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FIRST PETER

Standing Fast in the Grace of God

DANIEL L. SEGRAVES

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I Peter: Standing Fast in the Grace of God

by Daniel L. Segraves

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I

Salutation

1:1-2

A. Author (1:1a)

(1a) Peter, an apostle of Jesus Christ.

Verse 1a. The letter begins with a claim to apostolic authority. The author is Peter, one of the first to follow Jesus. (See John 1:40-42.) His brother Andrew brought him to Jesus. When Jesus saw him, He said, “You are Simon the son of Jonah. You shall be called Cephas” (John 1:42, NKJV). The original name of this disciple, Simon (from the Greek *Symeon*, Acts 15:14), is transliterated from the Hebrew *Shimeon*. It is a form of the word *shama*, which means “to hear,” “to listen,” or “to obey.” A form of *shama* appears in Deuteronomy 6:4, translated “hear” in the command, “Hear, O Israel: The LORD our God is one LORD.” Peter’s original name indicated his Jewishness, and it meant something like “hearing” or “heard.”

Jesus declared that Peter would be called “Cephas.” “Cephas” (Greek, *Kephas*) is transliterated from the Aramaic *kêp’*, which means “stone” or “rock.” The Greek name “Peter” (*petros*) has the same meaning. (See Matthew 16:18.)

In view of the significance of names among the Jewish

people,²² this change of Simon's name to Cephas was an important development. Generally, a new name symbolized a change of character. Peter's destiny was to be a pillar and foundation stone in the church (Galatians 2:9; Ephesians 2:20). His name will appear on the foundation stones of the New Jerusalem (Revelation 21:14).

After Andrew introduced Peter to Jesus, Jesus called Peter—a commercial fisherman—to be a fisher of men (Luke 5:10). When Jesus later chose, empowered, and commissioned His twelve apostles from among His disciples, Peter was the first one listed. (See Matthew 10:1-4; Mark 3:13-19; Luke 6:13-16.) On special occasions, Peter was one of only three apostles permitted to accompany Jesus. (See Mark 5:37; 9:2; 14:33.) On one occasion, Andrew was permitted to join this select group. (See Mark 13:3.)

After the ascension of Jesus and before the church was born on the Day of Pentecost, Peter still occupied a leading role among the Twelve. (See Acts 1:13.) He was the recognized leader of the waiting believers as they chose a replacement for Judas. (See Acts 1:15-22.) After the outpouring of the Holy Spirit, it was Peter who explained the phenomenon to the gathered multitude and who responded to their question, "Men and brethren, what shall we do?" (Acts 2:14-39, NKJV).

Peter's leadership in the church seems to be linked to his confession that Jesus was the Christ—the Messiah—the Son of the living God. (See Matthew 16:13-19.) Jesus gave him the "keys of the kingdom." The Jewish background of this phrase suggests that Peter would have the spiritual insight to lead others through the door of revelation through which he had passed.²³

Peter's spiritual insight did not render him inerrant, for shortly after his dramatic confession of faith he attempted to dissuade Jesus from His destiny. Jesus said to him, "Get behind Me, Satan! You are an offense to Me, for you are not mindful of the things of God, but the things of men" (Matthew 16:23, NKJV). Peter's frailties are well known. He was sometimes at a loss for words, but that did not keep him from speaking up. (See Mark 9:5-6.) He at first refused Jesus' ministry of washing his feet, but soon he swung to the opposite extreme (John 13:6-9). In spite of his protests that he would die before he would deny Jesus, he did deny Him three times, even cursing and swearing (Mark 14:29-31, 66-71). Jesus singled him out for rebuke for his inability to prayerfully support Him in the Garden of Gethsemane (Mark 14:37-38).

To Peter's credit, he recognized his sins (Mark 14:72). It is evident that Jesus forgave him, for after Jesus' resurrection an angel sent him special greetings (Mark 16:7) and then Jesus appeared personally to him (Luke 24:34; I Corinthians 15:5). Later, Jesus gave Peter a special commission, offering him an opportunity to recover himself from his three denials (John 21:15-17). He also foretold Peter's martyrdom (John 21:18-19).

In the first twelve chapters of Acts, Peter is the dominant apostolic influence. He conducted the replacement of Judas (Acts 1:15-22), preached the first message after the birth of the church (Acts 2:40), was instrumental in working miracles (Acts 3:1-11; 5:15), proclaimed Jesus to be the fulfillment of Messianic prophecies (Acts 3:12-26), defended the faith before the Sanhedrin (Acts 4:5-12), protected the purity of the young church (Acts 5:1-11), represented the Jerusalem church (together with John) to the