

# 1st Peter

1 Peter was written by the apostle, Simon Peter, most likely in the mid 60s of the 1<sup>st</sup> century. The language of the letter is considered to be good literary Greek, probably owing in part to Peter's assistance in writing from Silas and John Mark (5:12-13). The Babylon mentioned in 5:13 is generally understood to be Rome, consistent with Revelation 17-18 and the writings of Christians in the 2nd-3rd centuries, as well as Jewish writings of the 1<sup>st</sup> century BC and 1<sup>st</sup> century AD. Peter apparently spent his final days in Rome, perhaps serving as an elder there (5:1ff), before he was arrested and executed in Nero's attack on Christians in about 67 AD.

A recurrent theme in 1 Peter is suffering for Christ's sake.

1 Peter has been characterized as a "general epistle" because the letter was originally sent to numerous churches, not one particular congregation or locale.

The opening of 1 Peter identifies the author and his authority. The greeting identifies with the language of Acts 8:1-4 where scattered disciples of Jesus are the new "diaspora" of God's people among the nations, and includes believing Gentiles since those congregations, many of them begun by Paul and his fellow workers, were heavily Gentile in their membership.

Peter writing to those churches indicates he knew them personally. By the time Paul wrote Galatians Peter had been to Antioch in Syria (2:11ff). By the time Paul wrote 1 Corinthians Peter had been to Corinth (1:12, 9:5), and here in 1 Peter 1:1 we get the idea Peter had traveled extensively among the churches of the regions of Asia and ultimately came to Rome in the same general time frame that Paul was in Rome.

Note the Father, Spirit, and Jesus Christ in 1:2, participating in unity for our salvation. God's purpose and the Spirit's work to make us holy are necessary for obedience to Jesus Christ cleansing by his blood, and obedience to Jesus Christ is the necessary outcome of God's choosing, knowing, and sanctifying by the Spirit.

"Born again" in v3 and v23 should remind us of Jesus' words to Nicodemus in John 3:1ff, and connect to Paul's message in Romans 6:1ff.

Christian suffering and God's equipping go hand in hand with faith in 1:5-6.

Faith is "precious" in 1:6, as also is the blood of Jesus in 1:19, the chosen cornerstone in 2:4, 6, and a gentle quiet spirit in 3:4. Continuing that theme, in 2 Peter 1:4 God's promises are precious. Peter had found the precious pearl of Matthew 13:45-46 ("great value" is the same Greek word as "precious" in 1:6) and intended to keep it, encouraging all believers to see the same great treasure.

1:7-9 beautifully describe the Christian walk for those of us who did not see Jesus in the flesh but do believe in him, love him, find inexpressible joy in knowing him, and are receiving salvation through him.

The role of the prophets in 1:10ff is like that described by Paul in 1 Corinthians 10:1ff, preparing for an outcome they could not comprehend before Christ brought it to completion. A note on the nature of angels (1:12) tells us they don't know the future (or know everything) as God does, they do think and wonder and have curiosity about things they do not know, and are very interested in events in this world.

Peter was one of those who preached good news (ie evangelized), though others had certainly gone before him into the regions named in v1. He knew directly from the Day of Pentecost in Acts 2 about the Holy Spirit being sent from heaven, and knew that the same Holy Spirit had directed the work of Barnabas and Saul (Acts 13:1ff) and others who carried the good news to the nations.

Christians are to be obedient children of God, living holy lives consistent with the character of God (1:13ff). The "exile" in 1:17 references the "dispersion" of 1:1, Christians living in this present world, and again in 2:11-12. Scattered Christians are to be God's representatives to the nations.

Peter's first introduction to Jesus was in the context of John the Baptist declaring him to be "the Lamb of God who takes away the sins of the world" (John 1:29-42). Peter makes the same identification in 1:19 and again in 2:21-25 where he paraphrases Isaiah 53. The slain Lamb who is also the Good/Chief Shepherd (John 10:1ff, 1 Peter 2:25, 5:4).

God's foreknowledge and eternal planning were noted in 1:2 and highlighted again in 1:20.

Consistent with many other scriptures, Christians live in the "last times" (1:20).

Faith, hope and love recur several times in these verses including 1:21-22.

Deciding what to keep and what to eliminate, 2:1-3, is based on knowledge of God, which is also experiential. Psalm 34:8 advocates "taste and see that the Lord is good..." 2:3 indicates Christians who trust in Him have done just that, and should want more and more. An appetite for God and his nourishment in word and Spirit should be formed in those who've been born again.

The metaphors of Jesus as the rock in 1 Peter 2:4-8 are scattered in Isaiah and the Psalms and even (as noted by Paul in 1 Corinthians 10:4) in Exodus and Numbers. The metaphor of the rock was used by Jesus in Matthew 7:24ff, and Matthew 21:42-44. Peter of course must have thought about the setting in Caesarea Philippi in Matthew 16:13-20. Notice that Peter describes all believers as living stones being built into a spiritual temple (2:4-5) where God is served by a newly set-apart priesthood (2:5, 9). The promises at work in 2:9-10 evoke the premises of Exodus 19:4-6, Deuteronomy 26:18-19 and Isaiah 43:21. God has a people who are a priesthood who exist to proclaim his light in the darkness.

Hostility from the world is to be expected, but not imitated (2:12, 23; 3:9, 13; 4:4, 12, 16, 19; 5:8-10).

As in Romans 13 and Titus 3 and 1 Timothy 2, Christians are enjoined to submit to human authorities as agents of divine purpose, 1 Peter 3:13ff. That extends from the head of state all the way down to a slave's master. Even when they are unjust. Jesus set the pattern for this kind of submission, and we are to have the same spirit. 1Peter 3:22-25 is beautiful Christology, citing Isaiah 53 in particular.

As in Ephesians 5:22ff wives are to be submissive to their husbands, even unbelieving husbands, in the hope of winning them to Christ by their behavior. Fixating on clothes, hair, and jewelry as sources of beauty is

deplored as also in 1 Timothy 2:9-10, focusing instead on heart and deeds befitting women of faith. The reference to Sarah (3:6) explicitly happened in Genesis 18:12, when Sarah in private thought of Abraham as “lord.” As also in Ephesians 5:22ff, husbands must love and care for their wives. Generally speaking in this world, men have typically been physically stronger and had more power than women, and so are enjoined treating women, especially their own wives, as summarized in 3:7.

Humility is emphasized several times by Peter, as in 3:8, 5:5-6.

God is paying attention, always. 1 Peter 3:10-12, 4:17, 5:6-7.

Ready to make a defense, 3:15, is what Paul was in Acts 22:1ff, 23:10ff, 26:1ff. Not having a memorized formula response, but ready to talk about what we believe and why we believe it on the spur of the moment.

Peter may have been literally referring to Jesus’ overcoming death and all its constraints in 3:18-20 and 4:6, proclaiming victory in Hades itself, or he may have been referring to the Spirit that spoke through Noah (see 2 Peter 2:5) challenging his world to turn to God. Either way, it’s not a 2<sup>nd</sup> chance gospel giving opportunity to reconsider to those already dead, rather it’s the fulfillment of the promises of the ages as in Hebrews 11:39-40 and 12:22-24. Jesus overcame death for the sake of all those who died in faith in any generation, and made God’s justice known to all who have lived and died. He has affirmed God’s truth, God’s plan, once and for all.

Baptism in water is impossible to sidestep if we want to be inwardly clean before God, as stated explicitly in 3:21-22, empowered as it is by the resurrected Jesus, who reigns over all powers, spiritual and temporal. Noah and family weren’t just saved from drowning (in the ark) but saved from the corruption of the world (by water).

Think like Jesus! 4:1, 2:21, take up your cross and follow him! People still in the world probably won’t like it (4:1-6). The world is flesh driven. We must not be!

Peter didn’t know when Jesus would return, but lived and taught as though it was just around the corner (4:7), and we should think the same way.

The instructions in 4:7-11 parallel Paul's words in 1 Corinthians 12:1ff and Romans 12:3-8. Use your gifts for the benefit of others and the glory of God, whatever they are.

Don't rationalize suffering for bad behavior as a virtue. Suffering for faithfulness is a virtue. Wear the name "Christian" as a badge of honor (Acts 13:26, 26:28-29).

Judgment begins in God's household, which is his living temple (4:17, 2:5). That's where judgment began in Ezekiel 9:6, in the prophet's vision of judgment from the presence of God's glory moving outward from the glory in the temple. Only those marked with the seal of God escaped condemnation.

The various churches Peter addressed in 1:1 had elders among them in 5:1. Peter describes himself as an elder, perhaps serving the church in Rome in that capacity, or perhaps having served as an elder before coming to Rome. He was also an apostolic witness of Jesus as in 1:1 and 5:1.

Elders are described as shepherds (pastors) in 5:2, and overseers (bishops), who serve willingly. Peter doesn't deal so much with "qualifications" of elders as their attitude and demeanor in leading the Lord's flock. Consistent with 4:17 elders are in a sense at the front of the line when the Chief Shepherd comes to separate the sheep from the goats (Matthew 25:31ff), and can expect a good return for their faithfulness.

All Christians are called to cooperation with the Lord's chosen leaders, and to humility in general, 5:5. Not just humility, but particularly humility by virtue of trusting God, 5:6ff. None of us are intrinsically capable of defeating Satan, but in Christ we have victory over him (5:8-9, 1 John 4:4) and all principalities and powers. That doesn't mean there won't be hardship, suffering is almost guaranteed (5:9-10) but dominion and justice and the crown of glory are assured in Christ (5:4, 11).

The final notes tell us Silas (the same as Silvanus) helped write the letter.

Babylon in 5:13, from numerous ancient sources, is a code word for Rome.

She who is in Babylon would be the church in Rome.

Mark must be John Mark. In the same general time frame, Paul was eager to have John Mark in Rome as an assistant (2 Timothy 4:11), probably particularly for purposes of organizing materials that would become our New Testament.