

THE EPISTLE TO 1 PETER

INTRODUCTION TO 1 PETER

A. Authorship

1. The author of 1 Peter is the apostle Peter.

a. Internal support

- 1) 1 Peter 1:1, *Peter, an apostle of Jesus Christ, To those who are elect exiles of the Dispersion in Pontus, Galatia, Cappadocia, Asia, and Bithynia,*
- 2) Roger Raymer, *The parallels between this letter and Peter's sermons recorded in Acts are significant (cf. 1 Peter 1:20 with Acts 2:23 and 1 Peter 4:5 with Acts 10:42). One of the more striking examples is the similarity between 1 Peter 2:7-8 and Acts 4:10-11. In each passage Psalm 118:22 is quoted and applied to Christ. It is interesting that Peter was present when Christ Himself used Psalm 118:22 to refer to His rejection by the Jewish leaders (Matt. 21:42).*
- 3) Scot McKnight, *If the text says Peter wrote the letter, then to contend that he did not requires proof. If there is no solid counterproof, we can consider the ascription to be solid.*

b. External support

- 1) Respected theologians: Irenaeus (c.130-202), Clement of Alexandria (c. 150-215), Jerome (c. 340-420), Augustine (c. 354-430).
- 2) Canonical lists of New Testament books: Apostolic (c. 300) and Athanasius (c. 400).
- 3) Early church councils: Nicea (c. 325-340), Hippo (393), Carthage (397 and 419).
- 4) Roger Raymer, *The letters of Polycarp, Clement, and Irenaeus (to name only a few) show that the early church unquestionably accepted the authenticity of 1 Peter.*
- 5) J. Ramsey Michaels, *Aside from the four Gospels and the letters of Paul, the external attestation for 1 Peter is as strong, or stronger, than that for any NT book.*

c. Some disputes concerning authorship

- 1) Roger Rayer, *Until relatively recent times the authenticity of the epistle's claim to apostolic authorship went unchallenged. Then some modern scholars noted that Peter was considered by Jewish religious leaders as "unschooled" and "ordinary" (Acts 4:13). The superb literary style and sophisticated use of vocabulary in 1 Peter seem to indicate that its author must have been a master of the Greek language. Those who deny Peter's authorship say that such an artistic piece of Greek literature could not possibly have flowed from the pen of a Galilean fisherman.*
- 2) It is possible that Peter used an amanuensis (scribe) to put words to scroll. According to 1 Peter 5:12, Peter used Silas as his secretary. Silas was a Jerusalem Christian and a Roman citizen (Acts 16:36-37) who was probably skilled in the Greek language.
- 3) Thomas Nelson, *Peter's scribe, Silvanus (5:12), may have been responsible for much of the style and vocabulary. He probably applied his editorial skills to convey the message, personality, and apostolic authority of Peter the apostle.*
- 4) It would be foolish to assume that Peter remained just a fisherman. He was in Jesus' inner circle. He preached and ministered for more than 30 years from Jerusalem to Rome.

2. Peter's background

- a. His given name was Simon but changed by Jesus to Cafes (Aramaic) or Peter (Greek).
- b. He was from Bethsaida, the son of John and the brother of Andrew who was a disciple and follower of John the Baptist but became a follower of Jesus, John 1:36-37.
- c. He was a fisherman who resided in Capernaum.
- d. He was in Antioch, Galatians 2:11-16, (Autumn 49 A.D.)
- e. He went to Rome (62 AD)
- f. He was martyred in Rome (c. 64-68 A.D.)

3. An overview of Peter in the Gospels

- a. Peter walked on water, Matthew 14:28-31
- b. Peter declared Jesus is the Christ, the Son of the living God, Matthew 16:13-19
- c. Peter was with Jesus at the transfiguration, Matthew 17:1-9
- d. Peter asked Jesus about the extent of forgiveness, Matthew 18:21-22
- e. Peter was spokesman for the disciples concerning all they sacrificed in following Jesus, Matthew 19:27-30
- f. Peter professed allegiance to Jesus, John 6:66-69
- g. Peter's response when Jesus attempted to wash his feet, John 13:6-11
- h. Peter and John were sent to prepare the Passover meal, Luke 22:7-13

- i. Jesus foretold Peter's denial, Luke 22:31-34
 - j. Peter slept in the garden of Gethsemane, Mark 14:32-42
 - k. Peter attacked the servant of the high priest at Jesus' arrest, John 18:10-11
 - l. Peter denied Jesus, John 18:15-27
 - m. Peter was reinstated by Jesus and places confidence in Peter to lead the early church, John 21:15-17
4. An overview of Peter in the *Acts of the Apostles*
- a. Peter's speech at selection of Judas' successor, 1:16-22
 - b. Peter's sermon on Day of Pentecost, 2:14-36
 - c. Peter's sermon in Solomon's Colonnade, 3:12-26 (Summer of 33 A.D.)
 - d. Peter's speech before the Council, 4:8-12
 - e. Peter brought before Sanhedrin, 5:12-42, (34-35 A.D.)
 - f. Peter's ministry to Gentiles, 10:1-11:18, (40-41 A.D.)
 - g. Peter's sermon in Cornelius' house, 10:34-43
 - h. Peter defense to the church in Jerusalem, 11:4-17
 - i. Peter's speech at Jerusalem Council, 15:7-11 (Autumn 49 A.D.)
- B. Place and date of writing
- 1. Many believe Peter wrote the epistle from Rome around 63 A.D.
 - 2. A number of respected scholar believes Peter wrote it from eastern Asia Minor, addressing Jews in the Diaspora (dispersion) while Paul was at Rome, the center of the Gentile world.
 - 3. There is confusion concerning Peter's reference to Babylon (5:13) refers to Babylon in Mesopotamia or symbolically to Rom.
 - 2. He warns of persecution which would intensify with Nero's persecution of the church in 64 A.D.
 - 3. Since Peter urged the readers to honor the emperor (1 Peter 2:17), it is assumed the letter was written before 64 A.D.
 - 4. Roger Raymer, *The persecution and suffering that Peter did refer to was primarily social and religious rather than legal. A hostile pagan society would slander, ridicule, discriminate against, and even inflict physical abuse on those whose lifestyles had radically changed because of their faith in Christ.*
- C. Destination and recipients of the letter
- 1. It was written to Christians in Asia Minor as noted in 1 Peter 1:1, . . . *To those who are elect exiles of the Dispersion in Pontus, Galatia, Cappadocia, Asia, and Bithynia.*
 - 2. Those are five Roman provinces in what is now northern Turkey (see map below).
 - 3. Roger Raymer, *The churches in those provinces were made up of both Jews and Gentiles. This epistle is rich in references to and quotations from the Old Testament. Jewish Christians would have found special significance in the term diasporas, translated "scattered," used in the salutation (1:1). Jews who lived outside of Jerusalem were referred to as living in the diaspora . . . Peter carefully included both Jewish and Gentile Christians in his letter of encouragement to the churches of Asia Minor.*
 - 4. Joel Green, *The form of the letter and its opening reference to the diaspora (1:1) suggest an audience of Jewish Christians. This conclusion would be supported by the letter's dependence on the Scriptures of Israel and its repeated identification of its readers with appellatives used of Israel. What is more, persons outside of the community are called "Gentiles" (2:12; 4:3). Finally, given the letter's attribution to the apostle Peter, it may be of interest that, according to Paul, Peter's mission was to the Jews (Gal 2:7). . . The people of God envisioned in this letter is none other than "Israel"—so this document's "Jewishness" intimates less a description of the ethnic origins of its implied audience and more a clarification of its readers' status before God.*
- D. Peter's purposes for writing 1 Peter
- 1. A key verse, 1 Peter 4:19, *Therefore let those who suffer according to God's will entrust their souls to a faithful Creator while doing good.*
 - 2. Roger Raymer, . . . *to encourage Christians to face persecution so that the true grace of Jesus Christ would be evidenced in them (5:12) . . . Peter concretely linked doctrine with practice. The new birth gives a living hope to those in the midst of persecution. New conduct is prescribed because Christ endured unjust suffering. New behavior is required to demonstrate the grace of God to an unbelieving and hostile world. And new responsibilities are placed on the leaders and members of the body of Christ since they should stand together as living stones against the onrushing tide of persecution.*
 - 3. Wayne Grudem, *Since many of the exhortations in 1 Peter concern faith and obedience, it may be suggested that the purpose of 1 Peter is to encourage the readers to grow in their trust in God and their obedience to him throughout their lives, but especially when they suffer. Peter accomplishes his purpose by pointing to what God has done for them in Christ, then applying that to the readers' lives.*

4. Scot McKnight, *In essence, then, Peter's letter is an exhortation to holy endurance of suffering because these Christians have experienced the salvation of God and because that salvation is promised to them in all fullness when the final day arrives. Having received salvation and having been empowered by God with a new life, they must orient their lives toward the future revelation of Christ, love their fellow Christians, and maintain a holy life.*
5. J. Vernon McGee, *Simon Peter is not going to give us his theory of suffering. Simon Peter is going to speak to us out of his own tremendous experience, and it will become very wonderful to us as it becomes your experience and my experience.*
6. Joel Green, *Together with the Book of Revelation, 1 Peter is unrivaled among NT documents for its concern with questions of Christian identity, constitution, and behavior in a hostile world. For 1 Peter, Christian communities must struggle with how to maintain a peculiar identity as God's people in the midst of contrary cultural forces.*
7. A foundational purpose of 1 Peter is the emphasis on right living based on right doctrine. Consider 1 Peter 4:1-2, *Since therefore Christ suffered in the flesh, arm yourselves with the same way of thinking, for whoever has suffered in the flesh has ceased from sin, so as to live for the rest of the time in the flesh no longer for human passions but for the will of God.* Peter stressed the importance of following the way of Christ who did not live for this world but for the will of God. That present purpose is complemented by the future emphasis in 2 Peter 1:10, *Therefore, brothers, be all the more diligent to confirm your calling and election, for if you practice these qualities you will never fall.*

E. A Biblical Theology of 1 and 2 Peter

1. Doctrine of God, A detailed picture of God is given by Peter in 1 and 2 Peter. His development of the relationship between the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit is of great importance. He pictures an intimate relationship within the outworkings of all three. In 1 Peter 1:2, one struck by Peter's intimation of the Trinity composed of Father, Son, and Spirit. The argument for the Godhead is strengthened by 2 Peter 1:1 when Peter addressed the Son as *our God and Savior, Jesus Christ*. The deity of Jesus Christ is seen in these epistles due to His perfection (1 Peter 1:9), His divine power (2 Peter 1:3) and commandments to give Him honor and glory forever (2 Peter 3:18). Most of what we know of God relates to His past, present and future dealings with man. Major emphasis is given to the Father and the Son with only three references to the Holy Spirit.

a. The Father

1) The nature of God

- a) The critical issue addressed by Peter involves the nature of God. Believers are to live what they believe based not on the standards of the world but on His nature.
- b) 1 Peter 1:15-16, *but as he who called you is holy, you also be holy in all your conduct, since it is written, "You shall be holy, for I am holy."*

2) His personal attributes

- a) He is the creator God, 1 Peter 4:19, *Therefore let those who suffer according to God's will entrust their souls to a faithful Creator while doing good.*
- b) He is not bound by time, 2 Peter 3:8, *But do not overlook this one fact, beloved, that with the Lord one day is as a thousand years, and a thousand years as one day.*
- c) He is omnipotent (all-powerful), 1 Peter 5:11, *To him be the dominion forever and ever. Amen.*

3) His attributed toward mankind

- a) He is merciful, 1 Peter 1:3, *Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ! According to his great mercy, he has caused us to be born again to a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead,*
- b) He is gracious, 1 Peter 5:10, *And after you have suffered a little while, the God of all grace, who has called you to his eternal glory in Christ, will himself restore, confirm, strengthen, and establish you.*
- c) He is patient with His creatures, 2 Peter 3:9, *The Lord is not slow to fulfill his promise as some count slowness, but is patient toward you, not wishing that any should perish, but that all should reach repentance.*
- d) He is just, 1 Peter 2:23, *When he was reviled, he did not revile in return; when he suffered, he did not threaten, but continued entrusting himself to him who judges justly.*

- 4) Attributes favored by God
 - a) Righteousness, 1 Peter 3:12, *For the eyes of the Lord are on the righteous, and his ears are open to their prayer. But the face of the Lord is against those who do evil.*
 - b) Gentleness, 1 Peter 3:4, *but let your adorning be the hidden person of the heart with the imperishable beauty of a gentle and quiet spirit, which in God's sight is very precious.*
 - c) Submission, 1 Peter 5:5a, *Likewise, you who are younger, be subject to the elders.*
 - d) Humility, 1 Peter 5:5b, *Clothe yourselves, all of you, with humility toward one another, for "God opposes the proud but gives grace to the humble."*

b. The Son

1) Relationship to the Father

- a) 2 Peter 1:17, *For when he received honor and glory from God the Father, and the voice was borne to him by the Majestic Glory, "This is my beloved Son, with whom I am well pleased,"*
- b) 1 Peter 1:21, *who through him are believers in God, who raised him from the dead and gave him glory, so that your faith and hope are in God.*
- c) 1 Peter 2:4, *As you come to him, a living stone rejected by men but in the sight of God chosen and precious,*

3) His nature

- a) Eternality, 1 Peter 1:20, *He was foreknown before the foundation of the world but was made manifest in the last times for the sake of you.*
- b) Deity, 2 Peter 1:1, *Simeon Peter, a servant and apostle of Jesus Christ, To those who have obtained a faith of equal standing with ours by the righteousness of our God and Savior Jesus Christ:*

5) His work of redemption

- a) 1 Peter 3:18, *For Christ also suffered once for sins, the righteous for the unrighteous, that he might bring us to God, being put to death in the flesh but made alive in the spirit,*
- b) 1 Peter 1:19, *but with the precious blood of Christ, like that of a lamb without blemish or spot.*
- c) 1 Peter 1:21, *who through him are believers in God, who raised him from the dead and gave him glory, so that your faith and hope are in God.*
- d) 1 Peter 2:24, *He himself bore our sins in his body on the tree, that we might die to sin and live to righteousness. By his wounds you have been healed.*

6) His ascension and role as High Priest

- a) 1 Peter 3:22, *who has gone into heaven and is at the right hand of God, with angels, authorities, and powers having been subjected to him.*
- b) 2 Peter 1:3, *His divine power has granted to us all things that pertain to life and godliness, through the knowledge of him who called us to his own glory and excellence,*

c. The Holy Spirit

- 1) His role in sanctification, 1 Peter 1:2, *according to the foreknowledge of God the Father, in the sanctification of the Spirit, for obedience to Jesus Christ and for sprinkling with his blood: May grace and peace be multiplied to you.*
- 2) His enablement in preaching the Gospel and presence, 1 Peter 1:12, *It was revealed to them that they were serving not themselves but you, in the things that have now been announced to you through those who preached the good news to you by the Holy Spirit sent from heaven, things into which angels long to look.*
- 3) His inspiration of the writers of Scripture, 2 Peter 1:21, *For no prophecy was ever produced by the will of man, but men spoke from God as they were carried along by the Holy Spirit.*

2. Holy Scripture

- a. It is inspired by the Holy Spirit and is eternal, 1 Peter 1:24-25, *for "All flesh is like grass and all its glory like the flower of grass. The grass withers, and the flower falls, but the word of the Lord remains forever." And this word is the good news that was preached to you.*
- b. The centrality of the Gospel, 1 Peter 1:11-12, *inquiring what person or time the Spirit of Christ in them was indicating when he predicted the sufferings of Christ and the subsequent glories. It was revealed to them that they were serving not themselves but you, in the things that have now been announced to you through those who preached the good news to you by the Holy Spirit sent from heaven, things into which angels long to look.*
- c. Proper interpretation of Scripture comes from God, *knowing this first of all, that no prophecy of Scripture comes from someone's own interpretation.*

- d. The Word of God enables believers to grow spiritually, 1 Peter 2:2, *Like newborn infants, long for the pure spiritual milk, that by it you may grow up into salvation—*
 - e. The Word of God is to be guarded from those who distort it, 2 Peter 3:16, *as he does in all his letters when he speaks in them of these matters. There are some things in them that are hard to understand, which the ignorant and unstable twist to their own destruction, as they do the other Scriptures.*
3. Doctrine of Salvation
- a. Purpose of salvation, 1 Peter 2:24, *He himself bore our sins in his body on the tree, that we might die to sin and live to righteousness. By his wounds you have been healed.*
 - b. Results of salvation
 - 1) New birth, 1 Peter 1:3, *Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ! According to his great mercy, he has caused us to be born again to a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead,*
 - 2) Partakers of divine nature, 2 Peter 1:4, *by which he has granted to us his precious and very great promises, so that through them you may become partakers of the divine nature, having escaped from the corruption that is in the world because of sinful desire.*
 - 3) Forgiveness of sins, 2 Peter 1:9, *For whoever lacks these qualities is so nearsighted that he is blind, having forgotten that he was cleansed from his former sins.*
 - 4) Established in truth, 2 Peter 1:12, *Therefore I intend always to remind you of these qualities, though you know them and are established in the truth that you have.*
 - c. Characteristics of salvation
 - 1) Justification (positional sanctification), 1 Peter 3:18, *For Christ also suffered once for sins, the righteous for the unrighteous, that he might bring us to God, being put to death in the flesh but made alive in the spirit,*
 - 2) Progressive sanctification, 1 Peter 2:2-3, *Like newborn infants, long for the pure spiritual milk, that by it you may grow up into salvation— if indeed you have tasted that the Lord is good.*
 - 3) Glorification (ultimate sanctification), 1 Peter 1:5, *who by God's power are being guarded through faith for a salvation ready to be revealed in the last time.*
5. The Created World
- a. God is the creator of all that has been made.
 - 1) 1 Peter 4:19, *Therefore let those who suffer according to God's will entrust their souls to a faithful Creator while doing good.*
 - 2) 2 Peter 3:5, *For they deliberately overlook this fact, that the heavens existed long ago, and the earth was formed out of water and through water by the word of God,*
 - b. God is in control.
 - 1) The world was destroyed by water, 2 Peter 3:6, *and that by means of these the world that then existed was deluged with water and perished.*
 - 2) The heavens and earth will one day be destroyed by fire, 2 Peter 3:7, *But by the same word the heavens and earth that now exist are stored up for fire, being kept until the day of judgment and destruction of the ungodly.*
 - 3) Destruction is imminent, 1 Peter 4:7, *The end of all things is at hand; therefore be self-controlled and sober-minded for the sake of your prayers.*
 - 4) Christians are to be vigilant, 2 Peter 3:10-12, *But the day of the Lord will come like a thief, and then the heavens will pass away with a roar, and the heavenly bodies will be burned up and dissolved, and the earth and the works that are done on it will be exposed. Since all these things are thus to be dissolved, what sort of people ought you to be in lives of holiness and godliness, waiting for and hastening the coming of the day of God, because of which the heavens will be set on fire and dissolved, and the heavenly bodies will melt as they burn!*
 - 5) A new heaven and earth is coming, 2 Peter 3:13, *But according to his promise we are waiting for new heavens and a new earth in which righteousness dwells.*
 - 6) It is a place of righteousness, 2 Peter 3:13, *But according to his promise we are waiting for new heavens and a new earth in which righteousness dwells.*

- e. God created angelic beings in addition to mankind.
 - 1) Angels are greater than mankind in might and power, 2 Peter 2:11, *whereas angels, though greater in might and power, do not pronounce a blasphemous judgment against them before the Lord.*
 - 2) They are intrigued by God's work in saving humans, 1 Peter 1:12, *It was revealed to them that they were serving not themselves but you, in the things that have now been announced to you through those who preached the good news to you by the Holy Spirit sent from heaven, things into which angels long to look.*
 - 3) Angels, authorities and powers have been subjected to Christ, 1 Peter 3:22, *who has gone into heaven and is at the right hand of God, with angels, authorities, and powers having been subjected to him.*
 - 4) Sinning angels have been cast into hell, 2 Peter 2:4, *For if God did not spare angels when they sinned, but cast them into hell and committed them to chains of gloomy darkness to be kept until the judgment;*
 - 5) The devil is the adversary of believers, 1 Peter 5:8, *Be sober-minded; be watchful. Your adversary the devil prowls around like a roaring lion, seeking someone to devour.*
 - 6) Christians are called to resist the devil, 1 Peter 5:9, *Resist him, firm in your faith, knowing that the same kinds of suffering are being experienced by your brotherhood throughout the world.*

6. The Plan of God

a. His plan is to glorify Himself.

1) Through His Son forever

- a) 1 Peter 4:11, *whoever speaks, as one who speaks oracles of God; whoever serves, as one who serves by the strength that God supplies—in order that in everything God may be glorified through Jesus Christ. To him belong glory and dominion forever and ever. Amen.*
- b) Jesus Christ is to receive glory throughout eternity, 2 Peter 3:18, *But grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. To him be the glory both now and to the day of eternity. Amen.*

- 2) He calls believers to eternal glory in Christ despite persecution and suffering on earth, 1 Peter 5:10, *And after you have suffered a little while, the God of all grace, who has called you to his eternal glory in Christ, will himself restore, confirm, strengthen, and establish you.*

b. His will includes the spiritual maturity of believers despite suffering.

- 1) 1 Peter 2:15, *For this is the will of God, that by doing good you should put to silence the ignorance of foolish people.*
- 2) 1 Peter 3:17, *For it is better to suffer for doing good, if that should be God's will, than for doing evil.*
- 3) 1 Peter 4:19, *Therefore let those who suffer according to God's will entrust their souls to a faithful Creator while doing good.*

F. A very general outline of 1 Peter (to be developed in detail)

- 1. Greeting (1:1-2)
- 2. Salvation (1:3-2:10)
- 3. Submission (2:11-3:12)
- 4. Suffering (3:13-4:19)
- 5. Responsibilities (5:1-11)
- 5. Conclusion (5:12-14)