
Introduction to 1 Peter

1 Peter 1:1



Steve Lewis

www.SpiritAndTruth.org

Who is Peter?

- His life is documented in all four Gospels, the first fifteen chapters of the book of Acts, and in the books of Galatians and 1 Corinthians.
- Born Simon the son of Jonah (Matt 16:17); a fisherman on the Sea of Galilee (Matt 4:18; Luke 5:3-10); married (Matt 8:14; 1 Cor 9:5); lived near Capernaum (Matt 4:12-22).
- Peter preached the first gospel sermon in Acts 2. Later he spoke in the temple and also defended himself before the Sanhedrin (Acts 3-4). He visited the disciples in Samaria (Acts 8), and received the vision from God which opened the gospel to the Gentiles at Caesarea (Acts 10).
- Herod Agrippa arrested Peter, but he was miraculously delivered from prison (Acts 12); he testified to the Jerusalem Council about the salvation of the Gentiles (Acts 15).

What is an apostle?

- **an apostle** (*apostolos*) **of Jesus Christ** ~ an important office active during the first years of the church. It involved laying the foundation for the New Testament church (1 Cor 3:9-11; Eph 2:19-22).
- Peter was personally commissioned by Jesus as an apostle and was given special gifts, including the ability to perform miracles (Acts 3:1-10).
- Apostles were men chosen by Jesus. Their function was limited to the lifetime of those specific individuals, and apostleship was not a self-perpetuating gift. The first apostles could not appoint successors who would continue throughout the church age. The apostles passed from the pages of history by AD 100.

Who are the recipients?

- **those who reside as aliens** ~ (*parepidēmos*) describes people from a foreign country who come into a land that is not their own to reside there alongside the natives.
- **scattered** (*diaspora*) ~ a special term for Jews who were dispersed among the Gentile nations. Used in the Greek translation of the Old Testament (Septuagint or LXX) to describe God's scattering of Israel in judgment due to their disobedience (Deut 30:4; Neh 1:9; Jer 15:7).
- In the New Testament this word was used only three times, the other places being John 7:35 and James 1:1 where the word referred to Jews who were scattered across foreign countries as a consequence of God's judgment on the nation of Israel.

Who are the recipients? (continued)

- Peter was writing primarily to Jewish believers who were living outside their native land. This seems reasonable since Peter was known as an apostle to “the circumcision” and his primary ministry was to the Jews.
- The apostle Paul specifically mentioned Peter, James, and John as apostles whose focus was ministering to the lost sheep of Israel (see Gal 2:7-9).
- This does not mean that Peter’s words were not applicable to non-Jewish believers. Both were members of one body, the church, over which Jesus Christ is the head (Eph 2:11-22).

Who are the recipients? (continued)

- One of the purposes of this study is to explain Peter's teaching for Jewish believers who might see it in the future.
- Especially for those who will come to faith in their Messiah during that period called the "Great Tribulation" (Matt 24:21) or the "Day of the Lord" (Joel 1:15; 2:1-11; Amos 5:18-20; Zeph 1:14-18).
- There will be millions of both Jews and Gentiles who will trust in the Lord Jesus Christ during that time of great persecution.
- Believers today, as well as those in the future, will need Peter's words of instruction and encouragement.

Where were the recipients?

- **throughout Pontus, Galatia, Cappadocia, Asia, and Bithynia** ~ Roman provinces in Asia Minor; within the country of Turkey today.
- How did the gospel reach them? Jews from Cappadocia, Pontus and Asia attended the feast of Pentecost and heard the first gospel sermon preached by Peter (Acts 2:9).



Where was Peter?

- 1 Peter 5:13 indicates that Peter was in **Babylon**.
- Four major Jewish population centers: Jerusalem, Alexandria in Egypt, Antioch in Syria, and Babylon in Mesopotamia.
- Each was estimated to have at least one million Jewish residents.



Where was Peter? (continued)

- It seems best to take Peter at his word and place him in **Babylon** when he wrote this letter.
- Some say Peter was using “*Babylon*” as a code word to hide his actual location in Rome.
- But Peter could simply omit his location from this letter. Why would he try to hide his own location while clearly stating the locations of his dear recipients?



Summary

- This letter is filled with doctrinal teaching as well as much-needed encouragement. The work of God is mentioned over seventy times (Father, Son, and Holy Spirit), and the second most frequent theme is **suffering** (mentioned twenty times as *suffering, testing, trials, and ordeals* in all five chapters of this letter).
- Peter's letter contains over forty quotes or allusions to Old Testament passages. Peter was equally familiar with the letters of both James and Paul, which were being collected and circulated among the churches.
- The apostles were succeeding in completing their task of recording New Testament revelation and building the foundation for the church.