His fame in the culture of the ancient world places him alongside Noah, Daniel, and Job as a folk hero in the repertoire of the storyteller.

Balaam appears commonly in the Old Testament and regularly in the New Testament as an example of an evil artist, a prophet who would sell his skill for the proper price without reference to the Word of God supposedly represented by his words (*Deuteronomy 23:4, 5; Joshua 13:22; 24:9, 10; Nehemiah 13:2; Micah 6:5; 2 Peter 2:15; Jude 11; Revelation 2:14*). In Numbers 22:21-35, Balaam, known as a *seer of the gods*, cannot see as well as his donkey. Moreover, Balaam carries the responsibility for causing Israel to sin at Baal-peor (*Numbers 31:8, 16*).

In contrast, the narrative in Numbers 22-24 holds Balaam in a favorable light. When the antagonist, Balak, hires Balaam to curse the armies of Israel so that his defense against the Israelite threat would be manageable, Balaam responds with an appeal to his prophetic virtue. He can offer Balak only the word given him by God for the occasion. Balaam finishes the scene with an affirmation of his prophetic virtue: ‘Did I not tell your messengers whom you sent to me, ‘If Balak should give me his house full of silver and gold, I would not be able to go beyond the word of the Lord, to do either good or bad of my own will; what the Lord speaks, that will I speak?’’ (*Numbers 24:12-13*).<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Paul J. Achtemeier and Society of Biblical Literature, *Harper’s Bible Dictionary*, 1st ed. (San Francisco: Harper & Row, 1985). 90.

**BETHSAIDA** — Place-name meaning “house of fish.” The home of Andrew, Peter, and Philip (John 1:44; 12:21), located on the northeast side of the Sea of Galilee. This town was rebuilt under Philip the tetrarch, one of the sons of Herod the Great, who named it Julius in honor of the Emperor Augustus’ daughter. Near here Jesus fed the 5,000 (Luke 9:10) and healed a blind man (Mark 8:22). Jesus pronounced judgment upon Bethsaida for its lack of response to His message and miracles (Matt. 11:21; Luke 10:13). The site of Bethsaida has yet to be identified archaeologically. Some scholars do propose two sites named Bethsaida: the one northeast of the Sea of Galilee, as already discussed; and another, west of the Sea of Galilee, close to Capernaum. This postulation is based on Mark 6:45, where following the feeding of the 5,000 outside Bethsaida, Jesus tells His disciples to sail to Bethsaida. However, there is no contemporary mention of two Bethsaida’s, and the Mark 6 text can just as easily refer to a short trip to the known city of Bethsaida-Julias as to an unknown town.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Vermillion, William H. “Bethsaida.” Ed. Chad Brand et al. *Holman Illustrated Bible Dictionary* 2003 : 196. Print.

**CALVARY** — The name occurs once only in the King James Version, in Luke. 23:33, and not at all in most English versions. The word comes from the Vulgate, where the Latin *calvaria* translates the Greek *kranion*; both words translate from the Aramaic *gulgoltâ*, the ‘Golgotha’ of Matthew 27:33, meaning ‘skull’. Three possible reasons for such a name have been propounded: because skulls were found there; because it was a place of execution; or because the site in some way resembled a skull. All we know of the site from Scripture is that it was outside Jerusalem, fairly conspicuous, probably not far from a city gate and a highway, and that a garden containing a tomb lay nearby.

Two Jerusalem localities are today pointed out as the site of the Lord’s cross and tomb; the one is the Church of the Holy Sepulcher, the other Gordon’s Calvary, commonly known as the Garden Tomb. Unfortunately it has always proved difficult to debate the question objectively; in some quarters the identification one accepts is almost the touchstone of one’s orthodoxy. The Church of the Holy Sepulcher marks the site of a temple to Venus, which the emperor Constantine removed, understanding that it stood over the sacred site. The tradition thus goes back at least to the 4th century. But in view of the operations and activities of Titus in the 1st century and Hadrian in the 2nd, the identification must still be viewed as precarious. It has at least been clarified by recent excavations that the traditional site lay outside the city walls in the time of Christ. On the other hand, the evidence of the church itself may indicate a tomb of slightly too late a date to be authentic.

The Garden Tomb was first pointed out in 1849; a rock formation there resembles a skull; and admittedly the site accords with the biblical data. But there is no tradition or anything else to support its claim. The more ancient site is much more likely; but any identification must remain conjectural.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup>D. F. Payne, “Calvary”, *New Bible Dictionary*, ed. D. R. W. Wood, I. H. Marshall, A. R. Millard, J. I. Packer and D. J. Wiseman, 3rd ed. (Leicester, England; Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1996). 160.

**CAPERNAUM** — City of Galilee, mentioned only in the Gospels, which was the headquarters of much of Jesus' ministry. It lay on the northwest side of the Sea of Galilee (or Lake of Gennesaret), but its site is unknown. Its name means "village of Nahum." But it is impossible to say who this Nahum was, whether the Old Testament writer or someone else. Matthew gives us the only location we know: "And leaving Nazareth he went and dwelt in Capernaum by the sea, in the territory of Zebulun and Naphtali" (*Matthew 4:13*). The west shore of the lake was settled by the tribe of Naphtali. Two of the characters described as being in Capernaum help to identify its location as near the border of the Jordan and the political frontier. The story of the centurion (*Matthew 8:5; Luke 7:2*) points to the small garrison of about 100 men found at such a frontier town. The story of Levi's call to leave the customs post controlling the taxation of the area reflects on the same border character of the town (*Matthew 9:9; Mark 2:14; Luke 5:27*).

These are the only scant indications we have, for the supposed sites of Capernaum have not been excavated adequately to determine which it is. The two possible sites are within two miles of each other: Khan Minya (or Khirbet el-Minyeh) and Tell Hum (or *Telhūm*). Until the end of the last century Khirbet el-Minyeh was favored, lying at the seventh milestone on the road from Tiberias to Safed. Stones for building the road were used from this site. E. Robinson identified Khirbet el-Minyeh as Capernaum, but does not indicate why he favored the site. Josephus (War 3.10.8) describes in glowing terms the fertility of the countryside of Gennesaret and describes "a very copious spring" called Capernaum. This could well be the springs of the Seven Wells in the Tabgha delta, one of which is the most abundant spring in Galilee. Its water served to drive mills and to irrigate the Tabgha plain. It also fed two cisterns which in turn supplied a Roman bath northeast of Khirbet el-Minyeh.

Most of what we know of Capernaum is from the Gospel narrative. It was an important settlement, with a Roman garrison, adopted by Jesus as "his own city" after his rejection by Nazareth (*Matthew 9:1*). Here he was "at home" (*Mark 2:1*) and performed many miracles (*Mark 1:34*): the healing of the centurion's servant (*Matthew 8:5*); the healing of Peter's mother-in-law (*Mark 1:31*); and the exorcism of the unclean spirit (*Mark 1:23; Luke 4:33*). Thus highly favored by the ministry of Jesus, there was also a heavy curse imposed on the city because of its unrepentance: "And

you Capernaum, will you be exalted to heaven? You shall be brought down to Hades” (*Matthew 11:23; Luke 10:15*).<sup>1</sup>

War Josephus, *The Jewish War*

<sup>1</sup> Elwell, Walter A., and Barry J. Beitzel. *Baker encyclopedia of the Bible* 1988 : 415. Print.

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