**Introduction to 1 Peter**

**AUTHOR**

The apostle **Peter**, as stated in the salutation ([**1Pe 1:1**](https://www.blueletterbible.org/kjv/1pe/1/1)). Internal evidence supports Peter as the author, for it was written by one who was "a witness of the sufferings of Christ" ([**1Pe 5:1**](https://www.blueletterbible.org/kjv/1pe/5/1)). Early sources in church history that attribute this letter to Peter include Irenaeus (185 A.D.), Clement of Alexandria (200 A.D.), Tertullian (200 A.D.), and Eusebius (300 A.D.). Peter was assisted by **Silvanus**, also known as **Silas** ([**1Pe 5:12**](https://www.blueletterbible.org/kjv/1pe/5/12)), a well-known prophet and missionary in the early church (cf. [**Ac 15:32-34**](https://www.blueletterbible.org/Act/15/32-34)**,**[**40**](https://www.blueletterbible.org/Act/15/40)**;**[**16:19-25**](https://www.blueletterbible.org/Act/16/19-25)**;**[**17:14**](https://www.blueletterbible.org/Act/17/14)) who also joined with Paul in writing some of his epistles (cf. [**1 Th 1:1**](https://www.blueletterbible.org/1Th/1/1)**;**[**2 Th 1:1**](https://www.blueletterbible.org/2Th/1/1)).

**RECIPIENTS**

Peter refers to the recipients of his letter as "pilgrims of the Dispersion" ([**1Pe 1:1**](https://www.blueletterbible.org/kjv/1pe/1/1)). The term "Dispersion" is found in [Jn 7:35](https://www.blueletterbible.org/Jhn/7/35) and was used to describe Israelites who had been "scattered" following the Assyrian and Babylonian captivities (ca. 700-500 B.C.). This leads many to suppose that the epistle was written to Jewish Christians, as was the case of James' epistle (cf. [**Ja 1:1**](https://www.blueletterbible.org/Jam/1/1)). However, there is indication some of his readers were Gentile converts who had come to believe in God through Jesus (cf. [1Pe 1:21](https://www.blueletterbible.org/kjv/1pe/1/21)), and that Peter applies the term "dispersion" to Christians in general, just as he applied other designations to the church that were formerly applied to the nation of Israel (cf. [**1Pe 2:9-10**](https://www.blueletterbible.org/kjv/1pe/2/9-10)).

Peter's initial audience were **Christian "pilgrims"** (cf. [**1Pe 2:11**](https://www.blueletterbible.org/kjv/1pe/2/11)) who were living in Pontus, Galatia, Cappadocia, Asia, and Bithynia, provinces in what is now Turkey. Paul had traveled extensively in some of these areas (Bithynia a notable exception, cf. [**Ac 16:7**](https://www.blueletterbible.org/Act/16/7)), so the gospel had been given much opportunity to spread throughout the region.

**TIME AND PLACE OF WRITING**

It is generally accepted that Peter died during the reign of Nero. Since Nero committed suicide in 68 A.D., the epistle must be dated before then. A common view is the epistle was written on the eve of the Neronian persecution (perhaps alluded to in [**1Pe 4:12-19**](https://www.blueletterbible.org/kjv/1pe/4/12-19)), placing its composition around **63-64 A.D.**

Peter indicates he wrote from "Babylon" ([**1Pe 5:13**](https://www.blueletterbible.org/kjv/1pe/5/13)). It is questionable whether he refers to literal Babylon, or is using the name as a code word for Rome or perhaps even Jerusalem. Barnes, Lightfoot, and JFB (Jaimeson, Faussett, Brown) argue that literal Babylon is meant. Others (such as Kistemaker) point out that Mark (cf. [**1Pe 5:13**](https://www.blueletterbible.org/kjv/1pe/5/13)) had been in Rome with Paul during his first ([**Co 4:10**](https://www.blueletterbible.org/Col/4/10)) and second ([**2 Ti 4:11**](https://www.blueletterbible.org/2Ti/4/11)) imprisonment, and that Peter is linked to Rome by such writers as Papias (125 A.D.) and Irenaeus (185 A.D.). While possibly Rome (or even Jerusalem), I am content to say the epistle was written from **Babylon** (letting others debate whether it was literal Babylon or not).

**PURPOSE OF THE EPISTLE**

It is apparent from the epistle that Christians in Asia Minor had experienced persecution ([**1Pe 1:6**](https://www.blueletterbible.org/kjv/1pe/1/6)), and more suffering was on the way ([**1Pe 4:12-19**](https://www.blueletterbible.org/kjv/1pe/4/12-19)). Throughout the epistle Peter encourages them to remain steadfast ([**1Pe 1:13**](https://www.blueletterbible.org/kjv/1pe/1/13)**;**[**4:16**](https://www.blueletterbible.org/kjv/1pe/4/16)**;**[**5:8,9**](https://www.blueletterbible.org/1Pe/5/8-9)). He reminds them of their blessings and duties that are incumbent upon them as God's "elect" ([**1Pe 1:2**](https://www.blueletterbible.org/kjv/1pe/1/2)), "His own special people" ([**1Pe 2:9**](https://www.blueletterbible.org/kjv/1pe/2/9)). Therefore, Peter writes:

* **To encourage steadfastness in the face of persecution (**[**1Pe 5:10**](https://www.blueletterbible.org/kjv/1pe/5/10)**)**
* **To remind them of their special privilege as God's "holy nation" (**[**1Pe 2:9**](https://www.blueletterbible.org/kjv/1pe/2/9)**)**
* **To instruct them as to their proper conduct (**[**1Pe 2:11-12**](https://www.blueletterbible.org/kjv/1pe/2/11-12)**)**

**THEME OF THE EPISTLE**

The epistle is filled with practical admonitions concerning their conduct, especially as sojourners in a hostile land. They are told how to behave in the midst of those who speak evil of them, who abuse them, who do not believe their message, simply because they are Christians. An appropriate them for this epistle might therefore be:

**"CONDUCT BECOMING THE PEOPLE OF GOD"**

**KEY VERSES:**[**1 Peter 2:11-12**](https://www.blueletterbible.org/1Pe/2/11-12)

**"Beloved, I beg you as sojourners and pilgrims, abstain from fleshly lusts which war against the soul, having your conduct honorable among the Gentiles, that when they speak against you as evildoers, they may, by your good works which they observe, glorify God in the day of visitation."**