

# I Peter Introduction

## Author – The Apostle, Peter

The authorship of I and II Peter are highly debated among scholars. Many modern theologians have made the decision Peter is not the author of this letter as they suggest someone wrote in his name or served as his secretary to produce the wonderful truth we have enjoyed for thousands of years now. We will get to their arguments in a moment, but first let me explain why I hold to the traditional view of Petrine authorship using internal and external evidence.

### Internal Evidence

- The text we have before us refers to Peter as the author of this epistle
  - o His name is mentioned here and nowhere else in the letter (I Peter 1:1).
  - o Peter differentiates himself from the others who have seen Christ (I Peter 1:8).
  - o Stronger evidence is he has borne witness to Christ's sufferings (I Peter 5:1).
  - o He mentions writing a second letter (2 Peter 3:1).
- The self-claim of the letter ought to be accepted unless we have clear evidence to the contrary.

### External Evidence

- Another way to validate Petrine authorship is to look at how the early Church understood what they were reading. They also attribute authorship to Peter.
  - o Polycarp's Letter to the Philippians
    - The Epistle of Polycarp to the Philippians is an epistle attributed to Polycarp, an early bishop of Smyrna, and addressed to the early Christian church in Philippi.
    - Many striking similarities have led to the conclusion Polycarp used 1 Peter as source material.
      - Phil 8:1-2 and 1 Peter 2:21-22, 24
      - Phil 1:3 and I Peter 1:18
  - o Toward the end of the 2<sup>nd</sup> century and beginning the 3<sup>rd</sup> century Petrine authorship is widely accepted.
    - Tertullian
    - Clement of Alexandria
    - Irenaeus

## What are some of the arguments against Petrine Authorship?

### The Greek Peter Uses

- He is a fisherman from Galilee by trade
- Acts 4:13 refers to Peter as an unlearned man
  - o Some of the Greek used is some of the best in the NT
- There is also a different quality of Greek used in 2 Peter
- Also, the Old Testament references used comes from the Septuagint (LXX) – the Greek OT.

- Peter was a skilled businessman who would have learned the language of the day. People who learn English often use it better than those who have learned to bend the rules of the language.

### The Content of the Letter is more reflective of Paul's theology

- The death of Christ, the need to suffer with Christ, obedience to governing authorities, wives submitting to your husbands are all topics discussed in the letter.
- Remember from our study, Paul and Peter disagreed (Gal. 2:11-14). Why would Peter rely on Paul if the two didn't get along with one another.
- **When Paul and Peter disagreed, it was over behavior, but not reflective of their true convictions. They generally agree on what the gospel is all about and what that means for life together.**

### Widespread (Empire-Wide) Persecution

- Some scholars argue that the persecution described in the letter stems from Rome itself and is empirewide (1 Pet 5:9). Some conclude from this that such persecution can only be assigned to the reign of Domitian (a.d. 81–96).<sup>1</sup>
- Similarly, some scholars think that the mistreatment of believers in 1 Peter fits well with the correspondence between Pliny the younger and the emperor Trajan (a.d. 98–117).<sup>2</sup>
- **1 Peter does not mention what type of persecution they were experiencing. Most likely the persecution they faced were relegated to local communities. The only specific suffering noted is discrimination and mistreatment and verbal abuse from former colleagues and friends (1 Pet 4:3–4).<sup>3</sup>**

## Date

Based on authorship we can conclude the letter was written sometime between AD. 62-63

## Destination and Situation of the Letter

The reference to Babylon in 5:13 is almost surely a reference to Rome, indicating that Peter wrote the letter from Rome to churches in Asia Minor.<sup>4</sup>

- The letter is addressed to believers dispersed in "Pontus, Galatia, Cappadocia, Asia and Bithynia" (1 Pet 1:1). When Peter wrote the letter, Bithynia and Pontus were a single province (see commentary under 1:1), and hence Peter probably wrote generally, designating a geographic

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<sup>1</sup> Schreiner, T. R. (2003). [1, 2 Peter, Jude](#) (Vol. 37, p. 24). Nashville: Broadman & Holman Publishers.

<sup>2</sup> Schreiner, T. R. (2003). [1, 2 Peter, Jude](#) (Vol. 37, p. 24). Nashville: Broadman & Holman Publishers.

<sup>3</sup> Schreiner, T. R. (2003). [1, 2 Peter, Jude](#) (Vol. 37, p. 30). Nashville: Broadman & Holman Publishers.

<sup>4</sup> Schreiner, T. R. (2003). [1, 2 Peter, Jude](#) (Vol. 37, p. 37). Nashville: Broadman & Holman Publishers.

area north of the Taurus mountains (in what is now modern-day Turkey) as the recipients of the letter.<sup>5</sup>

- What is particularly interesting is that the readers are identified as (NRSV) “exiles” (1:1, *parepidēmoi*), in “exile” (1:17, *paroikia*), “aliens and exiles” (2:11, *paroikous kai parepidēmous*). In his sociological study of 1 Peter, Elliott argues that the terms refer to the political status of the readers before they became believers. The former refer to permanent strangers and the latter to those who are living temporarily in the regions addressed in the letter. Hence, for Elliott the readers were not aliens *by virtue of their faith*. They were literally resident aliens and visiting strangers in regions addressed by Peter. This is an improbable reading of the evidence.<sup>77</sup> The pair of terms in 1 Pet 2:11 hearkens back to Gen 23:4 and Ps 38:13, showing that the church of Jesus Christ occupies the status of God’s people throughout history.<sup>6</sup>

## Purpose of the Letter

The purpose of the letter is to encourage believers to stand fast while they endure suffering and distress in the present evil age.<sup>7</sup>

- Such perseverance is exhibited by living a godly life, living as good citizens, model slaves, gentle wives, and understanding husbands. When believers live in such a way, they indicate that they are placing their hope in God rather than in the joys and comforts of this world.<sup>8</sup>
- This life is not all the life there is to live. We can be earthly good because we are heavenly-minded.

## Major Themes

- (1) salvation is an eschatological gift (1 Pet 1:3–9; Rom 5:9–10)
- (2) believers will suffer for their faith (1 Pet 1:6–7; 3:13–17; 4:12–19; 2 Tim 3:12)
- (3) believers should live holy lives (1 Pet 1:13–2:3; Rom 6:1–23; Eph 4:1–6:9; Col 3:5–4:6)
- (4) Jesus is God’s cornerstone (1 Pet 2:6; Rom 9:33)
- (5) believers should submit to governing authorities (1 Pet 2:13–17; Rom 13:1–7)
- (6) wives should submit to husbands (1 Pet 3:1–6; Eph 5:22–24)
- (7) husbands should treat their wives kindly (1 Pet 3:7; Eph 5:25–29)
- (8) Christ is exalted as Lord over angelic powers (1 Pet 3:18–19, 22; Eph 1:20–23; Col 1:16; 2:10, 15)

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<sup>5</sup> Schreiner, T. R. (2003). [1, 2 Peter, Jude](#) (Vol. 37, p. 37). Nashville: Broadman & Holman Publishers.

<sup>6</sup> Schreiner, T. R. (2003). [1, 2 Peter, Jude](#) (Vol. 37, pp. 39–40). Nashville: Broadman & Holman Publishers.

<sup>7</sup> Schreiner, T. R. (2003). [1, 2 Peter, Jude](#) (Vol. 37, p. 45). Nashville: Broadman & Holman Publishers.

<sup>8</sup> Schreiner, T. R. (2003). [1, 2 Peter, Jude](#) (Vol. 37, p. 45). Nashville: Broadman & Holman Publishers.

(9) the end is near (1 Pet 4:7; Rom 13:11–14<sup>9</sup>)

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<sup>9</sup> Schreiner, T. R. (2003). [1, 2 Peter, Jude](#) (Vol. 37, pp. 34–35). Nashville: Broadman & Holman Publishers.