

1 PETER

(All exegeses by David Bartlett unless otherwise noted.)

- 1) -- The writing sounds like Paul. If written by Peter, he would have needed a translator for he was a Galilean fisherman, unlikely to speak Greek, and the letter was written in Greek. Peter may have written it from Rome with Silas's help. In fact, in 5:12 it clearly states that Silas did help. Catholic doctrine places Peter in Rome, passing on his primacy (given him by Jesus) to successive bishops of Rome up to the present Pope.
/// Against Peter as author: 1) When OT is quoted, it is from the (Septuagint – LXX, written in Greek. 2) When “Peter” uses his own name, it is the Greek form, whereas when Paul wrote to the Gentiles, he used the Aramaic “Cephas.” /// Dating the letter, Bartlett (NIB) believes it to be c. 90 CE, making it unlikely to be by Peter, more likely by Silvanus (Silas).
/// Paul Achtmeier: the letter is permeated by a governing metaphor: the image of the church as Israel. One example: just as Israel (God’s people) was exiled in Babylon, so also the recipients of this letter are exiles in Asia Minor (see 1:1 and note). It is generally accepted that the “exiles” are natives in their lands but are metaphysically “exiled” by their pagan neighbors who don’t understand why the Christians have forsaken their religious roots.
- 2) 1:1 -- Almost all of modern Turkey. NAB: “exiles of the dispersion;” in many translations, “sojourners; in the NIV: “strangers.” This probably does *not* refer to the Diaspora brought on by the Greeks and then the Romans, because the majority of the recipients of the letter were Gentiles. Most scholars believe it means that all Christians are “exiled” because they are separated for a time from their eternal home. Language about exile in 1 Peter seems to show an analogy between the Christians of Asia Minor and the Jews who had been exiled to Babylon in the Sixth century BCE.
- 3) 1:2 – God elected the exiles *from the beginning* to be sanctified by the Spirit to be obedient to Jesus. This is not a fully developed doctrine of the Trinity but it does show a three-fold understanding of the way in which God acts. The gift of his blood probably recalls Leviticus 16 where Aaron is to slaughter a bull and a goat and sprinkle their blood on the mercy seat in the sanctuary, because of the uncleanness of the Israelites. /// “Peace” here is the Greek translation of the Hebrew “shalom,” connoting not only peace but health and well-being.
- 4) 1:3-5 – The Greek for “new birth” is the only place in the NT when it’s used, although “born again” is found in John 2:3,5,7; Titus 3:5 and James 13:18 (the last one a bit of a stretch!). A clear parallel between the new birth of Christians’ and Jesus’ resurrection: both move from death to life. God’s promises are stored in heaven +but also God will some day be manifest on earth to the whole creation.
- 5) 1:6 – The nature of the trials is not known, but is more likely local harassment rather than systematic imperial persecution.
- 6) 1:7 – Their faith is tested by suffering. (JB: God purposely sends suffering to test faith?)
- 7) 1:8-11 -- Bartlett: “The prophets” are of the OT. Anachronistically, Christ’s own spirit spoke to them, either because the Holy Spirit cannot be separated from the Spirit of Christ, or, because Christ was pre-existent in the spirit to the prophets, “bearing witness to himself long before his earthly ministry.”
- 8) 1:22 -- The first “love” is *philadelphia*, love of the brethren. The second “love” is *agapao*, love for one another.
- 9) 1:23 -- Only here is “born anew” used. In John 3:3&7 the phrase is “born from above.” “Born

again” is not used in many modern translations. But the original Greek “anathema” can be translated either way.

- 10) 2:2-4 -- The same word in Greek as is translated in Ps 42:1, "pangs for." The quote “taste the Lord” is from Isa 34:8a. “Living stone” is from Ps 118:22 – “the stone that the builders rejected...”
- 11) 2: 21-25 -- The writer quotes from Isaiah 53:4-12, but in jumbled order: 4-9-7-12-5-6. Recalls Mark 14:53-61, where Jesus is silent before false accusation, and Mark 15:19, where Jesus is silent before taunters.
- 12) 3:9 -- Echoing Jesus in Luke 6:27-28, as Paul does in Rom 12:17, 1 Thess 5:15.
- 13) 3:14b -- Both the NIV and NRSV translate this, “Do not fear what they fear, and do not be intimidated,” which comes from Isa 8:12-13, where the prophet is told to take his cue from faith and not public opinion.
- 14) 3:18-21 -- **One of the most difficult passages in the Bible.** This passage, plus 4:6, were the basis for the second century (and on) belief that Jesus “descended into Hell,” after his death and before his resurrection. Hell (Sheol in Hebrew, Hades in Greek) then was not a place of eternal damnation but a resting place for all dead souls; there was no place for them to go until Jesus came. Archibald Hunter, **Interpreters' Bible**: Christ descended to Hades between his crucifixion and resurrection. This is where he was during those 36 hours. Hades was considered partly as a place of punishment and partly as an intermediate state. The "imprisoned spirits" were those of the rebellious generation who died in the flood (Gen 6:12ff). This then became a **tradition** of the church: in Acts 2:27 Peter applies to Jesus Psalm 16:10, "for you will not abandon me to Sheol, etc." (Cf. Also, Ps 107:13-16.) Jesus himself in Luke 4:17-18 applied to his own ministry Isaiah 61:1 (the servant is sent to proclaim liberty to the captives).
Bartlett, **New Interpreters' Bible**: The meaning is unclear and may never be resolved. Three explanations: 1) Before his incarnation, Jesus preached to the disobedient people of Noah's time. 2) Between his death and resurrection, Jesus *ascended* to the realm of the wicked angels who are mentioned in Genesis 6:2-6 (sons of God mating with mortal women) as forerunners of the wicked of Noah's time. 3) Same as Hunter's interpretation above. Mormons believe that Jesus went to Central America and recited the entire Bible to the natives, even the New Testament which hadn't been written yet.
- 15) 4:6 – May be the souls who perished in the Flood (1 Peter 3:19). Or, the Christians who died since hearing the gospel preached (Mormons' belief). In Dante's *Inferno*, Canto 4, **all** of those who were born before Christ were on the edge of Hell, not suffering except from boredom, in “limbo,” waiting.
- 16) 4:12-13 --The "fiery ordeal" may refer to a) Prov 27:21 -- "fire is the trial for gold and silver" -- so that the fiery trial here would then just be a metaphor for their faith being tested by "the refining fire," or b) to the Roman persecution which began with Domitian in 81 AD and lasted for about 200 years; in this case, the reference to Babylon (Rome – see note #16) in 5:13 may indicate that the epistle was written during the Domitian persecution, or even much later. /// Dr. Leonhard Goppelt thinks that this means that Christians **need to suffer**. (JB: I couldn't disagree more.) The suffering at this time was not physical, but insult, slander, and accusation. Though at the time of Pliny he executed everyone who admitted to being Christian.
- 17) 4:17-18 -- Not actually from the OT, but see Prov 11:31, which has it inverted. /// Time here is *kairos*, a significant moment. Whereas “*chronos*” is the time of day.

- 18) 4:19 -- Bartlett: God does not will each person's suffering, but when suffering comes, it provides the opportunity for us to live according to God's will, in trust and in doing good. /// No one should take these verses to mean that we should *seek* suffering in a misguided attempt to imitate Christ. As suffering came to Christ unbidden, so it will to us. /// The only place in the NT where God is called "Creator."
- 19) 5:1 -- May be taken as proof that it really was Peter who wrote this letter. The "glory" may be a reference to his presence at the transfiguration.
- 20) 5:7 -- Not found in the original Greek, "but nicely catches the theological balance anyway."
- 21) 5:13 -- There was no church at Babylon for Babylon no longer existed. Peter (?) was probably referring to Rome, using the old Biblical device of naming a bygone persecutor to discreetly name a present enemy. But on the other hand, Rome was not persecuting the Christians yet (before 64 when Peter died), except for Nero's short and localized action. The enemy before the destruction of the Temple in 70 AD was the Jewish priesthood.