

INTRODUCTION AND 1 PET. 1:1-12

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Introduction

I. Authorship

A. The internal evidence is clear. The Apostle Peter is expressly identified as the author of the letter in 1:1, and he says in 5:1 that he was "a witness of Christ's sufferings" (note Lk. 22:54b, 61). There also are some similarities of ideas and expressions between 1 Peter and Peter's speeches reported in Acts (compare Acts 4:11 with 1 Pet. 2:4; Acts 1:22, 5:32, and 10:39 with 1 Pet 5:1; Acts 10:34 with 1 Pet 1:17; Acts 10:42 with 1 Pet 4:5; Acts 15:9 with 1 Pet 1:22). 2 Peter 3:1 refers to a prior letter, which almost certainly is 1 Peter, so even if one thinks 2 Peter was pseudonymous (which I do not), it reflects the author's view that Peter was the author of 1 Peter.

B. The external evidence confirms that Peter is the author. As early as Polycarp's letter to the Philippians (A.D. 108-114), 1 Peter was used as a source, indicating its early acceptance as an authentic letter of Peter. By the end of the second century and beginning of the third the letter is explicitly identified as Peter's (by Clement of Alexandria and Tertullian). According to Eusebius in the early fourth century, that identification was not disputed in any quarters of the early church.

C. Many modern scholars, perhaps even a majority, deny that Peter was the author mainly on the assumption that the Greek is too sophisticated for a Palestinian fisherman for whom Greek would be a second language. It is by no means clear, however, that Peter could not have gained the required proficiency in his decades of interaction and travel in service of Christ. Indeed, Karen Jobes argues in detail in *1 Peter*, Baker Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2005) "that the extent of Semitic interference in the Greek of 1 Peter indicates an author whose first language was not Greek" (p. 337). In any event, the use of an amanuensis (secretary) could account for Greek proficiency beyond that of Peter.

D. D. A. Carson and Douglas Moo thus conclude in *An Introduction to the New Testament*, 2nd ed. (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2005), 645-646:

The case against Petrine authorship is therefore not at all a strong one. We agree with I. Howard Marshall that "if there ever was a weak case for pseudonymity, surely it is in respect to this letter." Only the issue of language stands in the way of authenticity; and this problem is far outweighed by the problem of thinking that a pseudonymous letter would have been written and accepted in the early church.

II. Place of Writing

A. In 5:13 Peter sends greetings from "She who is in Babylon, chosen with you." This suggests that Peter is in "Babylon" when writing the letter.

B. The historical Babylon of the O.T. was basically in ruins and was all but deserted. There is no evidence of Peter ever being there and no evidence of a church being there at this time. There was a very small Roman military colony in Egypt called Babylon, but there is no evidence of any Christian mission there until much later.

C. Most scholars agree that "Babylon" is a metaphorical reference to the center of Gentile (God-opposing) power, a reference drawn from Babylon's role in relation to Israel in the O.T. Karen Jobes states (p. 322), "There is virtually unanimous agreement among modern interpreters that the referent of 'Babylon' is actually Rome." Note that Mark was in Rome in Col. 4:10 and is mentioned in 1 Pet. 5:13. Eusebius states expressly that Papias (A.D. 60-130) said Peter wrote his first letter from Rome.

D. In light of this, "She who is in Babylon, chosen with you" probably refers to the church in Rome.

III. Date

A. There is a strong church tradition that both Peter and Paul were executed in Rome by Nero between A.D. 64 and 66. See, e.g., Eusebius's early-fourth-century work *The History of the Church* (Book 3, sections 1-2).

B. Peter apparently was not in Rome when Paul wrote Romans around A.D. 57. Paul's first Roman imprisonment was around A.D. 60-62. The fact the letters he wrote during that imprisonment (Ephesians, Philippians, Colossians, Philemon) make no mention of Peter and the fact Luke says nothing about Peter's presence during his report of Paul's imprisonment in Acts makes it unlikely that Peter was in Rome at that time. Given that Christians in the provinces to which Peter was writing would be familiar with Paul, even if they did not know him personally, the fact 1 Peter does not mention Paul makes it unlikely Paul was in Rome at the time it was written.

C. The most popular scenario is that Peter arrived in Rome some time after Paul's release from prison around A.D. 62 (during Paul's ministry in the East) and wrote 1 Peter before Paul was arrested again. Given that we need to leave time for Peter to write 2 Peter, that puts the writing of 1 Peter in A.D. 62-63. (It is possible that Peter was in Rome after Romans was written and before Paul's first imprisonment – between A.D. 57-60 – and wrote 1 Peter at that time. The former scenario is favored by the fact Eusebius implies that Peter came to Rome only near the end of his life.)

D. Hebrews most likely was written to the church in Rome in the mid-60s, perhaps a bit closer to the beginning of Nero's persecution than 1 Peter, a time when more "persecution straws" were in the wind. If that is correct and if 1 Peter was written from

Rome in A.D. 62-63, one can speculate that Peter left Rome for some unknown reason soon after writing 1 Peter. As the situation in that city grew more ominous, the Hebrew writer learned of it and dispatched his letter. Peter returned to Rome at some point during that time, perhaps in relation to the intensifying situation with Nero, where he wrote 2 Peter and was executed (as was Paul).

IV. Audience and Destination

A. Peter's intended audience is mainly Gentile Christians, even though Jewish Christians were no doubt part of the congregations.

1. This is suggested most strongly by the statement in 1:18 that they "were redeemed from [their] empty way of life inherited from [their] ancestors," the statement in 2:10 that they "once [were] not a people but now [are] a people of God," and the statement in 4:3 that they had spent enough time participating in the desires of the Gentiles, "having traveled in licentiousness, lusts, instances of drunkenness, revelries, drinking parties, and detestable acts of idolatry."

2. The agreement in Jerusalem that Paul would evangelize Gentiles and Peter would concentrate on Jews (Gal. 2:1-10) apparently was not intended to be exclusive or permanent. As Carson and Moo point out (p. 643), "Paul continued to evangelize Jews in every city he visited; and 1 Corinthians 1 implies that Peter had spent enough time in Corinth to attract a following among the mainly Gentile Christians there."

B. The Gentile Christians to whom Peter is writing are located in five regions of Asia Minor (which today is occupied by the nation of Turkey): Pontus, Galatia, Cappadocia, Asia, and Bithynia.

1. These probably refer to Roman political provinces, but some believe they designate smaller ethnic areas. Though Bithynia and Pontus were in Peter's day joined as a single province, Peter may have referred to the areas separately because the emissary carrying the letter would have begun his journey in the eastern part of Bithynia and Pontus (Pontus) and ended in the western part (Bithynia). The provinces are listed in the order they would be encountered on such a journey.

2. Peter need not be addressing Christians in the same localities as Paul's missionary activity. It is possible that the emissary's loop through these provinces did not dip that far south. Carson and Moo state (p. 648), "probably [Peter] has in mind only the northern part of Galatia and Cappadocia and the northeastern part of Asia."

3. "Peter's reference to 'those who have preached the gospel to you' (1:12) suggests that he did not personally evangelize these Christians" (Carson and Moo, 648).

V. Occasion

A. The Christians to whom Peter writes are suffering some kind of persecution. He refers to their suffering in a number of places:

1. In 1:6 he says that now they "have been grieved a little while in various trials."

2. In 3:13-17 he refers to the prospect of their suffering for righteousness and being reviled.

3. In 4:12-19 he refers to the fiery ordeal among them (v. 12), speaks of their sharing in the sufferings of Christ (v. 13), and suggests that they are suffering because they bear the name "Christian" (vv. 14 and 16).

4. In 5:9 he says the same sufferings are being endured by the brotherhood in the world, and in 5:10 he refers again to their suffering.

B. Most recent scholars are convinced that the persecution they were experiencing was a local unofficial persecution, the product of a general resentment of and hostility to Christians by the Roman public. As Carson and Moo state (p. 639):

By refusing to engage in the quasi-religious customs surrounding the official Roman governmental structures, by resolutely setting themselves against some of the immoral practices prevalent at the time, and by meeting so often on their own to celebrate the Lord's Supper, Christians were regarded with suspicion and hostility. The readers of 1 Peter were probably being criticized, mocked, discriminated against, and perhaps even brought into court on trumped-up charges. This situation fully explains the references to suffering in 1 Peter – including 5:10, since Christians throughout the empire were indeed suffering this same kind of treatment, and 4:14, 16, since the readers were indeed suffering because they followed Christ and bore his name.

C. Peter is writing to encourage them to endure in the face of their difficulties. "In a phrase, Peter calls on his readers to exhibit 'piety under pressure' as a means of glorifying God and of witnessing to a hostile but watchful world" (Carson and Moo, 636).

The Letter

I. Greeting (1:1-2) – *Peter, an apostle of Jesus Christ, to [the] elect, sojourners of [the] Dispersion of Pontus, Galatia, Cappadocia, Asia, and Bithynia, ²[elect] according to [the] foreknowledge of God [the] Father, in [the] sanctification of [the] Spirit, with reference to obedience and sprinkling of [the] blood of Jesus Christ: May grace and peace be multiplied to you.*

A. The name Peter

1. Peter's given name at birth was the Aramaic name *Shim'on*, which is transliterated into Greek both as *Simōn* (Σίμων) and *Simeōn* (Συμεών), which are transliterated into English as Simon and Simeon, respectively.

2. He was given the nickname "Rock" by the Lord Jesus to symbolize his new role as an apostle (Jn. 1:42; see also Mat. 16:18). That nickname probably was given in Aramaic. The Aramaic word for rock is *kêpā'*, which is transliterated into Greek as *Kēphas* (Κηφᾶς), which in turn is transliterated into English as Cephas.

3. The Greek word for rock is *petra*. Since *petra* is grammatically feminine in form, when applied to a man it becomes *petros*, which is transliterated into English as Peter. So Peter is the English *transliteration* of the Greek *translation* (*Petros*) of the Aramaic nickname (*kêpā'*) and Cephas is the English *transliteration* of the Greek *transliteration* (*Kēphas*) of the Aramaic nickname.

4. Peter is most often referred to in the N.T. simply as Peter, but sometimes in the Gospels and in 2 Pet. 1:1 his given name and his nickname are combined, yielding Simon (or Simeon) Peter.

B. Peter identifies himself as an apostle of Jesus Christ. He is writing to them with the authority inherent in that position. The word he is bringing to them is the word of the Lord.

C. He is writing to the elect, those chosen for the blessings of God, whom he further describes as sojourners of [the] Dispersion of Pontus, Galatia, Cappadocia, Asia, and Bithynia.

1. The term "Dispersion" (Diaspora) referred to Jews living outside their homeland of Palestine, and as such, serves as a metaphor for the people of God living in a state of dislocation. Christians are sojourners, meaning we live in this world as resident aliens, because this fallen world is not our home. We are citizens of heaven.

2. They are physically located in various Roman provinces of Asia Minor.

D. Their election is said to be (a) according to [the] foreknowledge of God [the] Father, (b) in [the] sanctification of [the] Spirit, and (c) with reference to obedience and sprinkling of [the] blood of Jesus Christ.

1. Though Calvinists would disagree, I am persuaded that God's election is based on his knowing in advance who will freely choose to put their faith in him rather than being an unconditional choice following which God *determines* who will (and will not) put their faith in him.

2. Election is in the sanctification of the Spirit in that those who come to faith are sanctified by the Spirit; they receive the Spirit and thereby are set apart for God's purposes.

3. Election is with reference to obedience and sprinkling of the blood of Jesus Christ in that it is tied to one's obedience to (acceptance of) the gospel message through which one is cleansed by the blood of Christ.

E. Peter desires on their behalf that grace and peace may be multiplied to them.

II. Privileges and Responsibilities of Being God's People (1:3 – 2:10)

A. The blessing of salvation (1:3-9) – ³*Praised [be] the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ who, according to his great mercy, has given us a new birth into a living hope through [the] resurrection of Jesus Christ from [the] dead; ⁴into an inheritance that is imperishable, undefiled, and unfading, kept in heaven for you ⁵who through faith are protected by [the] power of God; into [the] salvation ready to be revealed in [the] last time, ⁶in which [time] you [will] greatly rejoice, though now, if it is necessary, you have been grieved a little while in various trials ⁷in order that the genuineness of your faith – being more precious [than] gold which, though perishable, is tested by fire – may be found to result in praise, glory, and honor at [the] revelation of Jesus Christ; ⁸whom not having seen you love, in whom not now seeing but believing you [will] greatly rejoice with an indescribable and glorious joy ⁹on receiving the end result of your faith, [the] salvation of [your] souls.*

1. Peter says God is to be praised for his great mercy in bringing Christians into a living hope, a vibrant and meaningful hope, through the resurrection of Christ. He means, of course, that our hope has been provided by what Christ endured for us, which is represented by his resurrection (see 1 Pet. 2:24, 3:18a). He died for our sins, and his resurrection demonstrates God's approval of that sacrifice and/or is part of the completion of the sacrifice in that the Lord entered heaven itself "once for all by his own blood" (Heb. 9:12, 24 -- NIV).

2. Peter spells out the substance of our living hope in two ways:

a. It is an "inheritance," a term that presupposes a familial relationship with the Father (e.g., Rom. 8:15-17; Rev. 21:7).

(1) He describes this inheritance as imperishable, undefiled, and unfading. In other words, it is eternal, precious, and constant (without diminishment).

(2) It is kept in heaven, which means it is completely secure. The faithful will not find the cupboard empty on that day. On the contrary, the faithful are protected by God's power. No contrary power can deny them their inheritance; no contrary power can defeat God's purpose to bless the faithful.

b. It is the salvation ready to be revealed in the last time, meaning the time of final judgment at Christ's return.

(1) As Wayne Grudem states in *1 Peter*, Tyndale New Testament Commentaries (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1988), 59:

Salvation is used here not of past justification or of present sanctification (speaking in theological categories) but of the future full possession of all the blessings of our redemption – of the final, complete fulfillment of our salvation (*cf.* Rom. 13:11; 1 Pet. 2:2). Though already 'prepared' or *ready*, it will not be *revealed* by God to mankind generally until the *last time*, the time of final judgment.

(2) Christ is coming again to consummate the kingdom he inaugurated at his first coming. At that time, Christians will be resurrected, like Christ the firstfruits, and will spend eternity in a redeemed creation, the new heaven and earth, a perfect reality of love, joy, and fellowship with God and one another. See, e.g., 1 Cor. 15: 20-23, 42-44, 49, 50-57; 2 Thess. 1:6-10; Rom. 8:8-13; Phil. 3:20-21; Rev. 21:1-5.

3. The reaction of the saved on that day will be one of tremendous rejoicing.

a. Verse 6 begins with the prepositional phrase "in which," which many commentators take as referring to all that one has been given in the new birth as described in vv. 3-5. But I side with many ancient commentators and with modern commentators like J. Ramsey Michaels, Leonhard Goppelt, Hans Windisch, James Moffatt, and Charles Bigg who understand "in which" to refer to the immediately preceding phrase, "the last time."

b. That understanding requires a future meaning to the present tense verb "greatly rejoice," but the present tense can have a future meaning in this kind of circumstance. J. Ramsey Michaels writes in *1 Peter*, Word Biblical Commentary (Waco, TX: Word Books, 1988), 28:

The best option remains the present indicative with a future meaning. In "confident assertions regarding the future," especially prophecies (BDF § 323), a present tense can stand for the future. If "the time element is established by the context" (in this instance, ἐν ᾧ linked to the preceding ἐν καιρῷ ἐσχάτῳ), the present "becomes semantically a 'zero' tense, taking a future meaning from the context" (Reynolds, 69). Such an understanding accounts for ἀγαλλιᾶσθε in v 6, and will be found applicable in v 8 as well. It is this interpretive insight, not a primitive textual tradition, that most plausibly explains the persistence of the future verb forms *exultabitis* and *gaudebitis* in Latin translations of vv. 6 and 8 . . .

c. This fits best, in my opinion, with the temporal contrast indicated by "though now." They are suffering *now* but on that *future* day will greatly rejoice. The future orientation is further supported by the reference in v. 7 to their faith being found to result in praise, glory, and honor *at the revelation of Jesus Christ* and the reference in v. 9 to receiving the *end result of their faith*, the salvation of their souls.

d. This does not mean that Christians do not rejoice in some deep sense through the sorrow of present trials; it means that there is a sense of unparalleled rejoicing that will characterize our entrance into the eternal glory of the consummated kingdom.

4. Peter explains that the various trials they were suffering were a testing of their faith, just like gold is tested, so that its genuineness may result in *their* praise, glory, and honor at the revelation of Christ (see, Rom. 2:29; 1 Cor. 4:5; 1 Pet. 5:4). Michaels states (p. 31), "Peter has in mind *explicitly* the praise, glory, and honor that God bestows on his servants, and only *implicitly* the praise, glory, and honor that is his in the act of giving." That is what is in store for the Christian; it is an inheritance like no other.

5. In speaking of the salvation of their "souls" Peter is not referring to the salvation of the immaterial aspect of their being. Rather, as Peter Davids notes in *The First Epistle of Peter*, New International Commentary on the New Testament (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1990), 60, he is using the word in its typical Hebrew sense of the total person, the self. You can see this quite clearly in his statement in 3:20 that "eight souls" were saved through water, referring to Noah and his family.

a. Schreiner rightly cautions (p. 71): "Salvation of 'souls' could easily be misunderstood by moderns, as if Peter referred to the salvation of our immaterial substance. The word 'souls,' however, refers to the whole person and does not suggest in any way that the body is left out. The reference is to 'a person's whole life or self-identity.'"

b. Paul Achtemeier states in *1 Peter*, Hermeneia (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1996), 104:

[The] eschatological context, at home in the Hebrew rather than the Greek tradition, gives to [souls] the sense of the salvation of the entire person rather than simply the rescue of a higher or spiritual part of a person in contrast to the body. Because such Hebrew tradition in which the human being is understood to be a psychosomatic unity is dominant in the NT, redemption (here [salvation]) is understood in terms of a new creation rather than of the release of the soul from imprisonment in the body. A translation that implies salvation of only part of the person (e.g., "soul") is therefore misleading, since in 1 Peter elsewhere [soul] is used to mean the whole person.

B. Digression accentuating the greatness of this salvation (1:10-12) –

¹⁰Concerning this salvation, the prophets who prophesied about the grace [to come] to you diligently searched and carefully inquired, ¹¹inquiring into what [time] or what sort of time the Spirit of Christ within them was indicating when predicting the sufferings [coming] to Christ and the glories after these things. ¹²It was revealed to them that they were presenting these things not for themselves but for you, which things have now been announced to you by those who preached the gospel [to] you by [the] Holy Spirit sent from heaven, into which things angels long to look.

1. Peter highlights the greatness of this salvation by noting that the O.T. prophets who through the Spirit foretold its coming were so taken by its glory that they expended themselves in trying to discern the time or general period when the means and grounds of that salvation, that is, the sufferings of Christ and subsequent exaltation which they were predicting, would occur.

a. There are numerous references in the N.T. to the O.T.'s predictions about Christ. For example:

(1) Jesus says in Mat. 11:13 that "all the Prophets and the Law prophesied until John," meaning that the entire O.T. -- even its commands -- had a prospective or forward-looking aspect, and as Mat. 5:17 shows, Jesus is the fulfillment of that aspect.

(2) Lk. 24:25-27 states (ESV) – ²⁵ And he said to them, "O foolish ones, and slow of heart to believe all that the prophets have spoken! ²⁶ Was it not necessary that the Christ should suffer these things and enter into his glory?" ²⁷ And beginning with Moses and all the Prophets, he interpreted to them in all the Scriptures the things concerning himself.

(3) Lk. 24:44-47 states (ESV) – ⁴⁴ Then he said to them, "These are my words that I spoke to you while I was still with you, that everything written about me in the Law of Moses and the Prophets and the Psalms must be fulfilled." ⁴⁵ Then he opened their minds to understand the Scriptures, ⁴⁶ and said to them, "Thus it is written, that the Christ should suffer and on the third day rise from the dead, ⁴⁷ and that repentance and forgiveness of sins should be proclaimed in his name to all nations, beginning from Jerusalem.

(4) Paul says in Acts 26:22-23 (ESV) – ²² "To this day I have had the help that comes from God, and so I stand here testifying both to small and great, saying nothing but what the prophets and Moses said would come to pass: ²³ that the Christ must suffer and that, by being the first to rise from the dead, he would proclaim light both to our people and to the Gentiles."

(5) Paul says in 1 Cor. 15:3-5 (ESV) – ³ For I delivered to you as of first importance what I also received: that Christ died for our sins in accordance

with the Scriptures,⁴ that he was buried, that he was raised on the third day in accordance with the Scriptures,⁵ and that he appeared to Cephas, then to the twelve.

b. Wayne Grudem writes *1 Peter*, Tyndale New Testament Commentaries (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1988), 70:

In this sense [of the entire Old Testament being writings of 'the prophets'], the predictions of the sufferings of the Messiah begin with the prediction of the 'seed' of the woman who would be bruised in the heel by the serpent (Gn. 3:15), and continue through much of the Old Testament writings (for, example, Pss. 22:1, 7-8, 18; 34:19-20; 69:21; Is. 50:6; 52:14-15; 53:1-12; Zc. 12:10; 13:7, *etc.*).

The Messiah's subsequent glory is predicted in Pss. 2;16:10; 22:22; 45:7; 110:1, 4; Is. 9:6; 40:3-5, 9-11; 42:1-4; 61:1-3; Je. 33:14-15; Ezk. 34:23; Dn. 7:13-14; Mal. 3:1-3, *etc.*

c. The Holy Spirit who inspired the O.T. prophets is here called the Spirit of Christ (see Rom. 8:9 and also Acts 16:7; Gal. 4:6; Phil. 1:19) because he is the same Spirit who was sent from Jesus (see v. 12; Acts 1:4-5, 2:33) and he bears witness to Christ and glorifies him (Jn. 15:26, 16:13-14). As Jim McGuiggan writes in *Where the Spirit of the Lord Is* (West Monroe, LA: Howard Publishing, 1999), 39-40:

The Spirit brings glory to Christ by refusing to put himself on center stage. Whatever the Spirit does and however he does it, it is to be understood in light of Jesus' own proclamation: "He will bring glory to me."

We've all known people who were the dynamic behind whatever was going on, and while we knew they were at work, they didn't parade or proclaim their presence. They were hiding in plain sight. They did their job so well that people looked at what was being accomplished more than at the prime mover in the venture. The Spirit of God models this behavior for us.

He doesn't want first place!

Because there is no life without him, because we have no Christ without him, because he does so much -- we're tempted to forget *why* he does what he does. The Spirit does what he does to glorify the Christ, to bring the Christ, to represent the Christ.

He never parades his own presence, even though he insists that we know he is present. And when the Spirit leads people to speak -- and they cannot speak without him -- they speak of the Master and not of him. The Spirit suffers from no identity crisis, yet you never hear him say, "Behold me!" Rather, over and over and over again he says, "Behold him!"

To say we shouldn't glorify the Spirit would be nonsense! To say we shouldn't delve into his nature and work would be sheer ignorance. But one of the reasons that less has been said about the Spirit down the centuries than about the Father and Son is because the Holy Spirit has unceasingly pointed to the Father and the Son. That he himself should be praised and glorified is only proper, but it honors the Spirit when we pay attention to the focus of his work in the world. He is not the focus of his own labors. In pointing away from himself, the Spirit is not putting himself down; he is exalting the Christ.

2. These prophets sought to discern when their predictions would be fulfilled, presumably by investigating the times and circumstances of their own lifetimes, by reflecting on earlier prophetic writings, and/or by seeking wisdom or further revelation from the Lord (e.g., Dan. 12:8).

3. They no doubt were hoping that this great work of God about which they prophesied would be fulfilled in their days, but it was revealed to them that their prophecies were, at least primarily, for those like Peter's audience, those who lived on the other side of the Christ event and who had had the glorious news of his crucifixion and exaltation announced to them through the Spirit-inspired and Spirit-empowered preaching of the gospel.

4. God's redemption of sinful humanity through the atoning work of Christ, an event now having occurred in history, is a subject so sublime that angels long to look into it, long to explore its depths. Thomas Schreiner writes in *1, 2 Peter, Jude*, New American Commentary (Nashville: Broadman & Holman, 2003), 76: "[T]he privilege of enjoying and anticipating salvation comes to the forefront. Old Testament prophets saw it from afar, and angels also marvel when gazing upon what God has done in Christ, while the Petrine readers actually experience it."