



The First Epistle General of Peter

Introduction

I. THE AUTHORSHIP OF FIRST PETER

A. The Proof of Peter's Authorship

1. The opening verse introduces Peter as the author (1 Peter 1:1).
2. Every time thereafter where we read pronouns like *I*, *my*, *our*, *us*, and *we*, we are reminded that the man who opened the letter by introducing himself is still the man setting forth the letter.
3. Note: His given name was Simon (John 1:41). It was changed by Christ to *Peter* (a Greek name) or *Cephas* (a Syriac name), which meant rock or stone (Matthew 4:18; Matthew 10:2; Mark 3:16; Luke 6:14; John 1:42).

B. The Timing and Location of Peter's Authorship

1. From Peter's epistle

a. Timing

- (1) The letter was obviously written after the sacrificial death and victorious resurrection of Christ (1 Peter 1:18-21).
- (2) It written after Christ's ascension (1 Peter 1:8; 1 Peter 3:21-22).
- (3) It was penned after the day of Pentecost (1 Peter 1:12).
- (4) It was penned long enough thereafter for the gospel to have spread to and been believed by the audience (1 Peter 1:22-25).

b. Location—The only indication we have of Peter's whereabouts from the epistle is found in the final verses where Peter said, "The church that is at **Babylon**...saluteth you" (1 Peter 5:13).

- (1) Some have supposed that Babylon is a reference to Rome and is a suggestion to their spiritual condition. While this would bolster our position on Mystery Babylon being Rome or Roman Catholicism, it does not fit the narrative of scripture as the scripture does not seem to put Peter in Rome.
- (2) Others state Peter ministered to JEWS who were descendants of those who remained in Babylon after the captivity. Some reject this opinion stating that Babylon had been left desolate.

2. The account and locations of Peter's journeys

a. During the ministry of Christ

(1) The Galilee ministry

- a) On the heels of John's imprisonment (Matthew 4:12-13; Mark 1:14-15), Jesus began to preach and seek out disciples (Matthew 4:18-22; Mark 1:16-18).

- i) It would appear that Simon Peter lived in Capernaum (Matthew 4:13 with Matthew 4:18; Matthew 8:5 with Matthew 8:14; Mark 1:21 with Mark 1:29-30; Matthew 17:24-25).



- ii) At the same time, the city of Bethsaida is said to be “the city of Andrew and Peter” (John 1:44).
 - iii) This likely suggests that Bethsaida was the birthplace of Andrew and Peter, but that they currently lived in Capernaum. Regardless, the towns were neighbouring and it could have easily been said that they were residents of both.
 - b) Peter followed Christ to the marriage in Cana (John 2:1-11).
 - c) He saw the healing of his wife’s mother at his home in Capernaum (Matthew 8:14-15; Mark 1:29-31; Luke 4:38-39).
 - d) Simon Peter experienced a crisis of faith on the lake of Gennesaret, which was also known as the Sea of Galilee (Luke 5:1-11).
 - e) Peter was one of three (commonly called the inner-circle) who witnessed the resurrection of a young lady (Mark 5:35-43; Luke 8:49-56).
 - f) Peter sailed toward Bethsaida (Mark 6:45) with the disciples when they saw Jesus walking on water and Peter began to walk to Him (Matthew 14:22-34; Mark 6:46-53).
 - g) In Capernaum, Peter witnessed the departure of a good number of disciples (John 6:59-67), but he reaffirmed his allegiance to the Lord (John 6:68-69).
- (2) The northern ministry
- a) In Caesarea Philippi, Peter boldly claimed Jesus as the Christ (Matthew 16:13-20; Mark 8:27-30; Luke 9:18-21) but balked at Jesus being the crucified (Matthew 16:21-23; Mark 8:31-33; Luke 9:22).
 - b) Peter was one of three to see the glorified Christ on the mount of transfiguration (Matthew 17:1-13; Mark 9:2-13; Luke 9:28-36; 2 Peter 1:16-18).
- (3) The final days leading up to the crucifixion in Jerusalem
- a) Peter was initially bold in his allegiance to the Lord (Matthew 26:31-33; Mark 14:26-29; Luke 22:31-33) but was informed of Satan’s sifting and his denial of the Lord (Matthew 26:34-35; Mark 14:30-31; Luke 22:34).
 - b) Peter was in the mount of Olives when Judas and his band came to capture the Lord and he wielded his sword, cutting off a man’s ear (Matthew 26:36-54; Mark 14:32-47; Luke 22:35-51; John 18:1-11).
 - c) Peter denied the Lord three times as forewarned by Christ (Matthew 26:57-58, 69-75; Mark 14:54, 66-72; Luke 22:54-62; John 18:15-18, 25-27).
- (4) Post crucifixion/resurrection
- a) In Jerusalem
 - i) Ladies who saw the resurrected Christ were told to tell the disciples (Peter mentioned by name) to meet Him in Galilee (Mark 16:7; John 20:2).



- ii) Peter heard the news and ran to the sepulchre (John 20:3-10).
 - iii) Peter ran back to the tomb (Luke 24:12).
 - iv) Christ appeared to Peter (Luke 24:33-34; 1 Corinthians 15:5).
 - b) In Galilee—Peter led a fishing expedition in the Sea of Tiberias (also the Sea of Galilee) and was met by and challenged by the Lord to follow Him (John 21:1-23).
Note: It seems odd that the disciples would have gone from Jerusalem to Galilee only to end up back in Jerusalem, but the Lord had told them to go to Galilee (Mark 16:7) and time was allotted for them to do so (John 20:26).
- b. During the Acts account
- (1) Peter witnessed the ascension of Christ in Bethany (Luke 24:50) from a mount called Olivet, which was a sabbath day's journey from Jerusalem (Acts 1:1-12).
 - (2) He was present in an upper room in Jerusalem (Acts 1:13) where he immediately became the leader of the apostles (Acts 1:15-26; see Luke 22:32) and preached on the day of Pentecost, resulting in the salvation of about 3,000 souls (Acts 2:1-41).
 - (3) Peter would stay in Jerusalem and minister (Acts 3:1-26; Acts 4:1-14) and would be rebuked for doing so (Acts 4:15-31).
 - (4) Peter's ministry grew in Jerusalem and brought about his first imprisonment; however, he was freed by the angel of the Lord (Acts 5:12-20). When Peter was found, he was again rebuked but also beaten (Acts 5:21-42).
 - (5) He was commissioned to go forth on behalf of the church at Jerusalem to spend some time ministering to the new believers in Samaria (Acts 8:14-25).
 - (6) He ministered on the west coast in Lydda (Acts 9:32-38) and Joppa (Acts 9:39-43). While in Joppa, he was called upon to minister to Cornelius in Caesarea (Acts 10:1-48).
 - (7) Peter returned to Jerusalem and defended his outreach to the Gentiles (Acts 11:1-18).
 - (8) He was again apprehended and imprisoned, but prayer was made on his behalf and he was delivered by an angel (Acts 12:1-19).
 - (9) He travelled to Caesarea (Acts 12:19) but was back in Jerusalem when Paul visited to reconcile the differences coming from the church at Jerusalem (Acts 15:1-29; Galatians 2:1-10).
 - (10) It is possibly on the heels of this meeting that Peter made a trip to Antioch (Acts 15:30) where he was rebuked by the apostle Paul (Galatians 2:11-21).
 - (11) As far as the canon of scripture, nothing more is said of Peter from that moment until his epistles were written.



c. **Arguments and circumstances concerning Peter's presence/absence in Rome (taken from *Martyr's Mirror*)**

(1) Arguments

a) First argument

i) When Paul drew near the city of Rome, where he was to be arraigned before Caesar, the brethren came out of the city to meet him, as far as Appii Forum, and The three taverns, whom, when Paul, saw, he took courage (Acts 28:15).

ii) Among these Peter is not once mentioned, which would undoubtedly have been the case, had he been with them and occupied the episcopal throne at that place, as is pretended.

b) Second argument

i) When it came to pass, that Paul was to give an account before the emperor for the first time, he was forsaken by all, and no man stood with him, so that he complained of it to Timothy (2 Timothy 4:16).

ii) If Peter had been at Rome, he certainly would not have forsaken Paul whom he was wont to call his beloved brother (2 Peter 3:15) but would have stood by him with counsel and actual assistance, according to his ability.

iii) Someone might conclude, that he, who before had forsaken his Lord and Saviour (which was a matter of much consequence), now probably also forsook Paul, who was inferior. To this may serve as reply: That Peter, at the time he forsook Christ, was not filled with the gift of the Holy Ghost, which was not poured upon the apostles until after Christ's ascension (Acts 2:1-3); hence he could easily come to this fall; but now, being filled with the Holy Ghost, it was quite otherwise, so much so, that he and his fellow apostles feared no suffering, not even death itself (compare Acts 4:19-21 with 5:40-42 and Acts 12:3-4; also compare 1 Peter 3:14 and 1 Peter 4:16).

iv) Moreover, in Paul's complaint to Timothy not a word is mentioned as to Peter having forsaken him; which, had it happened, would certainly, as a notable matter, not have been passed over in silence; more especially, as he mentions some of those who forsook him, by name, as, Demas, Alexander the coppersmith, etc.

c) Third argument

i) When Paul was confined in prison at Rome, and bound in chains, he commended Onesiphorus, because he had visited him, and was not ashamed of his chain; without mentioning anything about others, saying:



“The Lord give mercy unto the house of Onesiphorus; for he oft refreshed me, and was not ashamed of my chain” (2 Timothy 1:16).

ii) But why does he not commend Peter as having visited him in his bonds? Or, if Peter was there and did not do so, but was ashamed of his chain, why does he not complain, that so great a man, who ought to have been a leader unto others, was so negligent therein?

iii) Doubtless, if Peter had been in the city at that time, and visited, or not visited, him in prison, Paul would not have passed it over in utter silence, without commending or complaining of it.

d) Fourth argument

i) When many had departed from Paul, while he was in prison, he made mention of one who had remained by, or with him, namely, in the city of Rome—“Only Luke is with me” (2 Timothy 4:11).

ii) It follows, therefore, that at the time which Paul wrote this, Peter was not at Rome, or it could not have been that only Luke was with him.

e) Fifth argument

i) Paul requested of Timothy, that when he came to him, he should bring Mark with him, since the same would be very profitable to him (2 Timothy 4:11).

ii) If Peter was in Rome at that time, why was Paul under the necessity of sending for Mark for the ministry? Or, if he was not there, why did he not send for Peter? Certainly, if he had sent for him, he would, unless prevented by some important cause, not have refused to come.

iii) It does not appear that Paul sent for him; hence, it cannot be concluded, that he came in answer to his summons; and even if he had come at that time, his stay there could not have lasted several years, much less twenty-five years, as the papists say, since death overtook him as well as Paul.

f) Sixth argument

i) Paul wrote various epistles from his prison at Rome to the believers, in which he puts various salutations from believers of the church at Rome, as also, in the beginning of the same makes mention sometimes of his fellow labourers; but he never mentions Peter.

ii) There might be much said upon this subject, but it would all amount to this: that it would be a strange thing, if Peter was at Rome, when Paul wrote his epistles from the Roman prison, that the latter did never mention in these epistles a salutation from Peter



seeing he mentions salutations from different leaders and members of the Roman church, whom he calls by name: hence it is quite reasonable to conclude, that Peter was not there during that time.

(2) Circumstances

a) First circumstance

- i) Here is to be considered, why Paul wrote an epistle to the Roman church, as well for the confirmation of the Christian faith, as for stirring up in the moral virtues (which epistle is still in existence), if Peter was there at that time, and had the charge of said church? Or, if it was necessary for important reasons, that he should write to them, why he did not send this epistle to Peter as their leader, like he did to Timothy, the teacher of the Ephesian church; and to Titus, the teacher of the church in the Island of Crete?
- ii) Or, at least, if we look at the contents of this epistle, we may well consider, why he did not address a salutation to him, or once mention him by name? seeing he filled nearly a whole chapter with the names of those whom he salutes at Rome without mentioning in any way whatever the person or name of Peter; from which there may be concluded again with good reason, that which has been concluded before from the account of the salutations which Paul wrote while in prison at Rome, namely, *that Peter was not in this city at that time?*

b) Second circumstance—When it afterwards happened that Paul, having traveled through Arabia and the country of Damascus, returned after three years, with a particular desire to see Peter; he did not seek him out at Rome, but at Jerusalem (Galatians 1:17-21).

c) Third circumstance—When fourteen more years had elapsed, namely, those spent by Paul in his Syrian and Cilician journey, where was Peter to be found? Certainly not at Rome (compare Galatians 2:1 with verses 11, 12).

d) Fourth circumstance—When some came down from Judea, and troubled the brethren, saying that, unless they were circumcised after the manner of Moses, they could not be saved; and Paul, Barnabas, and other pious men were sent to the apostles and elders, to consult about the matter; Peter as well as the others to whom they were sent, was found at Jerusalem (Acts 15:1-7).

e) Fifth circumstance

- i) Galatians 2:7, we read, that the uncircumcision (that is, the Gentiles) was committed to Paul, but the circumcision (that is, the Jews or the Jewish nation) to



Peter; also, Galatians 2:9, that Peter (there called Cephas) together with James and John gave to Paul and Barnabas the right hand and agreed, that these should go unto the heathen, but they to the circumcision (the Jews); namely, to preach the Gospel unto them.

- ii) It is, therefore, a settled fact, that Peter was properly a teacher of the Jews (after this agreement was made), and not of the Gentiles. But if he had taught among the Romans, who were Gentiles by nature, he would have gone altogether beyond his engagement and promise.
- f) Sixth circumstance—From the two epistles of Peter, especially from the words, 1 Peter 1:1, it evidently appears, that he preached to the strangers scattered throughout Pontus, Galatia, Cappadocia, Asia, and Bithynia (namely those who were scattered there from the twelve tribes of Israel) according to the statement of James 1:1; for which preaching, since these countries are very far, some even a hundred and more leagues apart, several years were required, in order to travel through them; during which time Peter apparently could not be there and at Rome at once; this is incontrovertible.
- g) Seventh circumstance
 - i) At the end of the first epistle of Peter, namely 1 Peter 5:13, are these words: “The church that is at Babylon...saluteth you.”
 - ii) How could Peter send a salutation from the church at Babylon, unless he was with it in Babylon at that time? But if he was in Babylon, he was not at Rome.
- h) Eighth circumstance
 - i) Those who hold that Peter was bishop at Rome, make no distinction between the words apostle, or messenger, and bishop, or overseer; yet there always has been a marked difference between the office of an apostle and that of a bishop.
 - ii) The office of an apostle was to travel from one country to another, yea, through the whole world, and preach the Gospel to those who had not yet heard it; without being bound to any particular place or church, as appears from Matthew 28:19; Mark 16:15.
 - iii) On the other hand, the office of a bishop or overseer was to watch over, care for, feed and govern, as a shepherd his flock, a particular church, unto which the gospel had been already preached, and which had accepted faith and the sign of holy baptism (compare Acts 20:28 with 1 Timothy 3:1-5; Titus 1:5-7).



- iv) Now, it is a fact, that properly not the latter, but the former office was enjoined upon Peter, for he gives himself the first mentioned name—apostle (see 1 Peter 1:1 and 2 Peter 1:1); for which purpose Christ Himself had chosen him (Luke 6:13-14), and sent him out.
- v) How could it be then, that Peter sat as bishop of the church in the city of Rome? And, what is still more – for a considerable number of years? Unless it be said that Peter abandoned his charge, and accepted another office and ministry than the one to which he was called; which it would be difficult to prove, since nothing is mentioned of it in Holy Writ.

(3) Concluding thoughts

- a) If one should confine himself solely to the testimony of the holy scriptures, not accepting anything else as worthy of belief, it could in no wise be shown that Peter was ever at Rome; but, since the holy scriptures do not relate all that has happened, the testimony of some accepted authors of that time may be recognized as credible, as far as their testimony is not contrary to what is expressed in holy scripture.
- b) We have shown from the apostolic writings, that during the time Paul wrote his epistles in the prison at Rome, and also during the whole period that he (Peter) was preaching in foreign countries, Peter was not in Rome, but in Jerusalem, Antioch, Pontus, Galatia, Cappadocia, and in other places where the Jews were scattered. This we have plainly shown, first by six arguments, and then by eight circumstances, derived from the holy scriptures. But as to where Peter was, or how he died, after Paul wrote his last epistle from Rome, the scriptures are silent.
- c) Hence the testimony of those writers whom we have just mentioned cannot well be contradicted; who maintain, that Peter shortly before his death came to Rome, and there laid down his life; without mentioning anything there about his bishopric, much less, popedom.

3. From historians

a. Peter's death

- (1) According to Martyr's Mirror, in 69 A.D. Simon Peter was sentenced to be crucified by the Emperor Nero.
- (2) He thought himself unworthy to be crucified in the manner in which Christ was crucified and therefore requested that his crucifixion be accomplished upside down. The tyrants were willing to comply believing it would be an increase in his pain.
- (3) While the scripture does not record Peter's death, it does testify that he would be taken and put to death and that his death would be a means by which he might glorify God (John 21:18-19).



Peter alluded to this in his second epistle stating, “Knowing that shortly I must put off this my tabernacle, even as our Lord Jesus Christ hath shewed me” (2 Peter 1:14-15).

- (4) It is supposed that Paul died in the same year, likewise as a martyr.
 - (5) This would have been only a few years over thirty years from the time when Christ was crucified.
- b. Peter’s writing
- (1) As is typically the case, the historians, all viewed as authorities by varying camps, cannot agree as to the time of Peter’s writing this epistle.
 - (2) The dates vary from 58 A.D. to 65 A.D. which may not seem to be a broad range but considering that they only had a window of approximately thirty-five years to work with before subtracting Peter’s ministry chronicled in the book of Acts, it appears to be a very noncommittal series of guesses.
 - (3) In the end, the historians have nothing more to offer us than what we can glean from the word of God, simply by reading and believing what we read.

II. THE RECIPIENTS OF FIRST PETER

A. Their Addresses (see Galatians 2:7-9)

1. Their lineage
 - a. They were considered strangers in the lands in which they were scattered (1 Peter 1:1).
 - b. They were identified as “elect” (1 Peter 1:2) which indicates that they were of Jewish descent (Isaiah 45:4; Isaiah 65:9, 22; Matthew 24:22, 24, 31; Mark 13:20, 22, 27; 2 Timothy 2:10; 2 John 1:1, 13).
 - c. They were associated with the fathers (typically a reference to the Jewish fathers)—“your vain conversation received by tradition from your fathers” (1 Peter 1:18).
 - d. Multiple references seem to separate them from or distinguish them from the Gentiles (1 Peter 2:12; 1 Peter 4:3).
 - e. Peter’s second epistle, written to the same audience (2 Peter 3:1) states that Paul specifically wrote an epistle to these believers (2 Peter 3:15-16). This was no doubt a reference to the book of Hebrews.
2. Their spiritual condition
 - a. They were saved (1 Peter 1:2-3, 18-19, 23; 1 Peter 2:7, 25).
 - b. However, they were viewed as newborn babes (1 Peter 2:2).

B. Their Locations (see Acts 2:5-11; James 1:1)

1. Pontus—Located far north and slightly west of Israel; more specifically, it was located on the southeastern side of the Black Sea



2. Galatia—Located west of Pontus
3. Cappadocia—Located south of Pontus
4. Asia—Located west of Galatia
5. Bithynia—Located west of Galatia

III. THE BREAKDOWN OF FIRST PETER

A. The Basic Statistics

1. Chapters = Five
2. Verses = 105
3. Sentences
 - a. Four asking sentences (1 Peter 2:20; 1 Peter 3:13; 1 Peter 4:17, 18)
 - b. Sixty-seven telling sentences
4. Words = 2,476; see below for some key words
 - a. Suffer (six times); also sufferings (three times), suffering (one time), suffered (six times)
 - b. Glory (twelve times); also glorify (two times), glorified (two times),
 - c. Obedience (one time); also obedient (one time), obeying (one time), obey (two times), obeyed (one time), disobedient (three times)

B. The Theme/Purpose of the Book

1. There is a likelihood that suffering will follow salvation (1 Peter 1:6-9).
2. Christ is set forth as the perfect example of proper handling of unjust suffering at the hands of sinners (Matthew 26:45; 1 Peter 1:11; 1 Peter 2:21-24; 1 Peter 4:1-5).
3. Several examples are set forth where believers are admonished to properly handle unjust suffering at the hand of sinners (1 Peter 4:19).
 - a. From government (1 Peter 2:12-17)
 - b. From employers (1 Peter 2:18-20)
 - c. From unbelieving spouses (1 Peter 3:1-7).
 - d. From accusers (1 Peter 3:13-17)
 - e. From the Devil (1 Peter 5:8-9)
4. Our sufferings are meant to perfect us (1 Peter 4:1-5, 12-14).
5. Just as it was with Christ, glory follows suffering (1 Peter 5:10).
6. Believers are warned that they should avoid at all costs suffering for wrongdoing (1 Peter 4:15-16).

C. The Outline of the Book

1. The Opening of the Epistle (1 Peter 1:1-2)
2. The Foreshadowing of the Subject of the Epistle (1 Peter 1:3-12)
3. Exhortations Concerning Suffering and the Glory to Follow (1 Peter 1:13-25; 1 Peter 2:1-25; 1 Peter 3:1-22; 1 Peter 4:1-19; 1 Peter 5:1-9)
4. The Summation of the Subject of the Epistle (1 Peter 5:10-11)
5. The Closing of the Epistle (1 Peter 5:12-14)