

Cappadocia was the major frontier province of the eastern Roman Empire. Rich in natural resources, it exported wheat, cattle, and prized horses. Christianity probably spread north along the road from Tarsus, although believing Jews may have taken the gospel with them when they returned from Pentecost (Acts 2).

Asia, among the wealthiest of Rome's many provinces, covered the western part of modern Asian Minor when Peter was written. Paul's two-year ministry in Ephesus, chief city in Asia Minor, had the result that "all the Jews and Greeks who lived in the province of Asia heard the Word of the Lord" (Acts 19:10, 22).

There were many Christians in Bithynia et Pontus in the days of Pliny the Younger (AD 111-113). He wrote to the emperor Trajan that "concerning this contagious superstition is not confined to the cities only, but has spread through the villages and rural districts." This state of Christian witness and growth presupposes a long period of evangelization throughout the province (note that Pliny was writing approximately 50 years after Peter was written).

#### Study Tips

Read through 1 Peter two or three times, alternating between your usual version and another to focus more clearly on what it says. Read about Peter in the New Testament--find every passage, using a concordance, where he is mentioned. Trace his spiritual growth through the Gospels and Acts; how does the picture gained from such a study correlate with the contents of this epistle? Read about Peter and 1 Peter in a Bible dictionary or encyclopaedia. As you read 1 Peter again, list unfamiliar places and terms to look up later for more background.

Read 1 Peter looking for examples of the actions of the Godhead as outlined in 1:2 (e.g., 1:18-19) further describe "sprinkling by his blood". Describe Peter's doctrines of Scripture and of the church. Compare 1 Peter with Peter's sermons in Acts. Are there any parallels? What are they?

Does this teaching about suffering apply to any members of the church today? How? How would you use 1 Peter to encourage or comfort a believer in a country where Christianity is illegal? What if it were illegal even to teach their children about the Lord?

Along with many promises, Peter exhorts and commands his readers in many ways? What are they? Does obedience to these commands characterize the church today? Why, or why not? Does it characterize your life? What changes in your life and in that of the church would result from such obedience?

#### Keys

Peter wrote to Christians suffering persecution because of their faith. He encouraged them by reminding them that it was not their decision to follow Christ, but God's decision to choose them that had led them into this situation. He who was powerful and omniscient to call them (1:2) was certainly able to preserve them to eternity,