

# 1 Peter BRI

## Author:

Peter (1:1). He says he was a witness to Jesus' sufferings (5:1), which points towards the apostle Peter. 1 Clement (95 AD) accepted it as authentic. Echoes in Polycarp's epistle to the Philippians (ca 135 AD), Papias (60-130 AD) Epistle of Barnabas (ca 135) and in Justin Martyr (ca 150). 2 Pet 3:1 most likely refers to 1 Peter. Unanimously accepted as Petrine by all of the fathers who mention it by name, beginning by Irenaeus (ca. 170).

## Date:

- "To the exiles in dispersion" (1:1), "the time of your exile" (1:17), "as aliens and exiles" (2:11), during a time of suffering (1:6, 11, 2:19-23, 3:13, 17-18, 4:1, 13-16, 19, 5:1, 9). Probably during a time of persecution, and in that case most probably the Neronian persecution during 64-68 AD. He does not mention any dying, which could mean that this was written during the early years of this persecution. Tradition says that Peter died in 64 AD and agree that it was written in the beginning of this persecution (3:13), perhaps in 63 AD. It may have started in Rome already, while the situation was uncertain elsewhere.
- Written between the point when Silvanus left Paul and before Mark rejoined him, if the same people. 1 Thess 1:1, 2 Cor 1:19, Col 4:10, 2 Tim 4:11. Silvanus was with Paul in Corinth in the early 50s, and Mark probably rejoined him right before Paul's death.
- Arguments against:
  - No official persecution took place during Peter's lifetime. But there still were persecutions.
  - It echoes some of Paul's teaching.
  - The quality of the Greek seems too refined for a Galilean fisherman. But 5:12 mentions Silvanus/Silas. He was a former associate of Paul and may have played a role completing this letter. Perhaps we even can say that the ideas came from Peter, but the design from Silvanus. And he was still a coworker of both Paul and Peter, so it would still be considered "apostolic".

## Recipients:

To the exiles of the dispersion in Pontus, Galatia, Cappadocia, Asia and Bithynia (1:1), which are places in northern and western Asia Minor, places that Paul may not have visited. The order may reflect the route taken by the mailman. Reference to exiles/aliens (1:17, 2:11), brothers (1:22, 3:8), OT references (1:24, 2:6-8, 10, 22, 3:10-12, 4:18, 5:5b), past wild lifestyle (4:3-4), "not a people" (2:10). Seems to be written to Gentiles (1:14, 18, 2:9-10, 4:3-4), who all were "no people" and had a bad lifestyle before they became Christians. But who still had some OT knowledge, or there were also Jews among them.

## Place:

Mentions a "sister church in Babylon" (5:13). Probably not Mesopotamian Babylon, where there was a large Jewish settlement in Peter's day, as it is too much of a coincidence that Mark and Silvanus should happen to be there at the same time. And no other sources indicate that Peter ever went to the original Babylon. The Babylon in Egypt near Alexandria was a military depot, so it's probably not that either. It is more likely that Babylon means Rome, as it does in Revelation.

**Historical situation:**

Bad lifestyle typical of Gentiles (4:3-4), encouragement to conduct themselves honorably among them (2:12), relationship between slaves and masters (2:18), adornment outwardly with hair, gold and clothes (3:3). This seems to be a pagan culture which includes idolatry, Roman and Greek gods and goddesses, emperor worship, mystery religions, control by spiritual powers, philosophy, asceticism and immorality, like the culture of Ephesus and Colossae. They were perhaps about to be persecuted by Nero, and, for no reason, killed and tortured in the circus. But more likely not persecution by the government but from people around them, according to the internal evidence. He asks them to obey the authorities, because they do good, while the people seem to ridicule them and slander them. Therefore it does not have to be written during 64-68.

**When were the churches founded?**

1:12 could mean they had not been evangelized by Peter himself. Some of them perhaps on Paul's journeys (Galatia 46-48, Asia 52-57). The others were probably not founded by Paul and could have been founded by Peter after the Jerusalem council in AD 49, by those present in Jerusalem at Pentecost or by others (1:12). So they were founded at Pentecost or between 49-64.

**Who makes up the church?**

Both Jews and Gentiles, but probably more Gentiles. Mentions households and slaves (2:18 - 3:7), young and old (2:2, 5:1).

**Strengths:**

Not seen Jesus, but love him anyway and have faith in him (1:8), obedience to the truth, love one another (1:22).

**Weaknesses:**

Involved in unholy practice (1:14-17), malice, guile, insincerity, envy and slander (2:1), possibly not submitting to authorities (2:13-17), slaves are not submissive (2:18-19), the women conform to the culture around them (3:3), the husbands are not honoring their wives (3:7), disunity, not love, pride (3:8-9), perhaps not proper relations between leaders and the rest (5:2-5).

**Main idea:**

Be encouraged in suffering, have the eternal perspective and always live godly. A commentary on Matt 5:10 - "Blessed are those who are persecuted for righteousness' sake, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven."