

1 Peter

- 1. Who was the author? Where was the author at the time of writing?** The author is God; the writer is the apostle Peter as clearly established in verse 1 of this letter. Peter closes this letter sending greetings from “Babylon.” This clearly seems to be a code word explaining the spiritual state of the actual location from which Peter was writing. Two possible explanations would be Rome or Jerusalem. The context of the letter (dealing with the sufferings of the church throughout the Roman provinces) along with tradition that Peter died in Rome in AD 64 makes me lean toward Rome as the probable location of this writing.
- 2. Who were the original recipients?** The recipients are Christians who dwelt in the five Roman provinces of Pontus, Galatia, Cappadocia, Asia and Bythina. Though these Christians lived there, Peter says they were aliens in that place. This should be true of all Christians in this world. Like the faithful of old, this world is not our home – see Hebrews 11:8-10, 14-16. Our citizenship is in heaven (Philippians 3:20), and we are no longer a part of this world – see Colossians 1:13, John 17:14-18, 1 John 3:1,13. Later in 1 Peter 2:11, we are urged as aliens and strangers to abstain from fleshly lusts which wage war against the soul. Compare with Ephesians 2:19 -- though we are strangers and aliens in this world, we are no longer strangers and aliens in God's kingdom.
- 3. What connection or history did the writer and recipients have?** There is no clear Scriptural connection that we have between Peter and the Christians residing in these areas. The records of Peter in the book of Acts shows his work still primarily in Jerusalem. However, traditional church history maintains that Peter ended up in Rome as an elder in that congregation -- see 1 Peter 5:1. At Rome he met his death at the hands of Nero, being crucified upside down. Certainly it is possible that Peter would have had some personal interaction with the Christians of these Roman provinces, and he was definitely qualified to write preparing them for the persecutions to come. Even if he had no personal acquaintance with these saints, Peter was willing to write to encourage "those who have received a faith of the same kind as ours" (2 Peter 1:1).
- 4. What is the overall theme?** The overall theme is to encourage the saints to stand faithfully in the midst of sufferings for Christ's name -- see 1 Peter 4:12-13, 5:8-10. Jesus Himself showed that the road to glory is paved with suffering -- see Hebrews 5:7-8. Jesus' life on earth demonstrated that to get the crown, you must go through the cross. The apostle Peter reminds us that Jesus is our example (1 Peter 2:21-24), and that the outcome of our suffering results in the perfection of our character (1 Peter 4:1). These points are consistent with the teachings of the entire New Testament -- see 2 Timothy 3:12, Romans 8:36, James 1:2-4.
- 5. What difficulties might the recipients be facing?** The recipients of the letter could expect to be facing persecutions primarily from the Romans in the years to come. There were the immediate persecutions under Nero, along with the ones that would come under Domitian, Trajan, and many more in the next two centuries. For example, under the

Emperor Trajan, Pliny the Younger was sent to Bithynia around A.D. 100. Pliny put many Christians to death for their "obstinacy and unbending perversity", but wondered what he should do with those who said they were no longer Christians. Trajan responded that those who renounced their Christian faith should be spared, but those who persisted should be punished.

6. What behaviors are recommended by the author that would be noticed most by unbelievers? Peter commands the Christian to keep his behavior excellent among the Gentiles -- 1 Peter 2:12. The result of this good behavior may be the salvation of the Gentiles (1 Peter 2:12) or at least silence the unbeliever (1 Peter 2:15) or bring shame upon the nonChristian (1 Peter 3:16). Some of the particular behaviors mentioned by Peter include:

- a. general holiness -- 1:15
- b. love of the brethren -- 1:22, 4:8
- c. submission to earthly authority -- 2:13-17
- d. wives' submission to their husbands -- 3:1-2
- e. husbands' showing honor to their wives -- 3:7
- f. returning good rather than evil -- 3:9
- g. keeping a good conscience -- 3:16
- h. hospitality without complaint -- 4:9
- i. service of others for God's glory -- 4:10-11
- j. rejoicing even in suffering -- 4:13
- k. humble attitude -- 5:5-6
- l. sober spirit -- 1:13, 5:8

7. What may the modern Christian apply from this letter? As previously discussed, we can obviously learn to rejoice in our sufferings, and we can show Christ to the Gentiles through our good behavior. In addition to that we can learn among other things:

- a. we have an imperishable inheritance reserved in heaven -- 1:4
- b. the outcome of our faith is the salvation of our souls -- 1:9
- c. to fix our hope completely on the grace to be brought at the revelation of Jesus Christ -- 1:13
- d. that the word of God is living, eternal, and it is how we are born again -- 1:23-25
- e. we are a chosen race, a holy priesthood, a holy nation, and a people for God's own possession -- 2:9
- f. Jesus died that we might die to sin and live to righteousness -- 2:24
- g. the Lord hears the prayers of the righteous -- 3:12
- h. to sanctify Christ as Lord in our hearts, ready to make a defense -- 3:15
- i. immersion saves us through the resurrection of Christ -- 3:21
- j. he who has suffered in the flesh has ceased from sin -- 4:1
- k. the world will give an account to the Judge -- 4:5
- l. entrust ourselves to a faithful Creator in doing what is right -- 4:19
- m. leadership by example -- 5:3
- n. humble ourselves and God will exalt us -- 5:6
- o. cast our anxiety on the Lord -- 5:7
- p. resist the devil, firm in our faith -- 5:9