

The Epistle of 1 Peter
Introduction to the New Testament
Class 12

I. Good morning!

II. Who and When?

- A. How do we know that Peter wrote *1 Peter*?
1. Internal Evidence
 - a. Named in 1:1
 - b. Connection to 2 Peter, where “Simon Peter” is named as well (1:1), and he refers to being “eyewitnesses of His majesty” at the Transfiguration (1:16-18).
 - c. The refrain about Christ as “Shepherd” (1 Peter 1:25; 5:4) and elders called to “shepherd the flock” entrusted to them echoes Jesus’ triple exhortation to Peter at the end of John to “feed my sheep” (21:15, 16, 17).
 2. External Evidence
 - a. Donald Guthrie’s NT Introduction says there was no question of its authorship in the early church and its place in the canon was *never* a question until recent critical scholarship.
 - b. Early authors like Polycarp, Tertullian, Clement of Alexandria in 1 Clement, Irenaeus quote from it—as if it is Scripture. See Keener for an extensive look at this evidence.²⁶
 - c. Peter H. Davids, “More importantly, it is, along with 1 John, the only Catholic Epistle²⁷ that was, so far as we know, never doubted or rejected, which, given its widespread use, is not surprising.”²⁸
 3. 1 Peter 5:12, “By Silvanus, a faithful brother as I regard him, I have written briefly to you.”

²⁶ Craig S. Keener, *1 Peter: A Commentary* (Baker Academic, 2021), 17–25.

²⁷ Davids, NICNT. He means it was center to the *entire* (catholic) church, not that it’s a Roman Catholic document.

²⁸ A Theology of James, Peter, and Jude: Living in the Light of the Coming King, *Biblical Theology of the New Testament* (Zondervan, 2014), 185.

- a. Some scholars think Peter's Greek in 1 Peter is too good to be from a Galilean fisherman.
 - b. Especially since 2 Peter comes from the same author and its Greek is less ornate and polished than 1 Peter. *Remember, though, simplicity of Greek does not at all mean simplicity of thought (cf. John's writings).*
 - c. Likely is that 1 Peter written through the "amanuensis" (a secretary) Silvanus, as indicated in 5:12.
 - d. The thoughts, structure, and concerns are Peters, but the words are crafted by Silvanus.
4. Keener holds to a Silvanus amanuensis theory as well and concludes, "Ockham's razor, however, suggests that the simpler solution is more apt to be correct, and the simpler solution here is that Peter remained alive and composed or directed the letter with significant collaboration or assistance."²⁹ On pgs 393–402 he has an extensive look at Peter's phrase, "*through Silvanus . . . I wrote to you briefly.*" He concludes:

A complete survey of the evidence, then, suggests that the expression "wrote through" was a loose one that could be used to encompass the entire epistolary (or other written) communication process or specify help at a particular stage. It could designate either composition (the usual sense of "writing") or, more loosely (yet quite commonly), delivery.³⁰

- a. Clowney says Silas was certainly the letter-carrier and "so, too, he may have conferred with Peter in the preparation of the letter, or may have drafted it under Peter's direction."³¹
- b. Why an amanuensis? Because ancient writing was not just a matter of literacy (i.e., who could read and then understand how to write the proper letters and words). It was also a matter of the techniques of pens, ink, and paper. Written documents weren't as easy as going to Staples and buying your supplies. People were trained in language but also the creation and preservation of documents. Peter was plenty intelligent: "Now when they saw the boldness of Peter and John, and perceived that they were uneducated, common men, they were astonished" (Acts 4:13). But as a fisherman he wasn't likely skilled in creating documents. This is also

²⁹ Craig S. Keener, *1 Peter*, 13.

³⁰ Craig S. Keener, *1 Peter*, 401.

³¹ Edmund P. Clowney, *The Message of 1 Peter*, BST (InterVarsity, 1988), 21.

true of Paul, who also used an amanuensis. Evident in places where he signs his name through a sentence like, “See with what large letters I am writing to you with my own hand” (Gal 6:11).

- c. Note on “Silvanus”: This is an alternate spelling for “Silas,” the companion of Paul who co-wrote 1–2 Thessalonians and who was a co-laborer with Paul in various parts of his 2nd missionary journey. He is sent from the Jerusalem Council with Paul in Acts 15:22 and is last mentioned in Acts 18:5. He’s with Paul throughout the 2nd missionary journey and is mentioned singing hymns with him at midnight in Philippi.

B. The author himself

1. One of the first apostles called (Matt. 4:18).
2. Outspoken: Matt. 14:28, “Lord, if it is You, command me to come to You on the water”; but also Matt. 16:16, “You are the Christ, the Son of the Living God.”
3. Part of Jesus’ inner circle of Peter, James, and John. These three are present with Jesus at the Transfiguration (Matt 17:1–8), which is significant because of 2 Peter 1:16–18:

16 For we did not follow cleverly devised myths when we made known to you the power and coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, but we were eyewitnesses of his majesty. 17 For when he received honor and glory from God the Father, and the voice was borne to him by the Majestic Glory, “This is my beloved Son, with whom I am well pleased,” 18 we ourselves heard this very voice borne from heaven, for we were with him on the holy mountain. (2 Pet 1:16-18)
4. Denied Christ three times (Matt. 26:58ff.) but he was fully restored by Christ (esp. John 21:15-17), and after he was filled with the Spirit proved fearless to authorities (Acts 4:19; 5:29-32). *It makes a difference when you are saved and filled with the Spirit!!!*
5. A leader in the early church: Acts 1:15, “Peter stood up and said...”; preaches the Pentecost sermon, Acts 2:17ff.; preaches the gospel to the first Gentile Cornelius in Acts 10-11.
6. Peter was outspoken and brash, but we should definitely not see him as unintelligent. He was a skillful orator and thoroughly immersed in the OT. His sermons in Acts (Acts 2, 3, 4, 10) reflect the same theological mind as evidenced in 1–2 Peter. Remember Acts 4:13, “Now when they saw the boldness of Peter and John, and perceived that they were uneducated, common men, they were astonished. And they recognized that they had been with Jesus.”
7. But...he was definitely NOT the first pope!!

- C. When did Peter write the book?
1. Dating depends on Nero's death (AD 68) and Peter's martyrdom during his reign (AD 67?).
 2. Keener holds to the view that 1 Peter is written by Peter during Nero's reign but doesn't get more specific than that (*1 Peter*, 30).
 3. If these are set then we need also to consider that Peter wrote two letters, ones which differ enough to think they weren't written close together.
 4. Carson says AD 62–63 because not enough time to write 2 Peter if later than this (*Introduction to the New Testament*).
 5. Doug Oss and Thomas Schreiner give a broader estimate of 64-67 (*ESV Study Bible*).
 6. **Edmund Clowney** (BST) says that because Paul does not mention Peter in connection with Rome and neither does Peter mention Paul, "it would seem that Peter wrote from Rome after Paul left, released from his first imprisonment in AD 62....The date of AD 63, after Paul's departure and before Nero's persecution, has a high degree of probability" (*The Message of 1 Peter*, 23).
 7. Mid 60s under Nero is the general era for both epistles.

III. Key Elements in 1 Peter

- A. Perspective on this life
1. Peter is honest about "suffering." The verb "suffer" (*paschō*) and noun "suffering" (*pathēma*) are used often in 1 Peter (1:11; 2:19, 20, 21, 23; 3:8, 14, 17; 4:1, 13, 15, 19; 5:1, 9, 10).
 2. Peter writes to us as "elect exiles of the Dispersion" (1:1), refers to this life as "your exile" (1:17), and he calls us "sojourners and exiles" (2:11). There is a practical side to this and a theological side.
 3. Peter helps us see in light of Christ's work.
 "Live as if Christ died yesterday, he rose this morning, and he's coming back tomorrow" – would reflect Peter's attitude.
- B. A theme in Peter's writing is the way he calls us to obedience but then gives us weighty reasons to obey:
1. Because we are called to this (1:2);
 2. Because we are commanded to in the Old Testament (e.g., 1:16) and in the New Testament (e.g., 2:17);
 3. Because of who we are ("you call on him as Father," 1:17; "as sojourners and exiles," 2:11);

4. Because of evangelism (2:12);
 5. Because of Christ's example (2:21-23);
 6. Because we have died to sin in order to live to righteousness (2:24);
 7. Because there is blessing in it (3:10-12);
 8. Because the time is short (4:7) and judgment is coming (4:5);
 9. Because of the glory of God (4:11).
- C. This time to another theme in 1 Peter and the New Testament: indicatives and imperatives.
1. Indicatives are statements (end with a period):
 2. Imperatives are commands (can end with an exclamation point).
 3. In the NT, indicatives are the basis of the imperatives, and the indicatives should always lead to imperatives.
 4. See this often in 1 Peter:

As he who called you is holy, you also be holy in all your conduct, since it is written, "You shall be holy, for I am holy." (1 Peter 1:15-16)

Servants, **be subject** to your masters with all respect, not only to the good and gentle but also to the unjust...²¹ **For** to this you have been called, **because Christ also suffered for you**, leaving you an example, so that you might follow in his steps.²² He committed no sin, neither was deceit found in his mouth. (2:18, 21-22)

Do not repay evil for evil or reviling for reviling, but on the contrary, bless, for to this you were called, **that you may** obtain a blessing. (1 Pet 3:9)

IV. Basic Outline (building around his indicatives and imperatives)

- A. (1:1–2) Greeting
- B. (1:3–2:10) As those called to a living hope, as living stones, as a chosen race, live obediently (*emphasis on indicatives*)

1:3–9 is one of the great statements in the Bible about what Christ has done for us.
- C. (2:11–3:12) Live obediently in light of being "sojourners and exiles" (2:11) that they may "see your good deeds and glorify God on the day of visitation" (2:12) (*emphasis on imperatives and the cross*)

11 Beloved, I urge you as sojourners and exiles to abstain from the passions of the flesh, which wage war against your soul. 12 Keep your conduct among the Gentiles honorable, so that when they speak against

you as evildoers, they may see your good deeds and glorify God on the day of visitation. (1 Pet 2:11-12)

- D. (3:13–5:11) Live obediently in light of the shortness of the time (*emphasis on imperatives and coming judgment*)

The end of all things is at hand; therefore be self-controlled and sober-minded for the sake of your prayers. (1 Pet 4:7)

- E. (5:12–14) Greetings and Peace

V. Detailed Outline of Peter

VI. (1:1-2) Greeting

VII. (1:3-2:10) As those called to a living hope, as living stones, as a chosen race, live obediently (*emphasis on indicatives, not imperatives*)

- A. (1:3-16) In light of being born again to a living hope, we are to be holy.
- B. (1:17-21) In light of calling God our Father and the imperishable blood that saved us, we are to walk in fear.
- C. (1:22-2:3) In light of the eternal word that regenerated us, we are to long for the pure milk of the word.
- D. (2:4-2:10) In light of being living stones in the spiritual house with Christ as the Cornerstone and who we've become, we are to "proclaim the excellencies of him who called you."

VIII. (2:11–3:12) Live obediently in light of being “sojourners and exiles” (2:11) that they may “see your good deeds and glorify God on the day of visitation” (2:12) (*emphasis on imperatives and the cross*)

- A. (2:11-12) THESIS FOR THE SECTION: As sojourners and exiles, keep your behavior excellent so that Gentiles will glorify God.
- B. (2:13-25) Following Christ's own example, Suffer well.
- C. (3:1-7) Following Christ's example, wives ought to be submissive, fearless, gracious, and modest to win your husbands; husbands are to honor and understand your wives so prayers unhindered.
- D. (3:8-12) Because of our calling (v. 9), “bless” others, that you may obtain a blessing, to which we were called—cites Ps 34:12–16.

IX. (3:13–5:11) Live obediently in light of the shortness of the time (*emphasis on imperatives and coming judgment*)

- A. (3:13-22) Because Christ died for our sins to bring us to God, we are to suffer well and give a defense (*apologia*) for the hope in us.

Christ after his resurrection (v. 18) “went and proclaimed to the spirits in prison” (v. 19) who were judged “in the days of Noah” (v. 20). Who are these “spirits in prison”?

4 views: (1) Christ went to hell (which we can reject, since he was with the Father upon death); (2) Christ was preaching *through* Noah (which we can reject, since Peter is speaking of something after the resurrection); (3) Christ was preaching to fallen angels imprisoned for their sins; (4) Christ was preaching to fallen angels *and* condemned people. Views 3 and 4 are possible, but view 3 seems best.

A good defender of this view is Thomas Schreiner who says: "The majority view among scholars today is that the text describes Christ's proclamation of victory and judgment over the evil angels."³² His reasoning:

- (1) the verbs for "went" in v. 18 and "has gone" in v. 22 aren't sufficiently captured by view #4 above;
- (2) "spirits" fits better with angels than disembodied souls (186);
- (3) "prison" fits better an angelic understanding, especially in light of Rev 20:7 adopting the same word. This occurs "after his death and resurrection" (188);
- (4) Gen 6:1-4 "may possibly provide the reason for the spirits' punishment: their sexual relations with women;
- (5) "This interpretation was standard in Jewish literature in Peter's day" and here he cites *1 Enoch, Jubilees*, some Targum (188). He acknowledges that "the greatest difficulty for such a view is the word 'preached'" (189) and the way his view empties of a literal meaning.

- B. (4:1-6) Live for the will of God to follow Christ's example (v. 1), and because of the coming judgment (vv. 5-6).
- C. (4:7-11) Pray, love, and serve others knowing the end is near (v. 7), and to glorify God through Christ (v. 11).
- D. (4:12-19) Suffer well, sharing Christ's sufferings (v. 13) and knowing that this is normal until Christ returns (v. 12).
- E. (5:1-4) Elders shepherd faithfully, knowing the Chief Shepherd is coming to give an "unfading crown of glory."
- F. (5:5-11) Be humble to receive grace and be exemplified; be alert because of the devil prowling; be firm in your faith for God will soon bless and perfect you in glory.

X. (5:12-14) Greetings and Peace

- A. (5:12-14a) Greetings (epistle is "by Silvanus"; greetings from "she who is at Babylon," and "Mark, my son").
- B. (5:14b) "Peace to all of you who are in Christ."

³² Thomas R. Schreiner, *1, 2 Peter, Jude*, NAC (B&H, 2003), 185.