

Author. The author says he is the apostle Peter (1:1), a witness of Christ's sufferings (5:1)—thus one of the original apostles chosen by Jesus (Mk 3:14–19) as authoritative spokesmen. Also known as Simon and Cephas.

- Peter was known as the apostle to the Jews just as Paul was the apostle to the Gentiles (Gal 2:7).
- That Peter had been with Jesus during his earthly ministry may help account for the strong influence of Jesus' teaching in 1 Peter. Except for James, 1 Peter probably echoes more of Jesus' words than any other NT letter
- Some scholars think that the Greek of this letter is too good to have been written by a former fisherman whose native language was Aramaic; that the doctrine is too much like Paul's to have been written by an apostle whose position was different from Paul's; and that someone wrote the letter after Peter's death and used his name to give apostolic weight to it.
- Other scholars answer that if the author wanted to give authority to a letter whose teaching resembles Paul's, he would have used Paul's name, not Peter's; that most Galileans probably learned Greek as well as Aramaic early in life; and that there is no evidence that the teaching of Peter and Paul fundamentally differed. When Paul rebuked Peter (Gal 2:11–14) it was due to a temporary lapse in conduct, not a basic disagreement in teaching. Besides, some key doctrines of Paul are missing from 1 Peter (e.g., justification) and those similar to Paul's were the common possession of all the early churches. We may reasonably conclude that the apostle Peter wrote this letter.¹
- The early church fathers also supported Petrine authorship, and there is wide and early evidence in the fathers to support such a view. Nevertheless, scholars raised a number of objections to Petrine authorship. (1) A Galilean fisherman could not have written the cultivated Greek. (2) The OT quotations stem from the Septuagint, and Peter, since he did not know Greek, would not have used the LXX. (3) The theology of 1 Peter is remarkably Pauline in character, demonstrating that it is not authentically Petrine. (4) The letter says very little about the historical Jesus. (5) The persecution in the letter is empire-wide and would be dated in the time of Domitian (A.D. 81–96) or Trajan (A.D. 98–117).
- None of these arguments are compelling, and Petrine authorship is solidly established. (1) Significant evidence exists that Greek was spoken in Palestine and especially in Galilee. As a fisherman in Galilee, Peter would have engaged in business with other Greek speakers. The notion that Peter was uneducated or illiterate is a myth. Acts 4:13 merely means that he was not trained rabbinically and should not be used to say he was unable to read. (2) Since Peter knew Greek, it is not surprising that he used the Septuagint. In particular Peter quoted from the Bible that his readers used, like any good pastor. (3) The old Tübingen notion that the theology of Peter and Paul was at loggerheads should be laid to rest. Paul himself argued that the apostles agreed upon the gospel (Gal. 2:1–10; 1 Cor. 15:11). (4) More allusions to the teaching of Jesus exist in the letter than some claim. In any case, there is no reason to insist that Peter was compelled to refer to the historical Jesus often in an occasional letter written for a specific purpose. (5) The notion that the persecution is empire-wide and state sponsored is hardly clear from 1 Peter, and most

¹ Elwell, W. A., & Beitzel, B. J. (1988). [Peter, First Letter Of](#). In *Baker encyclopedia of the Bible* (Vol. 2, p. 1652). Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Book House.

scholars now reject such a theory. Instead, 1 Peter indicates that sporadic persecution was breaking out against believers. Indeed the letter says nothing about believers being put to death, though the latter is a possibility. Hence, there is no compelling reason to doubt that the letter was written while Nero was emperor (A.D. 54–68) and Peter was still alive. It should be noted that not even Nero instituted an empire-wide persecution of Christians. His punishment of Christians in Rome after the fire that destroyed much of Rome was not the beginning of a policy that reached to the edges of the empire. (6) It is also possible that Peter used a secretary (amanuensis) to write the letter. Many have argued that the secretary was Silvanus (1 Pet. 5:12), though the language used in the verse denotes the carrier of the letter rather than the secretary. Still it is possible that Silvanus or some other person functioned as a secretary.²

Recipients:

- Peter was writing to the churches of Asia Minor who were experiencing persecution
- Persecution came from both the state and society
- Peter's reason for writing this letter is threefold
- **1. Salvation**
- They have been sprinkled with blood 1:2
- Been ransomed 1:18-19
- They have been purified 1:22
- They have been healed 2:24
- They have been presented before God 3:18
- Their salvation is the foundation for the way they are to deal with suffering
- **2. Church**
- Peter uses vocabulary from the Old Testament to describe God's chosen people "the church"
- The elect 1:1
- Living stones 2:5
- Spiritual house 2:5
- Holy priesthood 2:5
- Chosen people, people belonging to God, people of God 2:9-10
- **3. Christian Life**
- Grounded in the salvation that Christians find in their new life Peter exhorts them to:
- Practice hope 1:13
- Holiness 1:14-16
- Fear before God 1:17-21
- Love 1:22-24
- Growth 2:1-8

² Schreiner, T. R. (2003). [Peter, First Letter From](#). In C. Brand, C. Draper, A. England, S. Bond, E. R. Clendenen, & T. C. Butler (Eds.), *Holman Illustrated Bible Dictionary* (pp. 1282–1283). Nashville, TN: Holman Bible Publishers.

Outline

- I. Opening (1:1–2)
- II. Called to Salvation as Exiles (1:3–2:10)
 - A. Praise for Salvation (1:3–12)
 1. A Promised Inheritance (1:3–5)
 2. Result: Joy in Suffering (1:6–9)
 3. The Privilege of Revelation (1:10–12)
 - B. The Future Inheritance as an Incentive to Holiness (1:13–21)
 1. Setting One’s Hope on the Inheritance (1:13–16)
 2. A Call to Fear (1:17–21)
 - C. Living as the New People of God (1:22–2:10)
 1. A Call to Love (1:22–25)
 2. Longing for the Pure Milk (2:1–3)
 3. The Living Stone and Living Stones (2:4–10)
- III. Living as Aliens to Bring Glory to God in a Hostile World (2:11–4:11)
 - A. The Christian Life as a Battle and Witness (2:11–12)
 - B. Testifying to the Gospel in the Social Order (2:13–3:12)
 1. Submit to the Government (2:13–17)
 2. Slaves submit to masters (2:18–25)
 - a. To Receive a Reward (2:18–20)
 - b. To Imitate Christ (2:21–25)
 3. Wives Submit to Husbands (3:1–6)
 4. Husbands Live Knowledgeably with Your Wives (3:7)
 5. Conclusion: Live a Godly Life to Obtain an Inheritance (3:8–12)
 - C. Responding in a Godly Way to Suffering (3:13–4:11)
 1. The Blessing of Suffering for Christ (3:13–17)
 2. Christ’s Suffering as the Pathway to Exaltation (3:18–22)
 3. Preparing to Suffer as Christ Did (4:1–6)
 4. Living in the Light of the End (4:7–11)
- IV. Persevering in Suffering (4:12–5:11)
 - A. Suffer Joyfully in accord with God’s Will (4:12–19)
 - B. Exhortations to Elders and the Community (5:1–11)
 1. Exhortations for Elders and Younger Ones (5:1–5)
 2. Closing Exhortations and Assurance (5:6–11)
- V. Concluding Words (5:12–14)³

³ Schreiner, T. R. (2003). [Peter, First Letter From](#). In C. Brand, C. Draper, A. England, S. Bond, E. R. Clendenen, & T. C. Butler (Eds.), *Holman Illustrated Bible Dictionary* (p. 1283). Nashville, TN: Holman Bible Publishers.