



Presenting Peter
Who is this man called Peter? WEEK 13: Legends & Legacy of Peter

Wednesday Night Crew Summer Series Presenting PETER: A study in Mark and the Letters of Peter
Come Join Pastor Orleen and the Wednesday Night Crew this Summer beginning 6/9th

Who is this man whom Jesus Loved&Corrected&Taught&Trusted & Rebuked & Gave the Leadership of His Church to?

WEEK #1: Power in a name: Simon Peter. Social, Economic, Family Culture. What was it like to live life in Peter’s neighborhood? What did this Family Culture ADD to the nascent, embryonic, incipient Church?

WEEK #2: Peter in the Gospels – The Confession “LORD, I am a sinful man!” & Walking with Jesus – Confessing Him as Messiah

WEEK #3: The Passover, The Prophecy & The Reinstatement

WEEK #4: Matthais, Pentecost, Abuse: Ananias & Sapphira

WEEK #5: PETER IN LEADERSHIP – Samaritan Pentecost, Gentile Pentecost (Cornelius), The Council of Jerusalem

WEEK #6: Pastor Peter #1 – An EYE witness to the GRACE of God. Expect trials. How to live the Gospel.

Week #7: The Discipline of Suffering

Week 8: The Family of God

Week 9: Priesthood of Believers

Week 10: Submission

Week 11: 1 Peter—his 1st last letter. If you’re dying, trying to share your most important thoughts, what would you say? Let’s hear what Peter says...

Week 12: 2 Peter 3-the Eschatology of Peter

Week 13: Concluding Peter: extra-biblical sources and legends.

WEEK #13

The Legends and Legacy of Peter

Matthew 16:19

“I will give you the keys of the kingdom of heaven, and whatever you bind on earth is already bound in heaven, and whatever you loose on earth is already loosed in heaven.”

- Written to the house churches in the 5 Roman provinces of Asia Minor (Turkey)
- From Rome at the end of his life after Paul had left (Released from his first imprisonment in AD 62).

Purpose of the letter:

- Peter already ‘wrote’ his witness of the life of Jesus Christ in the Gospel of Mark through John Mark.
- In the epistle (letter), knowledge of the story of Jesus is assumed – It is NOT the Gospel of Mark rewritten.
- Instruct the church in the **apostolic interpretation of the gospel**. (Like Paul)
- **What we seen. What we heard. What we knew. What we did.**

This is how Peter “Fed the Sheep”

1. Shared his testimony. (**Peter’s testimony** against the background of his own experience as Christ’s disciple.)
2. Connected the **Old Testament promises** to Christ. (with which the letter is saturated.)
3. Outlined the apostolic **faith (Faith in action is trusting God’s word)** like Paul and other authors of the New Testament.
4. Outlined application into The Hellenistic world in which his hearers lived. (**Understood the culture**)
Our job is to take these timeless truths and apply to our world.

Peter eye witnesses to the Grace of God

Peter is moving US with the Five House Churches and infusing OUR mindset of WHO WE are as a Believer in Christ Jesus with:

- What we’ve seen.**
- What we’ve heard.**
- What we’ve known.**
- What we’ve done.**

Legacy & Legend – How does that affect us?



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I. LEGACY:

Peter understood persecution:

A. Shown in the Content of 1 Peter –

Persecution from – Nero – Probably not (or not only) &/OR Friends, Family, Colleagues.

1. Nero persecution = only to the Christians living in Rome. It was not an empire-wide affair.
2. The church of 1 Peter, however, live not in Rome but in the provinces of Asia Minor = 5 House churches.
3. Moreover, the Christians persecuted by Nero were not actually condemned for being Christians; they were condemned for the crime of arson (even though the charges were false).
4. The recipients of 1 Peter, on the other hand, are said to **suffer reproach for the sake of Christ** (4: 14). *If you are ridiculed for the name of Christ, you are blessed, because the Spirit of glory and of God rests on you.*

5. Persecution from no longer living as they used to:

1 Peter 4: 3–5 *For there has already been enough time spent in doing what the pagans choose to do: carrying on in unrestrained behavior, evil desires, drunkenness, orgies, carousing, and lawless idolatry. ⁴ So they are surprised that you don't plunge with them into the same flood of wild living—and they slander you. ⁵ They will give an account to the One who stands ready to judge the living and the dead.*

6. Finally, this author does not condemn the state officials for any harsh treatment of the Christians. On the contrary, he appears to think that the government is set up to reward those who behave well and to punish only those who disobey the laws

1 Peter 2: 13–14 *Submit to every human authority because of the Lord, whether to the Emperor^l as the supreme authority ¹⁴ or to governors as those sent out by him to punish those who do what is evil and to praise those who do what is good.*

“The author goes out of his way to emphasize that even though his readers are going through suffering and can expect more to come, they are highly privileged. When they abandoned their former social worlds, they joined a new family of faith by being born anew (1: 3, 23), so God himself is now their Father (1: 14, 17). As a result, they can pride themselves in being the chosen people (2: 9), special in the world because they alone have been made holy by the Spirit and have been the beneficiaries of Christ's death (1: 2, 19).”

“for it is clear that the Christians to whom it is addressed are undergoing considerable suffering for their Christian faith and that the author thinks yet more suffering is in store for them. It is interesting to note that the term suffering occurs more often in this short five-chapter book than in any other work of the New Testament, including the books of Luke and Acts combined, which take up one-fourth of the entire New Testament. What is this suffering that the readers are experiencing?”

— Peter, Paul and Mary Magdalene: The Followers of Jesus in History and Legend by Bart D. Ehrman



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B. Shown in His death

Book of 1 Clement (extrabiblical source)

“Because of unjust jealousy Peter bore up under hardships not just once or twice, but many times; and having thus borne his witness [or “having been martyred”] he went to the place of glory that he deserved. And a hundred years later Tertullian speaks of Peter enduring “a passion like the Lord’s” – possible referring to the tradition that Peter was crucified.”

— **Peter, Paul and Mary Magdalene: The Followers of Jesus in History and Legend by Bart D. Ehrman**

“This became the firm tradition of later times, that Peter, along with his companion apostle Paul, had been martyred during the persecution by the emperor Nero. According to this tradition Peter’s death came by crucifixion, and in a rather bizarre manner: he had been crucified upside down, with his head to the ground. This tradition is later reported in Eusebius, who says that “Peter came to Rome where he was crucified, head downward at his own request” (Church History, 3, 1).“

— **Peter, Paul and Mary Magdalene: The Followers of Jesus in History and Legend by Bart D. Ehrman**

Ruling prefect, Agrippa, had concubines that, after committing their lives to Christ, would not have sexual relationship with him. And the wife of Albinus, Agrippa’s friend, refuses as well so they go after Peter in retaliation.

EXTRA: His intelligence – History remembers the “literary elite” — Peter, Paul and Mary Magdalene: The Followers of Jesus in History and Legend by Bart D. Ehrman

- Could Peter write?
- What languages did he speak?
- What are signs of intelligence today?
- What happens when we confuse popular accomplishments with intelligence?

II. LEGEND:

A. Extrabiblical Sources

[Using Peter’s name to support their own errant beliefs.]

- **Clementine’s Writings** (not to be mistaken for the church father Clement)

The Clementine Homilies (20 sermons) & The Clementine Recognitions (10 volumes).

Believe they go back to one original source edited by two different authors.

Both indicate that Clement and Peter journeyed together around the Mediterranean.

However, Clement purports that Peter and Paul are enemy’s and that Peter espouses that Believers must keep the Law.

- **Letter of Peter to James** –

1. Using Peter’s name to qualify their own views of:

pro/con **Docetism**

[the doctrine, important in Gnosticism, that Christ’s body was not human but either a phantasm or of real but celestial substance, and that therefore his sufferings were only apparent] and/or pro/con

Gnosticism



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[a prominent heretical movement of the 2nd-century Christian Church, partly of pre-Christian origin. Gnostic doctrine taught that the world was created and ruled by a lesser divinity, the demiurge, and that Christ was an emissary of the remote supreme divine being, esoteric(secret, cult) knowledge (gnosis) of whom enabled the redemption of the human spirit].

- a. Gnosticism is a collection of religious ideas and systems which originated in the late 1st century AD among Jewish and early Christian sects. These various groups emphasized personal spiritual knowledge above the orthodox teachings, traditions, and authority of traditional religious institutions.
- b. Gnosticism is the belief that **human beings contain a piece of God (the highest good or a divine spark) within themselves**, which has fallen from the immaterial world into the bodies of humans. All physical matter is subject to decay, rotting, and death.
- c. **by the conviction that matter is evil and that emancipation comes through gnosis(knowledge).**

- **Gospel of Peter** – Contained teaching that appeared long after Peter’s death.

Anti – Judiasm sentiment. Docetic Christology.

Gnostic undertones

- **Coptic Apocalypse of Peter – Letter of Peter to Philip – Apocalypse of Peter**

So too with other writings in Peter’s name: the **Coptic Apocalypse of Peter** and the **Letter of Peter to Philip**, both of them

- discovered near Nag Hammadi.
- Gnostic

- **Apocalypse of Peter**

Peter is given a guided tour of heaven and hell, was accepted by some Christians as authentically by Peter, but rejected by others as too bizarre to have come from him. Modern scholars are unanimous in thinking that none of these writings could have actually been written by Peter himself.

For one thing, all of them contain teachings that appear to have arisen long after Peter’s death, in the second century. This is true, for example, of the heightened anti-Judaism of the Gospel of Peter or the Gnostic understanding of the Coptic Apocalypse of Peter.”

— **Peter, Paul and Mary Magdalene: The Followers of Jesus in History and Legend** by Bart D. Ehrman

“Throughout our discussion we have constantly asked why Christian storytellers would tell the accounts of Peter’s life the way they did. In the account of his death, there seem to be numerous lessons conveyed by the narrative. On the most basic level, **Peter is finally able to redeem himself for the act of unfaithfulness at Jesus’ arrest and trial: now, true to his word, he does go to death with Jesus.** Moreover, he goes not kicking and screaming but rejoicing and praising God. This is an important lesson, no doubt, for Christians in the second and third centuries, who were themselves sometimes captured by the authorities and confronted with painful tortures and death. And then there is the key point made by Peter himself, hanging upside down on his cross: **this world and its values are not to be embraced, for God’s ways are not our ways and his views are not ours.** We must realign our views to realize that what most people seek and long for in this



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world is to be shunned. We must avoid the passions of this world and forsake its longings. Only then will we understand our true human nature and be prepared to enter the world that God has prepared for his people.”

— **Peter, Paul and Mary Magdalene: The Followers of Jesus in History and Legend by Bart D. Ehrman**

B. Bishop Peter

Was Peter the first Pope?

Who was the first leader of the nascent church?

When did the ‘belief’ that Peter was the first Bishop arise?

Other churches outside of Rome that connected with Peter:

“If Peter was Jesus’ chief disciple and the first to affirm his resurrection, then any church that could claim him as their own would obviously improve its status in the eyes of the Christian world at large.”

— **Peter, Paul and Mary Magdalene: The Followers of Jesus in History and Legend by Bart D. Ehrman**

PETER MAKES US POPULAR

What we know:

- Peter did take charge after Jesus’ resurrection.
- Began the mission to convert others (Acts 2:14-40).
- Paul called Peter one of the pillars of the Jerusalem church, along with John and James (JC Brother) (Galatians 2:9).
- James took over the sole leadership of the Jerusalem church (first Bishop) as supported by the writings of the 2nd Century author Clement of Alexandria.
Peter, Paul and Mary Magdalene: The Followers of Jesus in History and Legend by Bart D. Ehrman
“Peter as Bishop”. (he quotes Eusebius)
- Antioch – Peter and Paul argue over whether you can eat with Gentiles (Gal 2:11-14). Traditions supports Peter was the 1st Bishop here. (Eusebius)
- Corinth – Paul’s letter to them references the group who are loyal to Peter. Indicating his ‘popularity’.
- Jerusalem, Antioch(Syria), Corinth = 3 largest churches in the first 2 centuries!
Peter is connected to all three.
- The apostle Mark (who wrote the Gospel of Mark from Peter’s words) established the large church in Alexandria, Egypt. Peter’s follower and secretary. Large church #4.
- #5 – Rome. Who started this church – unknown. First Bishop = Linus. Appointed by Peter and Paul. (Irenaeus) Eusebius states that Linus was appointed after Peter was the first Bishop and Clement was the 3rd Bishop. Tertullian states Clement was the 1st Bishop of Rome. Paul writes in 50ad indicating there were no Bishops in any of the churches.



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- Peter could not have been the first Bishop of Rome because the church did not have anyone as its bishop until about 100 years after Peter's death.

WHY DOES THIS MATTER?

- When we want scripture or Christian history to support our ideal.
SUCH AS: Peter as our first leader to give us leverage/status. Do we do this today?
- When it is needed for us to perpetuate a belief we are using to set us apart from other believers.
- When we need scripture or Christian history to 'support' a belief we are using to set us apart from other believers.
SUCH AS:
That unless you are baptized in the Spirit w/evidence of speaking in tongues you do not have a mature relationship with Christ. Are you 'really' a Christian?

Peter's example is now our mantra
Peter is calling out to us to SPEAK to SHARE to LIVE:

What I have seen is:

What I have heard is:

What I do know is:

What I have done is:



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NoTES:

What can we learn from Peter's life? Here are a few lessons:

Jesus overcomes fear. Whether stepping out of a boat onto a tossing sea or stepping across the threshold of a Gentile home for the first time, Peter found courage in following Christ. "There is no fear in love. But perfect love drives out fear" (1 John 4:18).

Jesus forgives unfaithfulness. After he had boasted of his fidelity, Peter fervently denied the Lord three times. It seemed that Peter had burned his bridges, but Jesus lovingly rebuilt them and restored Peter to service. Peter was a *former* failure, but, with Jesus, failure is not the end. "If we are faithless, he will remain faithful, for he cannot disown himself" (2 Timothy 2:13).

Jesus patiently teaches. Over and over, Peter needed correction, and the Lord gave it with patience, firmness, and love. The Master Teacher looks for students willing to learn. "I will instruct you and teach you in the way you should go" (Psalm 32:8).

Jesus sees us as He intends us to be. The very first time they met, Jesus called Simon "Peter." The rough and reckless fisherman was, in Jesus' eyes, a firm and faithful rock. "He who began a good work in you will carry it on to completion" (Philippians 1:6).

Jesus uses unlikely heroes. Peter was a fisherman from Galilee, but Jesus called him to be a fisher of men (Luke 5:10). Because Peter was willing to leave all he had to follow Jesus, God used him in great ways. As Peter preached, people were amazed at his boldness because he was "unschooled" and "ordinary." But then they took note that Peter "had been with Jesus" (Acts 4:13). Being with Jesus makes all the difference.¹

The Life of Peter

Peter's life was dramatically changed after the resurrection, and he occupied a central role in the early church and in the spread of the gospel to the Samaritans and Gentiles (Acts 2–10). After the Jerusalem Council in Acts 15, little is recorded of Peter's activities. He evidently traveled extensively with his wife (1 Cor. 9:5) and ministered in various Roman provinces. According to tradition, Peter was crucified upside down in Rome sometime prior to the death of Nero in A.D. 68.

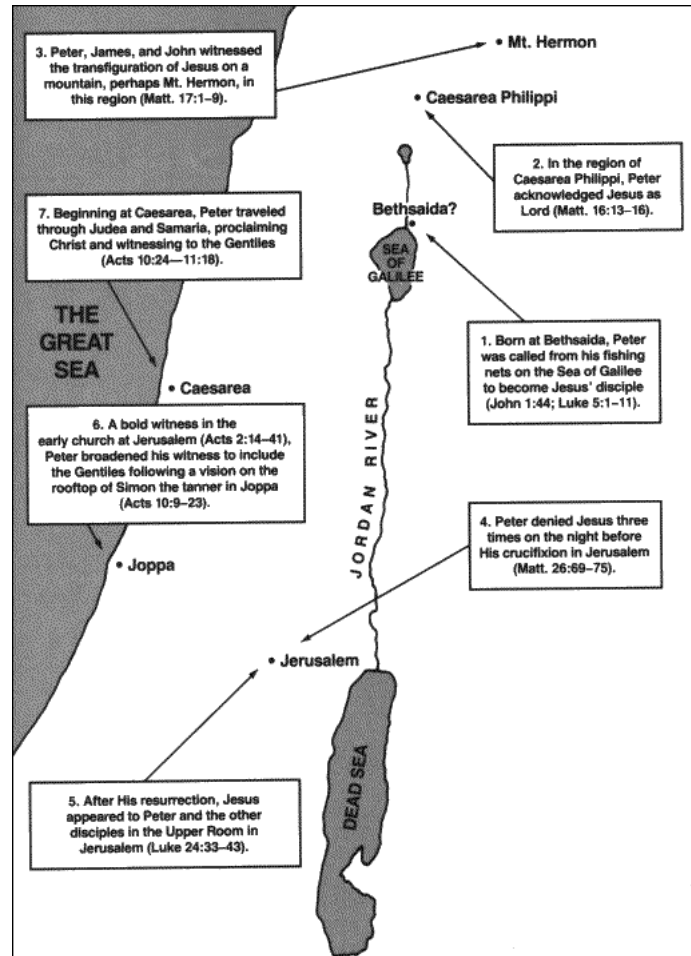
The Life of Peter

¹ Got Questions Ministries. (2002–2013). [*Got Questions? Bible Questions Answered.*](#) Bellingham, WA: Logos Bible Software.



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2

The persecution of Christians by the emperor Nero. As we know from Roman historians, Nero wanted to implement some architectural designs for the city of Rome but was hampered by the fact that Rome already was built (Tacitus, *Annals of Rome*, 15). And so he arranged for arsonists to burn down parts of the city in the great fire of 64 CE, leaving many thousands homeless. When the populace came to suspect Nero for the fire, the emperor decided to blame someone else and lit upon the Christians as easy scapegoats, since they were already hated so widely. He had Christians "rounded up and publicly tortured and killed on charges of arson. This is the first recorded instance of a Roman emperor persecuting the Christians.

There are reasons to think, however, that 1 Peter is not referring to the suffering of Christians under Nero. For one thing, this persecution extended only to the Christians living in Rome. It was not an empire-wide affair. The recipients of the letter of 1 Peter, however, live not in Rome but in the provinces of Asia Minor. Moreover, the Christians persecuted by Nero were not actually condemned

² Thomas Nelson Publishers. (1996). *Nelson's complete book of Bible maps & charts: Old and New Testaments* (Rev. and updated ed.). Nashville, TN: Thomas Nelson.



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for being Christians; they were condemned for the crime of arson (even though the charges were false). The recipients of 1 Peter, on the other hand, are said to suffer reproach for the sake of Christ (4: 14). In addition, their suffering is not caused by imperial authorities but is occurring on the grassroots level, as former friends (and family members?) have become upset that they no longer participate in the religious and civic life of their communities, but have started their own closed social group instead (4: 3–5). Finally, this author does not condemn the state officials for any harsh treatment of the Christians. On the contrary, he appears to think that the government is set up to reward those who behave well and to punish only those who disobey the laws (2: 13–14). The situation of the readers, therefore, is not one of official persecution by the state. These people are suffering because they are under attack from former friends and colleagues who cannot understand why they have changed their views and taken to participating in a new and possibly secretive society of Christians. The author urges his readers to face their suffering strongly, since they are to suffer as their master, Christ himself, did (4: 13). Relatedly, he insists that they should suffer not for doing anything wrong, but only for doing what is right. That is to say, they should not break the law or do anything else that would justify punishment. Then, if they suffer simply for being Christian, they can hold their heads high as those who suffer unjustly. That is probably why the author urges them to live moral, upright lives (3: 14–17; 4: 14–15): they are to show the world that despite the suspicions against them, they are upstanding citizens who benefit, not harm, society by their presence. The author appears to hope that honorable, moral behavior by the Christians will win others over to the faith (2: 11; 3: 1). The followers of Christ are not to be antisocial, but must be willing to explain their behavior, and their faith, to anyone who asks (2: 13–15; 3: 15–17).”

“The author goes out of his way to emphasize that even though his readers are going through suffering and can expect more to come, they are highly privileged. When they abandoned their former social worlds, they joined a new family of faith by being born anew (1: 3, 23), so God himself is now their Father (1: 14, 17). As a result, they can pride themselves in being the chosen people (2: 9), special in the world because they alone have been made holy by the Spirit and have been the beneficiaries of Christ’s death (1: 2, 19).”

— Peter, Paul and Mary Magdalene: The Followers of Jesus in History and Legend by Bart D. Ehrman

Appendix B

Living rock, living water

In the Old Testament, ‘Rock’ is a divine name. In the wilderness at Massah-Meribah, Israel accused God of covenant-breaking, of abandoning them to die of thirst. God responded to the charges by standing trial. The elders of the people were summoned to pass before the congregation. Moses took in his hand the rod of judgment. In this formal setting, God stood before Moses upon the rock. As though he were indeed guilty, he received in symbol the blow of Moses’ rod. Moses struck the rock on which God stood, the Rock with which God was identified by his name as well as his position. For this reason Paul identifies the Rock with Christ.²

From the Rock that Moses struck, water flowed to bring life to Israel. God had presented himself as the source of the water of life as well as of the bread of heaven. That symbol was continued in the Old Testament prophets with the image of the stream of living water flowing from the temple of God’s dwelling, founded on the rock. Jesus not only presented himself as the source of living water to the Samaritan woman; he also stood up in the temple during the feast



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of tabernacles to call people to come and drink from him.⁴ John reminds us of the fulfilment of the scriptural image of the waters flowing from the heart of God. For John the water that flowed from the spear-thrust on the cross was a symbol of the water of life from the smitten rock. While we cannot assume that Peter is suggesting John's theme of living water when he speaks of Christ as the living rock, we may at least recognize the richness of the adjective for the apostle. If the living water from the rock was in view, it might account for the easy transition that Peter makes from the figure of drinking and tasting to that of the Rock.

Appendix C

The office of elder in the New Testament

The eldership in the New Testament church was not a fresh institution. It was carried forward from the Old Testament organization of the people of God. Luke makes frequent mention of the elders of Israel, and introduces, without further description, the elders of the church at Jerusalem to whom relief offerings were brought. Eldership in Israel had for its background the prestige and authority of older men in a patriarchal society. The Old Testament speaks of elders in ancient Egypt and in other nations.² We find Abraham's servant described as 'the elder of his house, that ruled over all that he had'.

At the time of the exodus the 'elders of Israel' formed a definite body of men whose authority was recognized. In Egypt the ordinance of the passover was given to Israel through the elders.⁵ The institution of elders in Israel was sealed with God's approval. Heeding the advice of Jethro, his father-in-law, Moses structured the government of Israel by appointing judges to govern groups from ten to a thousand, with referral of more important cases. Moses himself, as spokesman for the law of God, served as 'chief justice'. Among the thousands of judges appointed under this system, seventy were singled out as the elders of the nation, to represent all the people, much as the elders of a tribe or city would represent their constituency.

Seventy elders were summoned to the feast of God's covenant in Mount Sinai; there, with Moses and the chief priests, they were granted a vision of God. Later they were filled with God's Spirit and prophesied.³ Prophecy was not a permanent gift, but a sign of God's recognition and approval of their representative office. The elders were not prophets 'like Moses', or teaching priests. Their function was administration and judgment. Yet the possibility of more highly endowed elders is suggested in the sign that confirmed their authority: 'I wish that all the Lord's people were prophets and that the Lord would put his Spirit on them!'

The elders often represented the people in political or religious activity. Moses gathered the *elders* and spoke to the *people*. On behalf of the people the elders asked for a king⁶ and entered into covenant. Moses and Joshua associated the elders with them in a governing council.⁸ We read of elders of the land, of cities, of Judah, and of Israel. In exile, the elders provided continuing order for the community.¹⁰

Following the exile an aristocratic nobility seems to have continued the functions of a national eldership in Israel. In Ezra and Nehemiah lists of nobles who are 'heads of fathers' houses' are given.¹² The system of local city elders appears to have continued. The roots of the Sanhedrin 'council of elders' reach back into the Persian period. In the Sanhedrin at the time of Christ, lay



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nobles (in distinction from both the priests and the scribes) had a seat and a voice.¹⁴ Each Jewish community had its council of elders or ‘presbytery’. Luke describes the officials who accosted Christ in the temple as ‘the chief priests and the scribes with the elders’.¹⁶ Scribes, as learned in the law, could be distinguished from the elders, or included among them.

Christ’s fulfilment of the sacrificial system in his priestly work ended the priestly office among the people of God, but government by elders continued. Jesus’ disclosure of the new structure of the church under apostolic authority teaches continuity as well as renewal. It is *his* church, but ‘church’ is an Old Testament term: the assembly of the people of God. He gives the keys of the kingdom of heaven, but the binding and loosing process is already familiar in the doctrinal and ethical discipline of the eldership in the synagogue. The process of discipline described in Matthew 18:15–20 corresponds closely to synagogue procedure.

Paul distinguishes the gift of rule from the gift of teaching in passages where office is defined in terms of function. Administrators as well as teachers served the church. It would appear that the ‘scribes of the kingdom’ of whom Jesus spoke were recognized as specially gifted elders whose work was preaching and teaching.⁵ At the same time, Paul had to ask the Corinthian church to appoint judges so that financial suits would not be carried before heathen civil courts. Presumably the rich endowment of spiritual gifts at Corinth had so equipped the elders with teaching gifts that none were concerned to adjudicate financial disputes.

By referring to the task of elders as shepherding, Peter emphasizes the ruling aspect of their calling. At the same time, the figure itself suggests the teaching ministry committed to elders of the church.³

A Comparison of 1 and 2 Peter

1 Peter	2 Peter
Theme: Hope in the midst of suffering	Theme: The danger of false teaching and practices
Christology: The sufferings of Christ for our salvation and example at His incarnation	Christology: The glory of Christ and the consummation of history at His return
The day of salvation when Christ suffered, died and rose from the dead	The day of the Lord when Christ returns in judgment
Redemptive title: Christ	Title of dominion: Lord
Be encouraged in your present trials	Be warned of eschatological judgment

³ Clowney, E. P. (1988). *The message of 1 Peter: the way of the cross* (pp. 230–234). Leicester, England; Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press.



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We need hope to face our trials

We need full knowledge to face error

Numerous similarities to Paul
(especially Ephesians and Colossians)

Almost identical similarities to Jude
(compare 2 Peter 2 with Jude 4–18)⁴

PETER, FIRST LETTER OF The first of two New Testament letters attributed to the Apostle Peter; encourages Christians to maintain hope while suffering.

The intended recipients of 1 Peter appear to have been facing significant hardships as a result of social and governmental opposition to their faith in Christ (1 Pet 2:19–20; 3:14–17; 4:16; 19). The author advises believers to endure suffering, following the example of Christ (1 Pet 2:21).

Outline of 1 Peter

- 1:1–2—Letter opening
 - 1:1—Identification of author and recipients
 - 1:2—Blessing
- 1:3–5:11—Letter body
- 1:3–2:12—Body section 1: Salvation, admonition, and encouragement
 - 1:3–9—Reminder that hope is based on Jesus' resurrection; new birth and subsequent inheritance will be gained when Jesus returns
 - 1:6–9—Reminder that trials will come, proving faith and leading to glory
 - 1:10–12—Reminder that prophets foretold salvation, suffering, and the resulting glory
 - 1:13–16—Christians should control their minds to conform to holiness
 - 1:17–21—Reminder that God judges impartially, Christ saves
 - 1:22–2:3—Reminder that obedience leads to love
 - 2:4–10—Reminder that Christians are chosen as God's people and built into a spiritual house
 - 2:11–12—Christians should be an example that will shame those who are attempting to shame them
- 2:13–3:12—Body section 2: Guidance to submit
 - 2:13–17—Christians should submit to authority
 - 2:18–25—Christians should submit to masters as Christ submitted to God and endured the harsh treatment of His persecutors
 - 3:1–6—Wives should submit to husbands and demonstrate inner beauty
 - 3:7—Husbands should be considerate of their wives
 - 3:8–12—Relationships ought to be mutually loving, compassionate, and blessed
- 3:13–4:19—Body section 3: Suffering
 - 3:13–17—Christians are advised to suffer for doing good and to answer accusers respectfully
 - 3:18–22—Baptism symbolizes that Christ's death brings people to God
 - 4:1–6—Christians should prepare for suffering and behave separate from evil society
 - 4:7–11—Christians should be united as a group
 - 4:12–19—Christians should expect and rejoice in suffering
- 5:1–11—Body section 4: Exhortation
 - 5:1–4—Elders are advised to lead in a Christ-like manner
 - 5:5a—Young people are advised to give heed to such leadership
 - 5:5b–11—Christians should be humble and cast their cares upon God
- 5:12–14—Letter closing

⁴ Thomas Nelson Publishers. (1996). *Nelson's complete book of Bible maps & charts: Old and New Testaments* (Rev. and updated ed.). Nashville, TN: Thomas Nelson.



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- 5:12—Identification of amanuensis (writing assistant) or courier, encouragement
- 5:13–14—Place of writing, greeting, and blessing

Composition

Author

The author identifies himself as “Peter” (Πέτρος, *Petros*) and claims the title of apostle (1 Pet 1:1). The Apostle Peter (Matt 10:2) also was known as Simon (Matt 4:18) and as Cephas, son of John (John 1:42). Irenaeus links Peter with this letter (Schutter, *Hermeneutic and Composition*, 4).

Although 1 Peter is commonly attributed to Peter, some scholars have proposed that there were multiple authors:

- Elliot argues for compilation from a Petrine school (Elliott, *1 Peter: A New Translation*, 34–40, 127–30).
- Horrell believes that 1 Peter is a “consolidation of early Christian traditions” (Horrell, “A Reassessment,” 29–60).

Theories such as these attempt to overcome the following common concerns regarding the traditional acceptance of Peter as the author.

Pseudonym. Beare, Best, and Goppelt argue that 1 Peter was authored under a pseudonym, or false name (Beare, *The First Epistle of Peter*; Best, *1 Peter*; Goppelt, *Der erste Petrusbrief*). However, Robinson argues that the common motivation for using a pseudonym—to borrow authority or credibility—is not necessary in 1 Peter, because the letter does not address theological controversy (Robinson, *Redating the New Testament*, 186–88). Steenberg argues that pseudepigraphical books typically include polemical and apologetic terminology, which is not prevalent in 1 Peter (Steenberg, “The Reversal of Roles,” 50).

Furthermore, the logical pseudonym to use would have been Paul, not Peter, as the letter is filled with characteristically Pauline theology, vocabulary, literary features, and themes; it also is addressed to Pauline churches.

Language. The Greek employed in this letter surpasses the apparent skills of someone like Peter, whose native language was not Greek and who is described as being “not well educated” (Acts 4:13 CEV). However, Steenberg argues that “being Galilean implied bilinguality” (Steenberg, “The Reversal of Roles,” 54), and Peter’s work in both Antioch and Rome might have allowed him to become competent in Greek (Grudem, *The First Epistle of Peter*, 26–30; Moulton & Howard, *A Grammar of New Testament Greek*, 25–26). Furthermore, Dalton, Davids, and Elliot propose that Peter could have been influenced by reading Paul’s letter to the Romans, which bears an earlier date (Dalton, *Christ’s Proclamation to the Spirits*, 87; Davids, *The First Epistle of Peter*, 5–6).

Interaction with Jesus. Kümmel argues that, with the exception of 1 Pet 5:1, the letter bears no signs that the author had personal interaction with Jesus (Kümmel, *Introduction to the New Testament*, 29–34). Given Peter’s inclusion in Jesus’ inner circle (along with James and John),



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this lack of first-hand material runs contrary to what might be reasonably expected. However, 1 Peter does demonstrate extensive usage of sayings of Jesus:

Saying of Jesus	Usage in 1 Peter
Matt 5:10; Luke 6:22	1 Pet 3:14
Matt 5:11	1 Pet 4:14a
Matt 5:12	1 Pet 1:8; 1 Pet 4:13
Matt 5:16	1 Pet 2:12
Luke 6:28	1 Pet 3:9; 1 Pet 3:16
Luke 6:32–34	1 Pet 2:19–20

Amanuensis (Writing Assistant). In 1 Peter 5:12, the author writes, “By Silvanus ... I have written briefly to you” (ESV). According to Robinson, this statement implies that Silvanus acted as a scribe (Robinson, *Redating the New Testament*). Alternatively, Michaels argues that Silvanus acted as the letter’s courier (Michaels, *1 Peter*, lxii).

The Apostle Silvanus—whom Acts calls Silas—worked with Paul (e.g., Acts 15:39–41; 16:19–32; 17:4–15) and apparently coauthored at least two letters with him (1 Thess 1:1; 2 Thess 1:1). Silvanus’ potential involvement in writing 1 Peter could account for several issues, including:

- The use of the Septuagint (the Greek Bible) rather than Hebrew sources and the Targum (Aramaic translation of the Hebrew Bible), which would have been more familiar to Peter.
- The letter’s terminology, which is reminiscent of Paul’s (Schutter, *Hermeneutic and Composition*, 5–6).
- The lack of autobiographical material about Peter.

Date

If Peter is accepted as the letter’s author, it would preclude a date after Nero’s reign (AD 54–68), as early church tradition holds that Peter died while Nero was emperor. However, if Peter is not accepted as the author, a date after AD 70 is preferred due to the prevalence of persecution at that time. Two additional factors may influence the date:

1. Type of suffering—Suffering caused by government persecution, rather than simply social persecution, would support a date after AD 70.
2. Ecclesiastical development—First Peter 5:1–5 mentions elder leadership, which may have developed over time. However, Acts reports rapid growth and an ecclesiastical structure early in the life of the Church (e.g., Acts 2:41; Acts 6).

Recipients



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First Peter is addressed to the “people who are scattered like foreigners in Pontus, Galatia, Cappadocia, Asia, and Bithynia” (1 Pet 1:1b CEV). The word “scattered” could refer specifically to Jewish believers or to Christians in general, including Gentiles. First Peter 2:9, which describes the readers as “God’s chosen and special people ... a group of royal priests and a holy nation” (CEV), may support a Jewish audience. However, two other passages may reflect a Gentile audience:

1. “You were rescued from the useless way of life that you learned from your ancestors” (1 Pet 1:18 CEV).
2. “Once you were nobody. Now you are God’s people. At one time no one had pity on you. Now God has treated you with kindness” (1 Pet 2:10 CEV).

Since the epistle is addressed to diverse locations, both Jews and Gentiles probably read or heard the letter. Steenberg and Bechtler argue that the places mentioned in the salutation are known to have accommodated both Jews and Gentiles (Steenberg, “The Reversal of Roles,” 24; Betchler, “Following in His Steps,” 134).

Central Theme: Hope Amid Persecution

First Peter addresses people who are experiencing suffering, likely due to persecution by the government or social pressure.

In its references to Jesus’ crucifixion, the letter emphasizes shame, mockery, and negative societal pronouncements more than physical pain. This may reflect that first-century Mediterranean societies often considered social humiliation worse than physical suffering. The letter’s addressees likely faced societal hatred in the form of verbal attacks, humiliation, and insults (Truex, “God’s Spiritual House,” 187). Likely reasons for societal persecution of Christians include the following (Steenberg, “The Reversal of Roles,” 97–98):

- Christian wives and slaves exhibited independence in choosing to become Christians apart from the *pater potestas*—the right of the father over the other members of the household. This went against Roman societal norms.
 - Betchler argues that Christianity was perceived as a superstition (Betchler, “Following in His Steps,” 106–07). This is attested in ancient works including the writings of Suetonius, Nero’s *The Twelve Caesars* 16.2, Tacitus’ *The Annals of Imperial Rome* 15.44, and Pliny the Younger’s letter.
- Misinterpretation of texts such as 1 Pet 5:14 and 1 Thess 5:26 caused perceptions that Christianity promoted sexual immorality.
- Christianity was perceived as cannibalistic based on the communion formula (“eat, this is My body,” Matt 26:26 CEV; Benko, *Pagan Rome*, 53–78).
- Christianity was equated to magic because of miracles and similarities with travelling magicians (Benko, *Pagan Rome*, 53–78).
- Christianity was seen by some as atheistic because pagan societies viewed Jesus a person, not a deity.
- Christianity rejected society’s gods and did not worship state gods.
- Christianity proselytized, which was unheard of in the ancient world (Goodman, *Mission and Conversion*, 20–37).



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Paschke argues that 1 Peter 5:8 refers to Roman *ad bestias* executions—in which people were fed to wild animals—suggesting that the readers suffered from governmental persecution (Paschke, “The Roman *ad bestias* Execution,” 489–500). Christian contact with Roman officials was often negative (Acts 13:14, 14:5; 16:20; 18:12–13). Likely reasons for governmental persecution include the following:

- Christians were accused of causing riots and civil unrest.
- Christians refused to participate in emperor worship, which may have been looked upon as treason.
- Christians viewed God as a higher authority than the emperor. Since the emperor was deified, the Romans expected people to view him as equal to the gods, not inferior.
- The Christian’s eschatological worldview stated that all things were coming to an end. This might have been perceived as a threat to the Roman Empire.

The author of 1 Peter offers several strategies that can help believers endure persecution and suffering:

- The letter provides believers with a new identity in Christ (Gupta, “A Spiritual House,” 76). The recipients are to see themselves as “living stones,” a “spiritual house,” and a group of “holy priests” (2:5). Horrell offers an in-depth discussion of the term Χριστιανός (*Christianos*, “Christian”), which 4:16 uses a label for the believers (Horrell, “The Label Χριστιανος, *Christiauos*,” 361–81). Although at one time they were “nobody,” they now are “God’s chosen and special people ... a holy nation” (2:9–10 CEV). This holy status implies God’s approval of them (1:15).
- The author calls on believers to stand together in solidarity. They need to agree, share concern for one another, and love each other (1:22; 3:8). Solidarity is to be fostered by hospitality (4:8–9), and their close relationships are to be shown by warm greetings with a kiss (5:14).
- The letter instructs its recipients to adopt an eschatological perspective, which provides hope that their suffering will be replaced with glory (1:7; 5:1, 4; 10). In this light, the author can advise the persecuted Christians to look at their suffering as a source of joy and gladness (1:6; 4:13).
- The author encourages the believers to live without fault, so any charges brought against them will be baseless (2:12–15; 1:14).
- The author reminds the recipients that God will bless and protect them (2:19–20; 1:5; 2:25). He also encourages them to trust that God’s judgment is just and fair (4:19; 2:23; 1:17).

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PIERRE F. STEENBERG

PETER, SECOND LETTER OF Attributed to Peter, the disciple of Jesus. Second Peter is often overlooked by New Testament readers for several reasons, including its brevity, lack of notable themes, difficult style, and debates over its reception in church history. However, 2 Peter adds to the New Testament in its reminders and warnings to Christians, and it acts as a bridge between the apostolic and postapostolic eras.

Introduction

Though it is often overlooked, the Second Letter of Peter makes several significant contributions to the New Testament. Some of the most central are contained in the book's two rhetorical arguments: warning its readers of the destructive power of false teachers (2:1–22) and—in the face of growing skepticism—reminding Christians that someday, Christ will return (3:8–10). It contains two memorable statements: a proverb that encapsulates the sad legacy of false teachers (2:22) and a description of the end of times (3:10).

Outline of 2 Peter

Second Peter develops along a multipart rhetorical structure that can serve as a useful outline for the book. There are numerous different outlines for 2 Peter, though there is a growing recognition of the role of rhetoric in the development of the New Testament texts. Rhetoric



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played a significant role in the ancient world, whether formally developed or informally picked up in passing and utilized. While most likely informal in nature, there are three or four major rhetorical movements in the structure of 2 Peter (compare Watson, *Invention*, 81–146), following the very brief letter opener (1:1–2):

- Opening Challenge (1:3–15). Here, 2 Peter reminds its readers of their divine nature as Christians and calls them to remember this in the times ahead (1:3–4). An important subsection here is the testimonial of Peter, moving from a localized, divine word to a universal, prophetic word included to bolster confidence (1:16–21).
- Argument A: Against False Teachers (2:1–22). This section of 2 Peter is a warning against the influence of false teachers who will tempt the faithful (2:1–2). Second Peter spends a significant amount of time highlighting the danger of false teachers (2:10b–22). The section concludes this section with an illustrative proverb (2:22). There is a break between Argument A and Argument B, created by the proverb in 2:22 and a brief return to the letter level of the book in 3:1.
- Argument B: Against Scoffers (3:1–13). Argument B is a shorter argument section than Argument A and is directed as a warning against scoffers who will question the coming of Jesus (3:4). The author offers a couple lines of apology for keeping faith in Christ's return (3:5–10) and concludes with a likely rhetorical question of how Christians are to wait for this return (3:11–12).
- Closing Reminder (3:14–18). Second Peter concludes with a final challenge to be pure and to resist false teachings as Christians wait anxiously for Christ's return (3:14, 17–18). There is also an aside about Paul (3:15–17), offered as an evidence of the evil of false teachers and scoffers. A final blessing concludes the letter (3:18).

Literary Form and Style

Debate continues over whether the form and style of 2 Peter is more closely related to New Testament texts or to texts of the postapostolic era. In this debate, much depends on how stylistically uniform one expects the different New Testament texts to be. Early church and most modern scholars conclude the form and style are more reasonably linked with the New Testament than postapostolic church writings or pseudepigraphal texts from the Petrine corpus (compare Bauckham, *Jude, 2 Peter*, 149–51). The form and style of 2 Peter is marked by three major elements: a rhetorical structure, regular use of more Hellenized language forms, and an ornate style.

Genre & Structure

Second Peter appears at first glance to be a letter—however, once past the opening and closing statements, the remainder of the document appears to be more than a simple letter (1:1–2; 3:17–18). It is possible that 2 Peter is more appropriately a *testament* or *farewell speech* (Bauckham, *Jude, 2 Peter*, 131–35). However, comparisons of 2 Peter with examples of testaments from the ancient world are not always convincing (Mathews, *Genre*). Perhaps more importantly, 2 Peter is marked by a discernible rhetorical structure. When one compares the form of 2 Peter with guidelines for Graeco-Roman rhetoric, it is likely the author of 2 Peter framed the text's arguments using a rhetorical strategy—though this could mean either that



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the author had some degree of formal training in rhetoric or it could mean that the author appropriated rhetorical ideas from the culture at large (Watson, *Invention*, 189).

Language

Second Peter contains instances of *hapax legomena* (words that only appear once in any given book) in a much greater percentage than any other New Testament book (Bigg, *Epistles of St. Peter and St. Jude*, 224). Since some of the *hapax legomena* probably originate from an unusually formal context for a New Testament book, this has led to speculation that the language of 2 Peter is too different from the remainder of the New Testament and belongs more to the world of the second century (Kraftchick, *Jude, 2 Peter*, 75). There are two problems with this argument: first, it is impossible to say that the author of 2 Peter could not have used these words and ideas in the late first century (this being in keeping with the conclusions of the canonical discussion); and second, while *hapax legomena* are interesting lexical specimens, critics tend to grant them more weight than other comparable linguistic features. A few other types of stylistic devices used in 2 Peter (for example, repetitions, rhyme and meter, hendiadys) are not frequently found in other New Testament texts.

Another question that has been raised regarding the style of 2 Peter is the use of Greek thought-ideas. For example, 2 Pet 1:4 explains that Christians take part in the “divine nature,” using a phrase echoing Hellenistic philosophy and theology. At a minimum, it seems the author was conversant with the greater world of Greek thought—a possibility that is thought to conflict with the traditional view of the earliest Christians as uneducated Jews.

Style

While there is not a clear consensus on the writing style of 2 Peter—some readers see 2 Peter as highly crafted, while others see 2 Peter as flawed and disjointed—the author of 2 Peter tended toward ornate style in the text. This style is commonly referred to as the Asiatic style (in contrast to the Attic style(s)—often signified by simple, concise wording), and was coming in vogue in the Graeco-Roman world at the end of the first century and beginning of the second century. The challenge for readers today is that this ornate style comes across as congested and hard to read, which sometimes discourages the reading and use of 2 Peter.

Authorship

Church tradition holds Peter, the disciple of Jesus, to be the originator of 2 Peter, but modern scholarship typically treats the book as pseudonymous. While there are problems with linking 2 Peter to the Apostle Peter, there are greater problems with treating the book as a pseudepigraphical work. There are also a number of theories that have been proposed to find a third way between the two primary options.

Internal Evidences for Authorship

A significant number of internal evidences point to Peter as the originator of 2 Peter. The letter opens with the identifier, “Simeon Peter, a slave and apostle of Jesus Christ” (1:1). In the Greek, the name of Peter appears with the name Simeon as a transliteration of the Hebraic שִׁמְעוֹן (shim'on), šim'ôn instead of simply as the much more common Greek form, Simon (Σίμων, Simōn, Simōn). With such a bold assertion of authorship, there appears to be only two options:



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either the letter did originate with the apostle (Schreiner, *1, 2 Peter, Jude*, 259–60) or it was added by someone else to make the letter seem more authentic (Fornberg, *Early Church*, 10). While ancient people did not malign pseudepigraphy as much as modern people, it was still not considered good practice for important documents. Second Peter contains several of these authenticating references; for example, it speaks of the death of Peter (1:14), of Peter's eyewitness in general to the work of Jesus (1:19), of Peter's eyewitness to specific events like the Transfiguration (1:16–18), of Peter's collegiality with Paul (3:15), and of Peter's personal chiding of Paul (3:16). Since these evidences of a link between the text and the apostle are embedded in the rhetorical structure of the document, they should not be quickly dismissed. Nevertheless, many scholars treat the letter as pseudonymous (Kraftchick, *Jude, 2 Peter*, 75–76).

Against these favorable internal evidences, there are a few internal evidences that point away from Petrine authorship. The most prominent of these is the Hellenistic-flavored, Asiatic-style of the letter. Second Peter uses Greek ideas in a colorful way that would be unexpected of a man from Galilee in the mid-first century. Another concern is the heavy relationship between the text of 2 Peter and Jude. If the Apostle Peter wrote 2 Peter, it seems improbable that he would borrow heavily from another source (assuming 2 Peter uses Jude). A final, unfavorable evidence against Peter as the author is the differences in style and vocabulary between 1 Peter and 2 Peter. However, style evidence is of limited value since there are only two possible Petrine texts to compare and contrast (Kruger, "The Authenticity of 2 Peter," 658).

External Evidences for Authorship

There are possible allusions to 2 Peter in a number of documents and writers, including *1 & 2 Clement*, *The Shepherd of Hermas*, *Epistle of Barnabas*, *Martyrdom of Polycarp*, Ignatius of Antioch (circa AD 50–117), Justin Martyr (circa 100–165), Irenaeus (circa 175–195), Theophilus of Antioch (circa 120–185), Melito of Sardis (second century AD), and Hippolytus (circa 160–236), though the evidence is not particularly strong for most of these (compare Picirilli, "Allusions to 2 Peter"). The most likely reference to 2 Peter in the subapostolic era is *Letter of Barnabas* 15.4, citing 2 Pet 3:8 (compare Irenaeus, *Adversus Haereses* 5.23.1). In addition, Clement of Alexandria (circa 155–220), Origen (circa 185–254), Firmilian (circa 200–269), Eusebius (circa 260–340), and Athanasius (circa 295–373) refer to 2 Peter directly.

Jerome's Solution

Jerome (circa AD 345–419) was the first to write in a critical way about the authorship problems of 2 Peter, and he proposed a third solution. Jerome recognized the stylistic and syntactical differences between 1 and 2 Peter. His solution was that both letters originated with Peter but were developed by different aids or secretaries (Jerome, *Letter to Hedibia* 120; *Quaest.* 11). A possible adaptation of this theory is that a secretary wrote one and Peter wrote the other with his own hand. Variations of this proposal have circulated since Jerome's writing.

Date

There is little consensus on the date of 2 Peter, with estimates ranging from mid-first century to mid-second century AD. The date of the writing of 2 Peter largely hinges on one's view of its authorship. If the Apostle Peter wrote the letter, then a date in the late 60s is most plausible.



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Tradition holds Peter was martyred under Nero in Rome in the late 60s (e.g., Schreiner, *1, 2 Peter, Jude*, 276). If one views the letter as pseudonymous but related to Peter—written by a secretary, agent, or follower—then a date of AD 80–90 is more reasonable (Bauckham, *Jude, 2 Peter*, 149–51). If one views 2 Peter as pseudonymous and not directly related to the historical Peter, then suggested dates can range as late as AD 150, though more likely AD 110–125 (e.g., Cranfield, *1 & 2 Peter and Jude*).

Proposed dates stretching later into the second century have since faded in popularity, and there are several lines of evidence that argue for a first-century date:

- Relationships with Non-Canonical Documents. The dating of early, pseudepigraphical documents that rely on 2 Peter—such as the *Apocalypse of Peter* (early second century AD)—limit a late dating to early second century at the latest.
- Mocking of Christians about the Return of Christ. Second Peter 3:4 notes that opponents of the faith will chide Christians as a result of the first apostolic generation dying out before the expected return of Christ. This is not a concern anywhere else in second-century writings, and would logically be a concern only in the latter half of the first century (Bauckham, *ANRW*, 3741–42).

Reception

2 Peter's reception was one of the more contested of all New Testament books. During the period when the canon was formed, 2 Peter was considered one of the disputed (antilegomena) books, mostly due to questions over authorship. While early modern biblical scholars tended to doubt that 2 Peter was known in the early church, modern scholars mostly lean toward 2 Peter being known and accepted in the post-apostolic period (compare Gilmour, *Significance of Parallels*). It is possible—though speculative—that Clement of Alexandria wrote a commentary on 2 Peter (Eusebius, *Ecclesiastical History* 6.14.1). Only four writers of the early church mention the reception of 2 Peter in a meaningful way:

- Origen. Origen was the first to discuss the reception of 2 Peter. While he points out that 2 Peter was doubted in some places (Eusebius, *Ecclesiastical History* 6.25.11), elsewhere Origen appears to side with those who believe 2 Peter was canonical (Origen, *Hom. Josh.* 7.1). Additional evidence of Origen's positive verdict is that he referenced 2 Peter six times in his works.
- Eusebius. Eusebius argued that 2 Peter was disputed and that he himself had doubts about its authenticity, and his comments have possessed a great deal of staying power on the reception of 2 Peter down through the centuries. He wrote:

“Of Peter, one epistle, known as his first, is accepted, and this the early fathers quoted freely, as undoubtedly genuine, in their own writings. But the second Petrine epistle we have been taught to regard as uncanonical; many, however, have thought it valuable and have honored it with a place among the other Scriptures. On the other hand, in the case of the “Acts” attributed to him, the “Gospel” that bear his name, the “Preaching” called his, and the so-called “Revelation,” we have no reason at all to include these among the traditional catholic Scriptures, for neither in early days nor in our own has any church writer made use of their testimony ... These then are the works attributed to Peter, of which I have recognized only one



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epistle as authentic and accepted by the early fathers” (Eusebius, *Ecclesiastical History* 3.3.1–4; 3.25.3–4).

- Cyril of Jerusalem. In his *Catechetical Lectures* (circa AD 350), Cyril refers to the standard seven catholic letters, which would include 2 Peter.
- Athanasius. In his Paschal Letter of 367, Athanasius mentions 2 Peter alongside 1 Peter. Subsequent to this, the church at large has received 2 Peter as canonical. It was accepted at Hippo (393) and Carthage (397).

During the Reformation period, Erasmus (1466–1536), Luther (1483–1546), and Calvin (1509–1564) all looked down on it to some degree.

Chart of the Historical Reception of 2 Peter

This chart offers a visual image of the process of the reception of 2 Peter. Whether or not 2 Peter was included may not be indicative of how the compiler felt about 2 Peter’s inclusion in the canon; the purpose is to show general trends in reception. (An asterisk [*] means inclusion is suspect)

Source	Date	Inclusion
Marcion	ca. 150	No
Muratorian Fragment	ca. 170	No
Irenaeus	ca. 180	Yes*
Clement of Alexandria	ca. 210	Disputed
Origen	ca. 240	Yes*
Eusebius	ca. 330	No
Cyril of Jerusalem	ca. 350	Yes
Athanasius	367	Yes
Codex Vaticanus (B)	ca. 350	Yes
Codex Sinaiticus (Ⲛ, Ⲁ)	ca. 350	Yes
Laodicea	363	Yes
Apostolic Canons’	ca. 380	Yes
Gregory of Nazianzus	ca. 380	Yes



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Hippo	393	Yes
Carthage	397	Yes
Cheltenham Canon	ca. late fourth century	No*
Epiphanius	ca. 400	Yes*
Codex Alexandrinus (A)	ca. 425	Yes
Codex Fuldensis (F) (a vulgate)	ca. 545	Yes
Codex Claromontanus (D)	ca. sixth century	Yes
Peshitta (7a1)	ca. sixth—seventh century	No

Context

Intended for a specific church with specific needs, 2 Peter is otherwise short on contextual details. Its interests include spiritual encouragement, future events, and warnings against falling away. Internal evidence supports the theory that 2 Peter was meant for an actual church (1:1, 17; 3:1–2, 8, 14–15) and not a “catholic” letter (compare Reicke, *Epistles*, 146). According to 3:1, this was the second letter of Peter written to this group—but there is not enough information given to presume any relationship to 1 Peter. Internal evidence also reveals that there were false teachers in this church who would try to entice and ensnare the faithful (2:1). They were identifiable by their love of physical pleasure and their doubts about the return of Christ (1:16–21; 2:13–14; 3:3–6). In the early 20th century, scholars believed these false teachers were Gnostics, but this view is no longer accepted. We do know the false teachers were Christians (2:21). More likely possibilities for whom 2 Peter describes are either Christians steeped in paganism (Fornberg, *Early Church*, 120), Christians who misunderstood Paul’s teachings (Senior and Harrington, *1 Peter, Jude and 2 Peter*, 235) or new converts influenced by Epicurean thought (Neyrey, *2 Peter, Jude*, 122–27). Beyond these details we know nothing factual about the church to which the author of 2 Peter wrote.

Relationships with Other Texts

One unique feature of 2 Peter is the close relationship between it and the book of Jude (compare Jude 4–18 with 2 Pet 2:1–18; 3:1–3). Four possible options have been proposed for the relationship between 2 Peter and Jude:

1. Second Peter knew and relied on Jude (e.g., Bauckham, *2 Peter, Jude*, 141–43; Neyrey, *2 Peter, Jude*, 120–22).
2. Jude knew and relied on 2 Peter (e.g., Moo, *Jude, 2 Peter*, 16–21).



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3. there was a source used by both 2 Peter and Jude (e.g., Green, *2 Peter and Jude*, 68–74).
4. the same author wrote 2 Peter and Jude (see Robison, *Redating the New Testament*, 192–95).

While many early scholars believed Jude relied on 2 Peter, the most commonly held theory today is that 2 Peter used Jude. The primary reason for this preference is that among the parallel passages, Jude conforms to a tight, literary unit whereas the parallel passages in Peter are scattered about the book. The impression is that the author of Jude wrote a careful treatise, while the author of 2 Peter later used several of Jude's arguments at appropriate places throughout his work (Bauckham, *Jude, 2 Peter*, 142; compare Calan, "Use").

Beyond Jude, there are three other relationships to note: the relationships with 1 Peter, pseudepigraphical Peter texts, and subapostolic texts:

- 1 Peter As noted above, readers have debated the relationship between 1 Peter and 2 Peter at least since the time of Jerome. The striking difference is the divergence of ideas and themes that is unlike what one would expect after reading the letters of Paul or John. It is interesting to note that the greetings of both 1 Peter and 2 Peter are identical (χάρις ἡμῖν καὶ εἰρήνη πλῆθυνθει, *charis hēmin kai eirēnē plēthyntheiē*).
- Pseudepigraphical Peter Texts. A number of texts from the ancient world are linked to Peter; however, almost all of the noncanonical ones date to the second century or later. Most show familiarity with 1 or 2 Peter; the *Apocalypse of Peter* shows perhaps the greatest familiarity with 2 Peter. The early church judged the variances between 2 Peter and the pseudepigraphical Peter texts to be great, awarding it canonization, and rejecting the rest of the Petrine texts.
- Subapostolic Texts. Debate continues about whether 2 Peter is more closely allied with the New Testament books, or the books immediately following the New Testament era such as *1 Clement*, *2 Clement*, and the *Shepherd of Hermas*. While modern readers may be less familiar with these works, they were often circulated among the churches, placed in New Testament codices, and even discussed as possible additions to the canon—thus they were considered authoritative and valuable. While it is possible that 2 Peter is "from their world" rather than reflective of the New Testament era (Bauckham, *Jude, 2 Peter*, 149–51), it is also possible that as a very late book of the New Testament, 2 Peter signals the evolution in thought and language that was taking place in the early church. If so, 2 Peter serves as an important bridge-text between the thought-world of the apostolic and the subapostolic ages.

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DOUGLAS ESTES AND BRIAN LEPORT

PETER THE APOSTLE (Πέτρος, *Petros*). An apostle of Jesus Christ and one of the three named pillars of the early church in Jerusalem. Peter was the first Christian missionary to the Gentiles, a Christian missionary to the Jews, and a Christian martyr in Rome. Also called Cephas.

Introduction to Peter

Simon Peter is one of Jesus' first disciples and later becomes the spokesman of the Twelve. Although Jesus gives Simon the name "Peter" ("rock"; Πέτρος, *Petros*; in Matt 16:18; Mark 3:16; Κηφᾶς, *Kēphas*; in John 1:42), his ability to live up to it is often in doubt in the Gospels. Peter's rebuke of the Lord (Matt 16:22–23; Mark 8:32–33), his falling asleep in the garden (Matt 26:40; Mark 14:37), his attack on Malchus (Mark 14:47; John 18:10–11), and his denial of Jesus (Matt 26:69–75; Mark 14:66–72; Luke 22:55–61; John 18:15–27) all support this perception. However, Jesus' reinstatement of Peter in John 21:15–17 ("Do you love Me ... feed My sheep") communicates His confidence in and selection of him as the head of the early church. Luke demonstrates this in the book of Acts, which portrays Peter as a bold proclaimer of the gospel (Acts 2:14–41; 3:12–26; 4:8–21), a miracle worker (Acts 3:1–11; 9:32–35, 38–42), an authoritative figure in the early church (Acts 1:15–26; 5:3–10; 8:14–17; 15:7–11), the first missionary to the Gentiles (Acts 10:1–45), and a missionary to the Jews outside of Jerusalem (Acts 12:17). Ultimately, Peter demonstrates his total devotion as a follower of Jesus when he dies a martyr's death in Rome (1 Clement 5:4).

Peter in the New Testament

The New Testament provides limited information on Peter's life and background before his call to discipleship. His Hebrew name is Simon or Simeon (see Acts 15:14). His father's name is John, and his brother's name is Andrew (the disciple of Jesus). Peter grew up in Bethsaida (Βηθσαϊδά, *Bēthsaida*), a fishing village on the shore of the Sea of Galilee and operated a fishing business in partnership with the Zebedee brothers, James and John (also disciples of Jesus; John 1:44; Mark 1:16; Luke 5:10). He apparently was married (Mark 1:30; 1 Cor 9:5) and later lived in Capernaum.



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Peter in the Gospels

References to Peter in the Gospels are numerous and often attest to his prominence among the Twelve:

Peter is called to leave everything and follow Jesus	Matt 4:18–20; Luke 5:1–11
Jesus heals Peter’s mother-in-law	Matt 8:14–15; Mark 1:30–31; Luke 4:38–39
Peter is the first disciple named in the lists of the Twelve	Matt 10:2–4; Mark 3:16–19; Luke 6:14–16
Peter is the spokesperson when Jesus is touched by the bleeding woman	Luke 8:45
Peter, along with James and John, at the raising of Jarius’ daughter	Mark 5:37; Luke 8:51
Peter walks on the water	Matt 14:28–31
Peter’s confession after many disciples have turned away	John 6:66–69
Peter asks Jesus to explain a parable	Matt 15:15
Peter confesses Jesus as the Messiah	Matt 16:13–19; Mark 8:27–30; Luke 9:18–21
Jesus rebukes Peter	Matt 16:21–23; Mark 8:31–33
Peter with Jesus at the transfiguration	Matt 17:1–9; Mark 9:1–9; Luke 9:27–36
Jesus involves Peter in the questioning of the temple tax	Matt 17:24–27
Peter asks Jesus about the extent of forgiveness	Matt 18:21–22
Peter as spokesman for himself and the disciples, claiming to have left everything to follow Jesus	Matt 19:27–30; Mark 10:28–31; Luke 18:28–30
Peter remembers the withered fig tree	Mark 11:20–25



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Peter and John are sent to prepare the Passover meal	Luke 22:7–13
Peter's response as Jesus attempts to wash his feet	John 13:6–11
Jesus foretells Peter's denial	Matt 26:31–35; Mark 14:27–31; Luke 22:31–34; John 13:36–38
Peter sleeps in the garden of Gethsemane	Matt 26:36–46; Mark 14:32–42
Peter attacks the servant of the high priest at Jesus' arrest	Mark 14:47; John 18:10–11
Peter denies Jesus	Matt 26:69–75; Mark 14:66–72; Luke 22:55–61; John 18:15–27
Peter is informed of Jesus' arrival in Galilee	Mark 16:7
Peter runs to the tomb of Jesus to discover that it is empty	Luke 24:12
Cleopas and another disciple learn that Jesus has appeared to Peter	Luke 24:34
Peter catches fish at the encouragement of Jesus	John 21:3–14
Peter is reinstated by Jesus	John 21:15–19

Peter in Acts

Peter's leadership role in the early church dominates the first half of the book of Acts. His portrayal in Acts 15 is pivotal for the remainder of the text; however, after chapter 15, Peter is not connected with the gospel's advancement into the Gentile world.

In Acts 1, Peter demonstrates his leadership among the disciples as they pray together, seeking guidance from God. Peter leads the group (about 120 people) to select from among themselves an apostle to replace Judas. Agreeing with Peter, the group takes steps to fill the void, finally selecting Matthias as the new apostle to accompany the remaining eleven.

In Acts 2, Peter, along with the other followers of Jesus, are filled with the Holy Spirit on the Day of Pentecost. Standing with the other 11 apostles, Peter preaches in response to the questions of the crowd, explaining to them the meaning of Jesus' life, death, and resurrection. Peter's leadership resulted in about 3,000 people being added to the early church.



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Once again, in Acts 3, Peter is the chief character. Peter and John are headed to the temple to pray when they meet a man who is lame from birth. Peter tells the man to “get up and walk,” and he is healed. Peter then uses the attention garnered from this miracle as an opportunity to evangelize the crowd.

Acts 4 continues the story with Peter and John being arrested. The following day they are taken to a gathering where all the rulers, elders, and scribes of Jerusalem are present, along with Caiaphas, the high priest. Peter boldly proclaims the story of Jesus and His salvation. The leaders threaten them and demand that they cease teaching about Jesus. Peter and John refuse but are ultimately released.

Acts 5 portrays Peter as discerning and powerful. Ananias presents an offering to the church in a misleading and deceitful manner. Peter calls out the lie, and Ananias subsequently dies at his feet. Three hours later, Ananias’ wife, Sapphira, dies in a similar manner. Peter becomes so powerful that the sick and possessed are healed merely with the touch of his shadow (5:15). Later in the chapter, Peter rebukes the council of Pharisees (5:29), only to be beaten along with other believers who were present (5:40).

In Acts 8, Peter and John travel to Samaria to verify that the people there have received the Word of God. A man identified as Simon the Magician observes the giving of the Holy Spirit by Peter and wishes to obtain this gift through financial means. The account ends with Peter severely rebuking Simon for his inappropriate request.

In Acts 9, Peter visits the believers in Lydda and heals a man who was paralyzed for eight years. After hearing about a deceased believer in the nearby town of Joppa, Peter travels to her deathbed. He prays and commands the woman to “get up,” and she returns to life. Because of Peter’s mighty deeds, many people believe in Jesus.

Acts 10 tells the story of Peter’s encounter with Cornelius. After Peter receives a vision from the Lord, men from Cornelius’ household invite Peter to be their guest. Peter agrees, travels to Cornelius’ residence, and proclaims the message of Jesus as relevant to all nations (ἔθνος, *ethnos*). As Peter is preaching, the Holy Spirit is given to those present in Cornelius’ household, including Gentiles. This marks the third time that Peter has been involved in the giving of the Holy Spirit—in Jerusalem among the Jews, in Samaria among the Samaritans, and in Caesarea among the Gentiles. But when Peter returns to Jerusalem, he is challenged by some Jewish Christians regarding his visit to Gentiles. Acts 11 records his response to their misgivings. Once again, Acts shows how highly respected Peter is among his peers, as they marvel that God has seen fit to give the Holy Spirit to Gentiles.

Acts 12 records King Herod’s (Agrippa I) opposition to the fledgling church and to Peter as its leader. Herod arrests Peter with the intention of executing him. However, Peter is miraculously saved by an angel who leads him out of prison unscathed. Following a brief meeting with some believers, Peter departs to another place (12:17). Although the narrative does not specify his destination, there has been much speculation; Rome, Antioch, Mesopotamia, Corinth, and Edessa are all possibilities.

Peter makes one final appearance in Acts 15. Here, the Jerusalem council convenes to discuss how the Gentiles are to be included among the people of God. Peter’s speech resolves the matter following much debate. He recounts how God used him to include the Gentiles without any additional “yoke.” Barnabas and Paul affirm Peter’s conclusion with their



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testimony. James, the brother of Jesus, confirms the work of God and among the Gentiles, with the added declaration that they need not be circumcised to join the people of God. Peter's influence, coupled with James' interpretation of the Hebrew Scriptures, signals a decisive shift in the early church with permanent ramifications.

Peter in the Letters—Galatians, 1 Corinthians, 1 Peter

The New Testament letters of Galatians, 1 Corinthians, and 1 Peter provide information about Peter's apostolic ministry.

Paul mentions Peter extensively in his letter to the Galatians. In chapter 1, Paul mentions Peter as the first apostle he encounters during his visit to Jerusalem (1:18). Although Paul seems to be distinguishing himself from those in Jerusalem, it is significant that meeting with Peter is his top priority. In chapter 2, Paul gives Peter the description of "pillar" along with James and John (2:9). He reports that all were in agreement that his mission should be to Gentiles, while their mission should be to the Jews (2:9–10). In chapter 2, Paul recounts a conflict with Peter regarding the latter's hypocrisy toward the Gentiles in Antioch. This gives rise to the popular belief that Paul and Peter were in strong conflict with one another, but other texts such as 2 Pet 3:15 affirms their mutual support. (For more on this, see Dunn, "The Incident," 3–57; Kilpatrick, "Peter, Jerusalem and Galatians," 319–26.)

First Corinthians also provides some biographical information concerning Peter. In 1 Corinthians, Paul opens the letter with his concern of division in the church. In 1:12, Paul names Cephas as someone the people have chosen to follow. Martin Hengel and others use this as a means to further develop a so-called conflict between Paul and Peter (Hengel, *Saint Peter*, 66–79), ignoring the fact that Apollos and Jesus himself are mentioned in the same list. What this list does seem to indicate, though, is that at some point in Peter's travels, he arrived at Corinth and preached the gospel to the people there. Later, Paul reveals that Peter and other disciples also traveled with their wives in their missionary endeavors (9:5). Finally, in what is sure to be a pre-formed tradition, Paul lists Peter as the first person to whom the Lord appeared following His resurrection (15:5).

Although 1 Peter is a letter of encouragement to suffering Christians in Asia Minor, it offers embedded information about its author. If 1 Peter is to be regarded to have been written by Peter, then one finds an aged apostle exercising influence over the church as a fellow elder (συμπρεσβύτερος, *sympresbyteros*; in 5:1). A potential location for Peter is hinted at by the cryptogram "Babylon" in 5:13—a likely reference to the city of Rome. Even still, it is possible the letter's vague mention of Peter provides no real information about the apostle at all, but simply is a letter of exhortation written in the name of Peter to the Christians in the region (See Perkins, *Peter*, 120–22).

Peter in Extrabiblical Writings

Beyond the New Testament, several extrabiblical writings mention Peter. For instance, *First Clement* recounts Peter's martyrdom in Rome (see Bauckham, "The Martyrdom of Peter," 549–95). *First Clement* was written to the Corinthians around the end of the first century AD by Clement, the bishop in Rome. Clement states that Peter endured hardship and died the glorious death of a martyr (5:4). The early church historian Eusebius confirms Clement's statement, adding the detail that Peter was crucified upside-down; Eusebius claims that the church father



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Origen was the first to record this detail, in a now lost fragment of Origen's *Commentary on Genesis* (Eusebius, *Ecclesiastical History* 3.1.2).

Peter also appears as a main character in several noncanonical texts, including the Acts of Peter and the Acts of Peter and the Twelve Apostles.

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JASON GISH⁵

What Should We Learn from the Life of Peter?

Simon Peter was one of the first followers of Jesus Christ. He was an outspoken and ardent disciple, one of Jesus' closest friends, an apostle, and a "pillar" of the church (Galatians 2:9). Peter was enthusiastic, strong-willed, impulsive, and, at times, brash. But for all his strengths, Peter had several failings in his life. Still, the Lord who chose him continued to mold him into exactly who He intended Peter to be.

Simon was originally from Bethsaida (John 1:44) and lived in Capernaum (Mark 1:29), both cities on the coast of the Sea of Galilee. He was married (1 Corinthians 9:5), and he and James and John were partners in a profitable fishing business (Luke 5:10). Simon met Jesus through his brother Andrew, who had followed Jesus after hearing John the Baptist proclaim that Jesus was the Lamb of God (John 1:35–36). Andrew immediately went to find his brother to bring him to Jesus. Upon meeting Simon, Jesus gave him a new name: Cephas (Aramaic) or Peter (Greek), which means "rock" (John 1:40–42). Later, Jesus officially called Peter to follow Him, producing a miraculous catch of fish (Luke 5:1–7). Immediately, Peter left everything behind to follow the Lord (verse 11).

For the next three years, Peter lived as a disciple of the Lord Jesus. Being a natural-born leader, Peter became the *de facto* spokesman for the Twelve (Matthew 15:15, 18:21, 19:27; Mark 11:21; Luke 8:45, 12:41; John 6:68, 13:6–9, 36). More significantly, it was Peter who first confessed Jesus as "the Christ, the Son of the living God," a truth which Jesus said was divinely revealed to Peter (Matthew 16:16–17).

Peter was part of the inner circle of Jesus' disciples, along with James and John. Only those three were present when Jesus raised the daughter of Jairus (Mark 5:37) and when Jesus was transfigured on the mountain (Matthew 17:1). Peter and John were given the special task of preparing the final Passover meal (Luke 22:8).

⁵ Gish, J. (2016). [Peter the Apostle](#). In J. D. Barry, D. Bomar, D. R. Brown, R. Klippenstein, D. Mangum, C. Sinclair Wolcott, ... W. Widder (Eds.), *The Lexham Bible Dictionary*. Bellingham, WA: Lexham Press.



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In several instances, Peter showed himself to be impetuous to the point of rashness. For example, it was Peter who left the boat to walk on the water to Jesus (Matthew 14:28–29)—and promptly took his eyes off Jesus and began to sink (verse 30). It was Peter who took Jesus aside to rebuke Him for speaking of His death (Matthew 16:22)—and was swiftly corrected by the Lord (verse 23). It was Peter who suggested erecting three tabernacles to honor Moses, Elijah, and Jesus (Matthew 17:4)—and fell to the ground in fearful silence at God’s glory (verses 5–6). It was Peter who drew his sword and attacked the servant of the high priest (John 18:10)—and was immediately told to sheath his weapon (verse 11). It was Peter who boasted that he would never forsake the Lord, even if everyone else did (Matthew 26:33)—and later denied three times that he even knew the Lord (verses 70–74).

Through all of Peter’s ups and downs, the Lord Jesus remained his loving Lord and faithful Guide. Jesus reaffirmed Simon as Peter, the “Rock,” in Matthew 16:18–19, promising that he would be instrumental in establishing Jesus’ Church. After His resurrection, Jesus specifically named Peter as one who needed to hear the good news (Mark 16:7). And, repeating the miracle of the large catch of fish, Jesus made a special point of forgiving and restoring Peter and re-commissioning him as an apostle (John 21:6, 15–17).

On the day of Pentecost, Peter was the main speaker to the crowd in Jerusalem (Acts 2:14ff), and the Church began with an influx of about 3,000 new believers (verse 41). Later, Peter healed a lame beggar (Acts 3) and preached boldly before the Sanhedrin (Acts 4). Even arrest, beatings, and threats could not dampen Peter’s resolve to preach the risen Christ (Acts 5).

Jesus’ promise that Peter would be foundational in building the Church was fulfilled in three stages: Peter preached on the day of Pentecost (Acts 2). Then, he was present when the Samaritans received the Holy Spirit (Acts 8). Finally, he was summoned to the home of the Roman centurion Cornelius, who also believed and received the Holy Spirit (Acts 10). In this way, Peter “unlocked” three different worlds and opened the door of the Church to Jews, Samaritans, and Gentiles.

Even as an apostle, Peter experienced some growing pains. At first, he had resisted taking the gospel to Cornelius, a Gentile. However, when he saw the Romans receive the Holy Spirit in the same manner he had, Peter concluded that “God does not show favoritism” (Acts 10:34). After that, Peter strongly defended the Gentiles’ position as believers and was adamant that they did not need to conform to Jewish law (Acts 15:7–11).

Another episode of growth in Peter’s life concerns his visit to Antioch, where he enjoyed the fellowship of Gentile believers. However, when some legalistic Jews arrived in Antioch, Peter, to appease them, withdrew from the Gentile Christians. The Apostle Paul saw this as hypocrisy and called it such to Peter’s face (Galatians 2:11–14).

Later in life, Peter spent time with John Mark (1 Peter 5:13), who wrote the gospel of Mark based on Peter’s remembrances of his time with Jesus. Peter wrote two inspired epistles, 1 and 2 Peter, between A.D. 60 and 68. Jesus said that Peter would die a martyr’s death (John 21:18–19)—a prophecy fulfilled, presumably, during Nero’s reign. Tradition has it that Peter was crucified



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upside down in Rome, and, although such the story may be true, there is no scriptural or historical witness to the particulars of Peter's death.

What can we learn from Peter's life? Here are a few lessons:

Jesus overcomes fear. Whether stepping out of a boat onto a tossing sea or stepping across the threshold of a Gentile home for the first time, Peter found courage in following Christ. "There is no fear in love. But perfect love drives out fear" (1 John 4:18).

Jesus forgives unfaithfulness. After he had boasted of his fidelity, Peter fervently denied the Lord three times. It seemed that Peter had burned his bridges, but Jesus lovingly rebuilt them and restored Peter to service. Peter was a *former* failure, but, with Jesus, failure is not the end. "If we are faithless, he will remain faithful, for he cannot disown himself" (2 Timothy 2:13).

Jesus patiently teaches. Over and over, Peter needed correction, and the Lord gave it with patience, firmness, and love. The Master Teacher looks for students willing to learn. "I will instruct you and teach you in the way you should go" (Psalm 32:8).

Jesus sees us as He intends us to be. The very first time they met, Jesus called Simon "Peter." The rough and reckless fisherman was, in Jesus' eyes, a firm and faithful rock. "He who began a good work in you will carry it on to completion" (Philippians 1:6).

Jesus uses unlikely heroes. Peter was a fisherman from Galilee, but Jesus called him to be a fisher of men (Luke 5:10). Because Peter was willing to leave all he had to follow Jesus, God used him in great ways. As Peter preached, people were amazed at his boldness because he was "unschooled" and "ordinary." But then they took note that Peter "had been with Jesus" (Acts 4:13). Being with Jesus makes all the difference.⁶

Eusebius of Caesarea

Christian bishop and historian

BY [The Editors of Encyclopaedia Britannica](#) [View Edit History](#)

Flourished: c.301 - c.400 [Israel](#)

Notable Works: ["Ecclesiastical History"](#)

Subjects Of Study: [early church](#)

FULL ARTICLE

Eusebius of Caesarea, also called **Eusebius Pamphili**, (flourished 4th century, Caesarea Palestinae, Palestine), [bishop](#), exegete, polemicist, and historian whose account of the first centuries of [Christianity](#), in his *Ecclesiastical History*, is a landmark in Christian historiography.

Eusebius was baptized and ordained at [Caesarea](#), where he was taught by the learned [presbyter](#) Pamphilus, to whom he was bound by ties of respect and affection and

⁶ Got Questions Ministries. (2002–2013). [Got Questions? Bible Questions Answered](#). Bellingham, WA: Logos Bible Software.



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from whom he derived the name “Eusebius Pamphili” (the son or servant of Pamphilus). Pamphilus came to be persecuted by the Romans for his beliefs and died in [martyrdom](#) in 310. After the death of Pamphilus, Eusebius withdrew to [Tyre](#) and later, while the [Diocletian persecution](#) was still raging, went to Egypt, where he seems to have been imprisoned but soon released.

The work of the scholars of the Christian school at Caesarea extended into all fields of Christian writing. Eusebius himself wrote voluminously as apologist, chronographer, historian, exegete, and controversialist, but his vast erudition is not matched by clarity of thought or attractiveness of presentation. His fame rests on his *Ecclesiastical History*, which he probably began to write during the Roman persecutions and revised several times between 312 and 324. In this work Eusebius produced what may be called, at best, a fully documented history of the Christian church, and, at worst, collections of passages from his sources. In the *Ecclesiastical History* Eusebius constantly quotes or paraphrases his sources, and he thus preserved portions of earlier works that are no longer [extant](#). He had already compiled his *Chronicle*, which was an outline of world history, and he carried this annalistic method over into his *Ecclesiastical History*, constantly interrupting his narrative of the church’s history to insert the accession of Roman emperors and of the bishops of the four great sees (Alexandria, Antioch, Jerusalem, and Rome). He enlarged his work in successive editions to cover events down to 324, the year before the [Council of Nicaea](#). Eusebius, however, was not a great historian. His treatment of [heresy](#), for example, is inadequate, and he knew next to nothing about the Western church. His historical works are really apologetic, showing by facts how the church had [vindicated](#) itself against heretics and heathens.

Eusebius became bishop of Caesarea (in Palestine) about 313. When about 318 the theological views of [Arius](#), a priest of Alexandria, became the subject of controversy because he taught the [subordination of the Son to the Father](#), Eusebius was soon involved. Expelled from Alexandria for heresy, [Arius](#) sought and found sympathy at Caesarea, and, in fact, he proclaimed Eusebius as a leading supporter. Eusebius did not fully support either Arius or [Alexander](#), bishop of Alexandria from 313 to 328, whose views appeared to tend toward [Sabellianism](#) (a heresy that taught that God was [manifested](#) in progressive modes). Eusebius wrote to Alexander, claiming that Arius had been misrepresented, and he also urged Arius to return to communion with his bishop. But events were moving fast, and, at a strongly anti-Arian [synod](#) at Antioch, about January 325, Eusebius and two of his allies, Theodotus of Laodicea and Narcissus of Neronias in Cilicia, were provisionally excommunicated for Arian views. When the [Council of Nicaea](#), called by the Roman emperor [Constantine I](#), met later in the year, Eusebius had to explain himself and was exonerated with the explicit approval of the emperor.

In the years following the Council of Nicaea, the emperor was bent on achieving unity within the church, and so the supporters of the [Nicene Creed](#) in its extreme form soon found themselves forced into the position of dissidents. Eusebius took part in the expulsion of [Athanasius of Alexandria](#) (335), Marcellus of Ancyra (c. 336), and [Eustathius of Antioch](#) (c. 337). Eusebius remained in the emperor’s favour, and,



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after Constantine's death in 337, he wrote his *Life of Constantine*, a [panegyric](#) that possesses some historical value, chiefly because of its use of primary sources. Throughout his life Eusebius also wrote apologetic works, commentaries on the Bible, and works explaining the parallels and discrepancies in the [Gospels](#).
<https://www.britannica.com/biography/Eusebius-of-Caesarea>