

THE 1ST EPISTLE OF PETER

- I. Authorship and canonicity.
- A. Internal evidence for the Apostle Peter as its author is mostly unchallenged.
1. The letter bears the identity of Peter, an apostle of Jesus Christ, as its author. 1Pet.1:1
 2. He calls himself an elder and a witness of the sufferings of Christ. 1Pet.5:1
 3. The author's association with Silvanus and Mark (1Pet.5:12-13) alludes to Peter's circle of long-standing relationships from early on.
 4. Silvanus is one and the same Silas in the book of Acts.
 5. He was present at the Jerusalem Council with Peter and the Apostles. Act.15:6,7,14 cp.vss.22,27,32,34
 6. Mark is John Mark (Author of the Gospel of Mark) and provided Peter refuge in his home after Peter's prison escape during the time of Herod. Act.12:12
 7. That Peter refers to John Mark as his son looks to the extremely close relationship these two enjoyed as an older man to a younger.
 8. Peter's fatherly influence over Mark has led many to equate the similarity of the sermon of Peter in Caesarea (Act.10:34-43) and the general outline of Mark's Gospel with this influence.
- B. The main objection to the Petrine authorship is that the Greek is too sophisticated for an unschooled fisherman.
1. Peter makes clear that the letter was written through the agency (διά - dia) of Silvanus (Silas). 1Pet.5:12
 2. Such language suggests more than just mere dictation.
 3. Silas was known for his writing skills and helped compose the Apostolic Decree of Act.15:23-29. Cp.Act.15:23a; the NAS "sent" is literally "to write/γράφω – grapho" in the Greek text.
 4. He was with Paul on his 2nd missionary journey and in some sense responsible for the Thessalonian epistles. 1The.1:1; 2The.2:1; *Paul uses the plural "we" liberally in both epistles; some 65x.*
 5. Paul's letters were not solely his *de novo* (anew) compositions and would sign off in his own hand writing as a mark of Pauline authenticity. Cp.2The.3:17
 6. Silas has been readily considered by historians of having a literary role for composing some Pauline epistles. Ref. *New Bible Dictionary. 2nd Edition; Tyndale p.1112b*
 7. Peter is stating in 1Pet.5:12 that he is writing *dia Silounanou* (through Silvanus) implying a literary function with a good amount of freedom grammatically to express Peter's dictation in proper grammatical form.
 8. Silas' penning in the NT could account for some of the resemblances in wording between 1Pet., 1 & 2Thes., and the Apostolic Decree of Act.15.
- C. External attestation shows that of the so-called General epistles, none has been more widely used during the history of the Church than 1st Peter.
1. The 1st witness of it comes from 2Pet.3:1.

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2. Eusebius (father of Church history) placed it among the undisputed books saying “*the ancient elders’ made free use of it*”.
3. Some have found echoes of it in Clement of Rome (c. 96 AD).
4. It is beyond question of its use by Polycarp (~69 AD) and is reflected in the *Gospel of Truth*, which seems to use the books regarded as authoritative in Rome c. 140 AD.

II. Background and date of writing.

- A. Peter arrived in Rome calculated by Chase at about the end of 63 AD, with Lightfoot setting his arrival early 64 AD.
- B. Peter sends greetings assumed to be from where he wrote the epistle in 1Pet.5:13.
- C. We note the cryptic use of “Babylon” in reference to Rome.
- D. Babylon in Mesopotamia was mostly deserted at this time.
- E. This is where he spent the last decade of his life (60’s AD), as with the apostle Paul.
- F. Paul had arrived earlier as a prisoner c. 61-62 AD.
- G. Both Peter and Paul were martyred by the Roman emperor, Nero, at about the same time (66 AD).
- H. Peter wrote this epistle ~63-64 AD.

III. Purpose for writing.

- A. This epistle is classified as a General epistle in that it is wide spread to a larger audience than the majority of NT epistles, yet limited and not to the entire Church as with a Universal epistle.
- B. Peter’s audience is predominately Gentiles residing in the five provinces of Asia Minor noted in 1Pet.1:1.
- C. Their gentile origin is noted with comments such as “*not a people*” (1Pet.2:10) and describing their past life as Gentiles (1Pet.4:3).
- D. A primary theme of the letter is “suffering”, which is mentioned 15x and a subject of every chapter.
- E. This would be apropos for Christian’s living in an era of Roman persecution under Nero c.54 – 68 AD.
- F. A general approach to the subject builds on the realities of salvation Ph₁ and the example of Christ in His sufferings as hope and confidence springboarding to the necessity of adhering to Ph₂ doctrine to ensure our sufferings are not in vain.

IV. General outline.

- A. Chapter One – Reassurance and confidence.
 1. Salutation. 1:1-2
 2. In praise of God. 1:3-5
 3. Suffering is part and evidence of the Christian faith. 1:6-9
 4. The Prophetic inquiry into the present Age of grace. 1:10-12
 5. Call to a new *modus operandi* and *Vivendi*. 1:13-25
- B. Chapter Two – Ph₂ realities and exhortations.

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1. The command for the R_BAJG and MAJG. 2:1-3
 2. The value of salvation in our relationship with Christ. 2:4-8
 3. The believer's status as a royal priesthood. 2:9-10
 4. So act like it. 2:11-12
 5. Orientation to authority. 2:13-20
 6. Christ as our example. 2:21-25
- C.** Chapter 3 – Instructions to wives and husbands and for overall harmony.
1. Wives. 3:1-6
 2. Husbands. 3:7
 3. General exhortation of brotherly love. 3:8-12
 4. A good conscience is the result. 3:13-22
- D.** Chapter 4 – Preparation for suffering.
1. Christ as the premier example. 4:1-2
 2. Separation and giving account. 4:3-6
 3. Maintaining spiritual sobriety in divine love. 4:7-11
 4. Intense suffering. 4:12-19
- E.** Chapter 5 – willful service to God and promises.
1. Directed to P-T's. 5:3-4
 2. To young men. 5:5-7
 3. Entails staying alert in the Devil's world. 5:5-10
 4. Acknowledging God's Sovereignty. 5:11
 5. Closing. 5:12-14