

# **Dr. Dave Mathewson, New Testament Literature, Session 31, 1 Peter Resources from NotebookLM**

1) Abstract, 2) Audio podcast, 3) Briefing Document, 4) Study Guide, and 5) FAQs

## **1. Abstract of Mathewson, NT Literature, Session 31, 1 Peter, Biblicalelearning.org, BeL**

**Dr. Mathewson's lecture explores the New Testament book of 1 Peter.** The lecture begins with course logistics, including exam details and an extra credit review session. **Mathewson then transitions to analyzing 1 Peter, highlighting its focus on Christians facing local persecution and suffering.** He discusses Peter's purpose in writing: to encourage believers to remain steadfast in their faith amidst hostility, maintain appropriate Christian conduct, and refrain from retaliation. **The lecture also explores a troubling passage about Jesus preaching to spirits in prison, offering interpretations and relating it to broader New Testament themes of Christ's victory over evil.** Finally, the lecture highlights the book's message of hope in the face of persecution.

**2. 18 - minute Audio Podcast Created on the basis of  
Dr. Mathewson, NT Literature, Session 31 – Double click icon  
to play in Windows media player or go to the  
Biblicalelearning.org [BeL] Site and click the audio podcast link  
there (Old Testament → Major Prophets → Daniel).**



**Mathewson\_NTLit\_S  
ession31.mp3**

### 3. Briefing Document: Mathewson, NT Literature, Session 31, 1 Peter

Okay, here's a briefing document summarizing the key points from Dr. Mathewson's lecture on 1 Peter:

#### Briefing Document: 1 Peter

**Date:** 2024

**Overview:** This lecture by Dr. Mathewson provides an introduction to the book of 1 Peter, focusing on the circumstances surrounding its writing, its main themes (especially suffering), its structure, and a particularly difficult passage (1 Peter 3:18-20). The lecture also addresses logistical details regarding upcoming exams and review sessions.

#### Key Themes and Ideas:

- **Logistical Announcements:**
  - One more section exam (Exam #4) covering Hebrews through Revelation, likely on Monday, May 9th.
  - The final exam is comprehensive but *only* covers material from the first four exams. No new material will be on the final.
  - Dr. Mathewson will be absent the week before finals due to his son's graduation and wedding. An assistant will administer Exam #4.
  - There will likely be an extra credit review session for the final exam, worth a quiz grade.
  - Students can pick up copies of previous exams.
- **Importance of the "Short Letters":** Dr. Mathewson emphasizes the significance of giving more attention to letters like James, 1 & 2 Peter, and 1, 2, & 3 John, as they are often overlooked due to their placement near the end of the New Testament and overshadowed by Paul's letters. "Again, these books, because they come near the end of the New Testament and because they seem to be so overshadowed by Paul's teachings and letters, they often get very short treatment."
- **Author and Audience:** The letter is named after the author, Peter, not the recipients. Peter, a prominent Christian leader in Rome (referred to as "Babylon"), is writing to Christians dispersed across a wide geographical area (Pontus, Galatia, Cappadocia, Asia, and Bithynia). "Babylon by this time seems to have become a

code word for the city of Rome. So apparently Peter is writing this letter from Rome that he calls Babylon."

- **Nature of Suffering:** The suffering faced by the recipients was *not* likely an official, empire-wide persecution. Instead, it was more likely local, sporadic persecution, ostracism, ridicule, and social pressure from pagan neighbors. "1 Peter seems to be addressing a situation where the Christians are mainly suffering the kinds of things as the verse I just read, chapter 5 verse 9, suggests that were common for Christians in general."
- **Purpose of the Letter: Encouragement in Suffering:** Peter writes to encourage Christians to remain steadfast in their faith in a hostile environment. The theme of suffering is central to the letter. "The purpose of the letter in a sense, the purpose of the letter can be summarized by noting a theme that occurs throughout Peter in a disproportionate amount of times to its space... the verb form to suffer... occurs forty-one times as a verb throughout the New Testament, twelve of those instances occur in 1 Peter."
- **Structure of the Letter:**
  - Chapters 1-3: Focuses on maintaining appropriate Christian conduct (holiness) in the midst of suffering, especially through the creation of a holy community ("temple").
  - Chapters 4-5: Focuses on persevering by maintaining Christian witness and *not* retaliating, using Christ as the prime example.
- **The Church as a Temple:** Peter uses Old Testament language to describe the church as a spiritual house, a holy priesthood, and a temple, drawing parallels to both the Old Testament temple and the Qumran community's self-understanding. "You are a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, God's own people, in order that you might proclaim the mighty acts of Him who called you out of darkness and into His light." This serves both to motivate purity/holiness and to provide a sense of belonging/identity for those experiencing dislocation and hostility.

- **1 Peter 3:18-20: Christ's Proclamation to Spirits in Prison:** This passage is considered particularly difficult to interpret. Dr. Mathewson offers his interpretation, arguing that:
  - This event happens at the *time* of Jesus' resurrection, not between his death and resurrection. "In which also he went and preached to the spirits who were in prison... I take it that whatever's going on in this text is that it happened at the time of Jesus' resurrection."
  - The location of the spirits is not necessarily a specific geographical place (like hell), but possibly the "heavenlies" as described in Ephesians.
  - The spirits are likely a reference to the "sons of God" from Genesis 6 (angels who sinned by intermingling with humans), a common interpretation found in Jewish literature like 1 Enoch.
  - Jesus' "preaching" is not necessarily a second chance at salvation, but a proclamation of judgment and victory over these evil powers, similar to Paul's message in Ephesians 1.
  - Peter uses the story to draw a parallel between Noah's family (a minority in a hostile society rescued by God) and the church (also a minority in a hostile environment). Just as God rescued Noah, Christians can be assured of God's rescue, because Christ has already defeated the powers of evil.
  - "I think this is just Peter's way of saying the same thing. So, I don't think we need to ask where did Peter go, or where did Jesus go, where were these spirits in prison, are these the only spirits, what about other spirits? Peter's not interested in that, he's just using a common story that his readers were familiar with to reiterate that through his death and resurrection, Jesus has won the victory over the powers of evil, and now, through his death and resurrection, proclaims a message of judgment and victory."

## 4. Study Guide: Mathewson, NT Literature, Session 31, 1 Peter

### 1 Peter: A Study Guide

#### Quiz

1. According to 1 Peter 1:1, who is the letter addressed to, and what is significant about their location?
2. How does 1 Peter apply Old Testament language about Israel to the church? Give two examples.
3. What type of suffering does 1 Peter primarily address, and how does this differ from the common perception of early Christian persecution?
4. According to Mathewson, what does the author mean in 1 Peter 5:13 when he states, "Your sister church in Babylon... sends you greetings?"
5. What are the two main sections into which 1 Peter can be divided based on its theme of suffering?
6. What does Mathewson mean when he says that 1 Peter emphasizes maintaining an "appropriate Christian conduct?"
7. How does 1 Peter describe the church in Chapter 2, verses 4-10? What Old Testament imagery does Peter draw upon?
8. According to Mathewson, what are the two purposes of Peter's description of the church as a temple in 1 Peter 2?
9. What are two common interpretations of 1 Peter 3:18-20 regarding Christ preaching to spirits in prison?
10. According to Mathewson's interpretation, when did Christ preach to the spirits in prison, and whom did he preach to?

#### Quiz Answer Key

1. The letter is addressed to "exiles of the dispersion" in Pontus, Galatia, Cappadocia, Asia, and Bithynia. This is significant because it shows the recipients were widely scattered across various Roman provinces, likely facing local, non-official persecution.

2. 1 Peter applies Old Testament language about Israel to the church by describing Christians as a "chosen race" and a "royal priesthood." Previously, these terms exclusively described the nation of Israel in the Old Testament, but Peter now applies them to the church, a transcultural group of Jews and Gentiles.
3. 1 Peter primarily addresses unofficial, local suffering such as ostracism, ridicule, and social pressure. This differs from the popular idea of empire-wide persecution with Roman soldiers actively seeking out and violently persecuting Christians everywhere.
4. When the author refers to "Babylon," it is a code word for the city of Rome. This suggests that Peter is writing from Rome when he sends the letter.
5. The two main sections are: 1) chapters 1-3, which call on readers to maintain appropriate Christian conduct in the midst of suffering by living holy lives and creating a community, and 2) chapters 4-5, which call on readers to persevere by maintaining their Christian witness and not retaliating.
6. When Mathewson says that 1 Peter emphasizes maintaining "appropriate Christian conduct," he means that Christians should actively pursue purity, holiness, and good behavior, especially in the face of hostility, rather than passively enduring the suffering. It is by demonstrating holiness that they resist the pressure to cave to suffering.
7. 1 Peter describes the church as "living stones" being built into a "spiritual house," a "holy priesthood," and a "chosen race." He uses Old Testament imagery of the temple and the people of Israel to depict the church.
8. According to Mathewson, the two purposes are: 1) to motivate readers to pursue a holy life that befits their identity as God's temple, and 2) to provide a sense of belonging and identity to those who are scattered and facing hostility.
9. Two common interpretations include: Jesus preached a second chance at salvation to spirits in hell between his death and resurrection, and Jesus preached through Noah to the people who were alive during the time Noah built the Ark.
10. According to Mathewson, Christ preached to the spirits in prison at the time of his resurrection. He argues that the spirits are the angelic beings/demonic beings referenced in Genesis 6 that had transgressed their boundaries and had been bound in chains awaiting judgment.

## Essay Questions

1. Analyze the historical context of 1 Peter. How does understanding the social and political environment of the first-century Roman Empire inform our interpretation of the letter's message?
2. Explore the theme of suffering in 1 Peter. How does the author encourage his readers to respond to persecution, and what role does Christ's example play in this encouragement?
3. Discuss the significance of the church as a "spiritual house" and a "holy priesthood" in 1 Peter 2. What does this imagery reveal about the nature and identity of the early Christian community?
4. Compare and contrast the different interpretations of 1 Peter 3:18-20. What are the key arguments for each interpretation, and what are their implications for understanding Christ's work and the afterlife?
5. Examine the use of Old Testament imagery and language in 1 Peter. How does Peter adapt and apply these traditions to the Christian context, and what does this reveal about the relationship between the Old and New Testaments?

## Glossary of Key Terms

- **Dispersion:** The scattering of Jewish people outside of their ancestral homeland, also refers to the scattering of Christians throughout the Roman Empire (3).
- **Exiles:** A person or group of people living away from their native country or land, typically due to persecution or other factors (3).
- **Gentile:** A person who is not Jewish (4).
- **Royal Priesthood:** A term used in 1 Peter to describe the church, indicating their special status and access to God (4).
- **Babylon:** A code word used in 1 Peter, understood to be a symbolic reference to the city of Rome (5).
- **Steadfastness:** The quality of being firm in belief or determination; resoluteness (5).
- **Ostracism:** Exclusion from a society or group (4).
- **Persecution:** Hostility and ill-treatment, especially because of race or political or religious beliefs (4).
- **Exhortation:** An address or communication emphatically urging someone to do something (7).
- **Essenes:** A Jewish sect that withdrew from mainstream society to live in isolated communities, such as Qumran (7).
- **Qumran:** The location of a Jewish community that produced the Dead Sea Scrolls, and it offers insights into Jewish thought contemporary with the New Testament (7).
- **1 Enoch:** An ancient Jewish religious work, ascribed by tradition to Enoch, the great-grandfather of Noah, that is not part of the biblical canon but provides important background to understanding certain New Testament passages (12).
- **Heavenlies:** A term used to describe the heavenly realms or spiritual dimensions, often inhabited by spiritual beings (12).
- **Paradigmatic:** Serving as a typical example of something (14).



## **5. FAQs on Mathewson, NT Literature, Session 31, 1 Peter, Biblicalelearning.org (BeL)**

Here is an 8-question FAQ based on the provided source:

### **FAQ on 1 Peter based on Mathewson Lecture 31:**

#### **1. Why does Dr. Mathewson plan to spend more time on letters like 1 Peter, 2 Peter, 1 John, 2 John, and 3 John in his lectures?**

These letters are often overshadowed by Paul's letters and are located near the end of the New Testament, resulting in less attention given to them in typical New Testament courses. Dr. Mathewson aims to provide a slightly more in-depth look at these often-overlooked texts.

#### **2. What is a key characteristic of the letter 1 Peter in relation to its intended audience?**

1 Peter is written by a prominent Christian leader (Peter) to a widely dispersed group of Christians across various geographical regions. This mirrors the structure observed in the book of James. However, unlike James, 1 Peter is addressed to Gentile Christians, though it uses Old Testament language originally applied to Israel to describe the church.

#### **3. What was the likely nature of the suffering experienced by the Christians to whom 1 Peter was written?**

The suffering described in 1 Peter likely wasn't a widespread, officially sanctioned persecution by the Roman Empire. Instead, it probably consisted of more localized, sporadic instances of ostracism, ridicule, social pressure to conform to pagan norms, and perhaps even some physical mistreatment from their pagan neighbors.

#### **4. What is the overarching purpose or main theme of 1 Peter?**

The primary purpose of 1 Peter is to encourage Christians to remain steadfast in their faith and to instruct them on how to respond to the various forms of suffering they face, especially at the hands of pagan society. The frequent use of the word "suffering" in the letter highlights this theme.

#### **5. How is the book of 1 Peter structured in relation to the theme of suffering?**

The book can be divided into two parts. Chapters 1-3 focus on maintaining appropriate Christian conduct and living holy lives, encouraging purity and the creation of a supportive Christian community as a response to hostility. Chapters 4-5 emphasize

perseverance, using Christ's example of non-retaliation as a model for Christians enduring unjust suffering.

**6. How does 1 Peter describe the church, and what is the significance of this description?**

Peter describes the church using Old Testament imagery as a spiritual house or temple, composed of "living stones." This imagery highlights that the church is the dwelling place of God and motivates believers to live holy lives, demonstrating their identity as God's temple. It also provides a sense of belonging and identity for Christians scattered and facing hostility, assuring them that they are part of a sacred community.

**7. What is the difficult passage in 1 Peter 3:18-20 about, and what are some interpretations of it?**

This passage describes Christ, after being resurrected, preaching to "spirits in prison" who disobeyed God in the time of Noah. Interpretations vary:

- One interpretation links it to the Apostles' Creed statement, "He descended into hell," suggesting Christ preached to spirits in a holding place between death and final judgment, possibly offering a second chance.
- Another view is that Christ preached through Noah to those who are now spirits.
- Dr. Mathewson suggests that this happened *at* the time of Jesus' resurrection and that Jesus is proclaiming a message of judgment and victory over evil angelic/demonic beings from Genesis 6 in the heavenly realms, drawing on a common story or tradition about the "sons of God" who sinned and were imprisoned.

**8. According to Dr. Mathewson, why does Peter include the seemingly obscure story of Christ preaching to spirits in prison?**

Peter uses the story as a means of setting up a comparison between Noah and his family and Peter's audience. He argues that, just as Noah's family was rescued by God, Peter's audience will also be rescued by God through Jesus Christ. Further, Peter argues that just as Christ defeated evil when he was resurrected, Peter's audience can be comforted knowing that they have nothing to fear because Christ has already defeated the powers of evil.