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## Article 60: First Peter at a Glance

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# FIRST PETER AT A GLANCE

This book, Peter's first epistle, expounds upon our glorious salvation, its mystery (pondered by angels and Old Testament prophets), its vehicle (the Word of God), its method (the shed blood of Christ), and its recipients (a royal priesthood of believers). Peter also explains the purpose of suffering as related to this salvation, pointing to Jesus as the perfect example. The apostle concludes by exhorting both leaders and laymen alike to be prayerful and watchful, awaiting the return of the chief shepherd.

## **BOTTOM LINE SUMMARY**

SOME SOUND ADVICE TO SOME SUFFERING SAINTS!

This New Testament book is the Old Testament book of Job.

## **FACTS REGARDING THE AUTHOR OF THIS BOOK**

1. Who? **Peter**. He was a former fisherman (Lk. 5:1-9) and brother of Andrew (Jn. 1:40), who would become the unofficial spokesman for the twelve apostles. He authored the two epistles that bear his name.
2. What? The books of 1 and 2 Peter.
3. When and where?
  - a. **1 Peter** 64 A.D., from Babylon.
  - b. **2 Peter** 65 A.D., from (?) Babylon.
4. Why?
  - a. **1 Peter**: to comfort suffering Christians.
  - b. **2 Peter**: to warn and challenge Christians concerning the future.
5. To whom?
  - a. **1 Peter**: scattered Christians.
  - b. **2 Peter**: scattered Christians.

## **KEY EVENTS**

1. Facts about our glorious salvation
2. Our relationship to Christ and society
3. Our relationship to Christ and family members
4. How to respond in time of suffering
5. Advice to church elders and church members

## **KEY INDIVIDUALS**

1. **Peter**, brother of Andrew, former fisherman, apostle of Jesus, and author of 1 and 2 Peter
2. **Sarah**, wife of Abraham, mother of Isaac, mentioned here to illustrate the desired characteristics of a godly woman

## KEY PLACES

1. **Prison house of some spirits:** place visited by Jesus during the time between His crucifixion and resurrection
2. **Right hand of God:** a place of highest honor and the present location of the ascended Christ
3. **Babylon:** ancient city capital of the Babylonian Empire and probable place where Peter wrote his first epistle

## UNIQUE FEATURES

1. Of the original 12 apostles, three were chosen to write inspired New Testament books or epistles. The three are Matthew, John, and Peter.
2. This epistle is the final fulfillment of a two-fold commission given to Peter by Christ. Both were issued at the Sea of Galilee.
  - The first part—"Catch fish" (Lk. 5:10). This Peter did, through the spoken word at Pentecost (Acts 2:14).
  - The second part—"Feed sheep" (Jn. 21:15-17). This Peter does, through the written word at Babylon (1 Pet. 2:2; 5:13).
3. Peter's name appears 210 times in the New Testament. Paul's name is found 162 times. The names of the remaining 11 apostles combined appear 142 times.
4. Peter has been called "the apostle of hope" (see 1:3, 12, 21; 3:15). Paul could thus be classified as the apostle of faith, and John the apostle of love.
5. A key word in this epistle is "suffering." It, or its equivalent is used 16 times. Six times it speaks of Christ's suffering and ten times that of believers. Another important word is "grace," which appears eight times.
6. It is indeed ironic that—
  - The saved man who had once rebuked Jesus after the Savior predicted He would soon "suffer many things" (Mt. 16:21, 22), now writes so extensively on the subject!
  - That the same man who was on that occasion influenced by Satan (Mt. 16:23) now warns his readers concerning this identical thing (5:8)!
7. In fact Simon Peter was the only believer to rebuke Jesus (Mt. 16:22), deny Him (Mt. 26:34, 72), and curse Him (Mt. 26:74).
8. Peter was the only known married writer of a New Testament book (Mt. 8:14, 15; 1 Cor. 9:5).
9. He was a privileged member of the inner three (Mt. 17:1-5; Mk. 5:37; Mt. 26:36-46).
10. The letter was probably written at the end of his life. It is thought that after this epistle he was arrested and tried. Between his trial and execution he wrote 2 Peter (2 Pet. 1:13-21).
11. It must have been written around A.D. 64 on the eve of the outbreak of persecution by Nero. Nero died in A.D. 68.
12. In 5:13 he identifies the place of writing as Babylon. There are two main theories concerning the location of Babylon.

- It is literal Babylon on the Euphrates River—This would seem to be the natural interpretation of the passage. Furthermore, the list of countries in 1 Pet. 1:1 is from east to west, which suggests that the writer was in the east at the time of writing.  
J. Vernon McGee writes: “There was at this time a large colony of Jews in ancient Babylon who had fled Rome due to severe persecution under Claudius and at the time of writing bloody Nero was on the throne” (*Through the Bible*, p. 256). In addition to this, the descendants of those Jews taken captive by Nebuchadnezzar were still living in and around Babylon.
  - It is Rome—Charles Ryrie writes: “The place of the writing was Babylon (5:13), a symbolic name for Rome much used by writers who wished to avoid trouble with Roman authorities...Peter was in Rome during the last decade of his life and wrote this epistle about A.D. 63, just before the outbreak of Nero’s persecution in 64. Peter was martyred about 67” (*The Ryrie Study Bible*, p. 425). Furthermore, it is argued that Peter states Mark (5:13) was with him at the time the epistle was written. However, just prior to this, Paul had written Timothy to bring Mark to Rome with him (2 Tim. 4:11).
13. The church apparently was affected by worldliness in the pews (2:11) and materialism in the pulpit (5:1-3).
  14. Chapter 3 can be considered the marriage chapter (vv. 1-12) because of the advice Peter gives to both husbands and wives. (Compare with Eph. 5:22-33.)
  15. In a remarkable passage (3:18-22) Peter explains the activities of Christ during that time between his death and resurrection.
  16. This passage, along with 4:6 is among the most controversial ones in the entire New Testament.
  17. Peter’s rhetorical style in the letter is similar to that of his speeches in Acts.
  18. For its length, 1 Peter contains more Old Testament quotations than any other New Testament book.
  19. The book of 1 Peter provides the final of three descriptive phrases concerning the shepherding ministry of Christ.
    - Jesus said he was the Good Shepherd (Jn. 10:11)
    - Hebrews said he is the Great Shepherd (Heb. 13:20)
    - Peter says he is the Chief Shepherd (1 Pet. 5:4)
  20. Satan is referred to as a roaring lion in this epistle (5:8).
  21. Peter has much to say about the Word of God. He says it is incorruptible (1:23), eternal (1:25), and is, to the believer, as wholesome milk (2:2).
  22. Peter develops the doctrine of Christ in a remarkable way in this short epistle. He discusses:
    - The incarnation of Christ (1:20)
    - The names for Christ
      - a. A spotless Lamb (1:19)
      - b. The chief Cornerstone—His relationship to the Scriptures (2:6)
      - c. The precious Stone—His relationship to believers (2:7)
      - d. The stumbling Stone—His relationship to unbelievers (2:8)
      - e. The Bishop of our souls (2:25)
      - f. The Chief Shepherd (5:4)

- His sinless life (1:19; 2:22)
  - His suffering and death (1:11; 2:23-24; 3:18; 4:1, 13; 5:1)
  - His resurrection (3:21-22)
  - His ascension (3:22)
  - His presence at God's right hand (3:22)
  - His second coming (1:13, 17; 4:13; 5:1, 4)
23. He also offers a number of titles which describe believers. Perhaps in no other New Testament book are so many given. We are referred to as:
- Obedient children (1:14)
  - Newborn babes (2:2)
  - Living stones (2:5)
  - A holy priesthood (2:9)
  - A royal priesthood (2:9)
  - A holy nation (2:9)
  - A peculiar people (2:9)
  - Strangers and pilgrims (2:11)
  - Christians (4:16)
  - The righteous (4:18)
  - The elect of God (1:2)
  - The people of God (2:10)
  - The oracles of God (4:11)
  - The flock of God (5:2)
24. First Peter is the only biblical book which opens with a summary regarding the work of the entire trinity as seen in our salvation. Thus:
- Elected by the Father (1:2a)
  - Sanctified by the Holy Spirit (1:2b)
  - Redeemed by the Son (1:3)
25. It answers a two-fold question in regards to this salvation.
- What did the Old Testament prophets know about it? (1:10, 11, 12a). See also Mt. 13:17.
  - What do the holy angels know about it? (1:12b). See also Dan. 12:5, 6; Eph. 3:10.
26. This epistle recounts the last of three instances where believers are called Christians.
- Acts 11:26 (as used by the unbelievers at Antioch)
  - Acts 26:28 (as used by King Agrippa)
  - 1 Peter 4:16 (as used by Peter)
27. The book of 1 Peter can be compared to Colossians.
- For its size, Colossians has more to say about the Person of Christ than any other New Testament book.
  - For its size, 1 Peter has more to say about the work of Christ than any other New Testament book.
28. This epistle contains the final of three New Testament passages commanding believers to be good citizens.
- Romans 13:1-7
  - 1 Timothy 2:1-4
  - 1 Peter 2:13-17

29. Peter and John are the only two New Testament authors to refer to Christ as a Lamb (Jn. 1:29, 36; Rev. 5:6; 1 Pet. 1:19).
30. A careful reading of 1 Peter and Ephesians shows more than 100 parallels in teaching and wording.
31. Peter was also familiar with the book of Romans, and perhaps other epistles from Paul (see 2 Pet. 3:15-16).
32. This epistle lists the final of five crowns as described in the Bible.
  - Crown of righteousness (2 Tim. 4:8)
  - Soulwinner's crown (Phil. 4:1; 1 Thess. 2:19)
  - Crown of life (James 1:12; Rev. 2:10; 3:11)
  - Incorruptible crown (1 Cor. 9:25)
  - Crown of glory (1 Pet. 5:14)
33. First Peter 1:11 provides scripture's greatest single verse overviewing the first and second coming of Jesus Christ!
  - The first coming, "the sufferings of Christ"
  - The second coming, "the glory that should follow"
34. Peter's first letter also records five of the seven New Testament references depicting Jesus as a rock, or stone. Thus:
  - A smitten stone (1 Cor. 10:4)
  - A crushing stone (Mt. 21:49)
  - A living stone (1 Peter 2:4a)
  - A rejected stone (2:4b)
  - A chosen and precious stone (2:4)
  - The chief cornerstone (2:6)
  - A stumbling stone (2:8)

### COMPARISON WITH OTHER BIBLE BOOKS

#### 1. 2 Corinthians:

- Both deal extensively with suffering: 2 Corinthians concerning the sufferings of Paul; 1 Peter concerning the sufferings of Christians generally.

#### 2. James:

- Both were addressed to Christians scattered abroad by persecution, and both are intensely practical.

### TITLES FOR AND TYPES OF JESUS

1. Jesus Christ (1:1)
2. Lord Jesus Christ (1:3)
3. Living stone (2:4)
4. A stone of stumbling (2:8)
5. Chief Shepherd (5:4)
6. Christ Jesus (5:10)