

# Peter, Apostle

1 Peter 1:1-2

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**Date of Writing:** The Book of 1 Peter was likely written between A.D. 60 and 65.

**Purpose of Writing:** 1 Peter is a letter from Peter to the believers who had been dispersed throughout the ancient world and were under intense persecution. Peter knew persecution... He was beaten, threatened, punished, and jailed for preaching the Word of God. He knew what it took to endure without bitterness, without losing hope and in great faith living an obedient, victorious life.

- This knowledge of living hope in Jesus was the message, and Christ's example was the one to follow.

**Summary:** Though persecution was desperate, Peter says it was actually a time to rejoice. It is a privilege to suffer for the sake of Christ, as He suffered for us.

- This letter refers to Peter's personal experiences with Jesus and his sermons from the book of Acts.
- Peter confirms Satan as the enemy of every Christian but the assurance of Christ's future return gives us hope.

## 1 Peter 1:1-2 – A greeting from the Apostle Peter

*Peter, an apostle of Jesus Christ,*

*To God's elect, exiles scattered throughout the provinces of Pontus, Galatia, Cappadocia, Asia and Bithynia, <sup>2</sup> who have been chosen according to the foreknowledge of God the Father, through the sanctifying work of the Spirit, to be obedient to Jesus Christ and sprinkled with his blood: Grace and peace be yours in abundance.*

### v1 – Who was Peter?

He was not merely **an apostle**, but there is a sense in which he was the *leader* of the apostolic group. Peter was an important and influential man in the early church. Considering the author, the first Christians would receive this letter with a sense of importance.

Peter's name is mentioned in the gospels more than anyone except the name of Jesus. No one speaks in the gospels as often as Peter did, and Jesus spoke more to Peter than to any other individual.

- Jesus rebuked Peter more than any other disciple.
- Peter was the only disciple who dared to rebuke Jesus.

- Peter confessed Jesus more boldly and accurately than any other disciple.
- Peter denied Jesus more forcefully and publicly than any other disciple.
- Jesus praised Peter more than any other disciple.

### What do the gospels tell us about Peter?

- Peter put his nets out at the direction of Jesus to bring in a massive catch of fish (Luke 5:1-11).
- Peter stepped out of the boat during a raging storm and walked on the water with Jesus (Matthew 14:24-33).
- Peter was the one who said, "*Lord, to whom shall we go? You have the words of eternal life. Also, we have come to believe and to know that You are the Christ, the Son of the living God*" (John 6:68-69).
- Peter saw Jesus transfigured in glory, together with Moses and Elijah (Matthew 17:1-9).
- Peter asked Jesus how many times we should forgive a brother that sins against us, quoting the high number of "seven times" (Matthew 18:21-35).
- Peter was the one who asked Jesus, after the encounter with the rich young ruler, what the disciples would receive for giving everything up to follow Jesus (Matthew 19:27-30).
- Peter was the one who insisted that Jesus would not wash his feet; then he commanded Jesus to wash his whole body! (John 13:16-20).
- Peter heard Jesus predict that he would deny Him three times (Matthew 26:30-35), and Peter replied, "*Even if I have to die with you I will not deny You!*", and the rest of the disciples agreed.
- Peter was the one who cut off the right ear of Malchus, the servant of the high priest, when the soldiers came to arrest Jesus (John 18:1-11).
- Peter denied Jesus three times, cursing and swearing that he did not even know "the Man," refusing to even name the name of Jesus (Matthew 26:69-75).
- Peter was the one who ran with John the disciple to the tomb on the morning of the resurrection, after hearing the report of the women that the body of Jesus was not in its tomb (John 20:1-10).
- Peter received a public restoration of Jesus in front of the other disciples after the resurrection of Jesus (John 21).

### **What is significant about Peter introducing himself as an apostle?**

The importance of the apostles is suggested by the fact that the phrase *of Jesus Christ* is attached to no other New Testament office: we do not read of *teachers of Jesus Christ* or *prophets of Jesus Christ* or *evangelists of Jesus Christ*, only of *apostles of Jesus Christ*.

- Peter did nothing to explain or justify his apostleship and did not add a phrase like “*by the will of God*” as Paul did on some occasions (1 Cor 1:1, 2 Cor 1:1, Gal 1:1, Eph 1:1).
- Unlike Paul, Peter’s apostolic status was never questioned.
- This brief phrase indicates Peter’s authority

### **What is an apostle?**

The word apostle means “one who is sent out.” In the New Testament, there are two primary usages of the word apostle...

- The first is in specifically referring to the twelve apostles of Jesus Christ.
- The second is in generically referring to other individuals who are sent out to be messengers/ambassadors of Jesus Christ.

### **What was unique about the twelve apostles of Christ?**

In referring to the New Jerusalem...

Revelation 21:14 – *The wall of the city had twelve foundations, and on them were the names of the twelve apostles of the Lamb.*

It was these twelve apostles who were the first messengers of the gospel after the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ.

- It was these twelve apostles who were the foundation of the church—with Jesus being the cornerstone (Ephesians 2:20).

### **How is it we don’t have apostles of Christ today?**

The qualifications of this type of apostle were:

1. to have been a witness of the resurrected Christ (1 Corinthians 9:1),
2. to have been explicitly chosen by the Holy Spirit (Acts 9:15), and
3. to have the ability to perform signs and wonders (Acts 2:43; 2 Corinthians 12:12).

The responsibility of the twelve apostles, laying the foundation of the church, would also argue for their uniqueness. Two thousand years later, we are not still working on the foundation.

### **Do we have apostles in the generic sense today?**

Barnabas was referred to as an “apostle” in Acts 13:2 and 14:14.

- Andronicus and Junias are possibly identified as apostles in Romans 16:7.
- The same Greek word usually translated “apostle” is used to refer to Titus in 2 Corinthians 8:23 and Epaphroditus in Philippians 2:25.

So, there definitely seems to be room for the term apostle being used to refer to someone besides the twelve apostles of Jesus Christ. Anyone who was “sent” could be called an apostle.

### **What exactly would be the role of an apostle outside that of the twelve apostles?**

That is not entirely clear. From the definition of the word, the closest thing today to an apostle, in the general sense, is a missionary.

- A missionary is a follower of Christ who is sent out with the specific mission of proclaiming the gospel.
- A missionary is an ambassador of Christ to people who have not heard the good news.

However, to prevent confusion, it is likely best to not use the term apostle to refer to any position in the church today.

- The vast majority of occurrences of the word apostle or apostles in the New Testament refer to the twelve apostles of Jesus Christ.

### **How should we regard those claiming to be apostles today?**

Be wary... Frequently, those claiming the office of apostle seek authority equal to, or at least rivaling, the authority of the original twelve apostles. There is absolutely no biblical evidence to support this...

2 Corinthians 11:13 – *For such are false apostles, deceitful workers, transforming themselves into apostles of Christ.*

In a sense, all followers of Jesus Christ are called to be apostles. We are all to be His ambassadors (Matthew 28:18-20; 2 Corinthians 5:18-20).

- We are all to be “ones who are sent out” (Acts 1:8).
- We are all to be preachers of the good news (Romans 10:15).

### **Is there a gift of apostleship per 1 Corinthians 1:28?**

Yes, it would be the generic use of the word apostle... one sent out representing Christ and especially those who we refer to as church starters today.

## Was Matthias or Paul God's choice to replace Judas as the 12th apostle?

Some point out that Paul was God's choice because Jesus had told the apostles to wait for the coming of the Holy Spirit (Acts 1:8) and that casting lots is not how the disciples should have made the decision.

- Also, Matthias is never again mentioned in the New Testament, while Paul obviously became very prominent in the early Christian church.

However, the New Testament nowhere condones or condemns the way the apostles made the decision in Acts 1. Casting lots was a biblically allowed method of making a decision (Proverbs 16:33).

- While Matthias is never again mentioned in the New Testament, the same can be said for most of the other 11 apostles.
- Church history records that Matthias died as a martyr for Christ, as did all of the other apostles, except John.

## So, what name will be written on the 12th foundation in the heavenly Jerusalem (Revelation 21:14)?

The Bible does not explicitly say, so we will have to wait to find out.

## To whom did Peter write this epistle?

*To the pilgrims:* The idea behind the word **pilgrims** is of someone who lives as *a temporary resident in a foreign land*. **Pilgrims** are sojourners and travelers, and **pilgrims** live in constant awareness of their true home.

- The NIV use of *God's elect, exiles* is essentially the same though "pilgrims" is more succinct.

## Where is the true home of Christian pilgrims?

They pass their days upon earth, but their citizenship is in heaven.

## Was Peter writing to Gentiles or Jews?

*To the pilgrims of the Dispersion:* Peter clearly wrote to Gentiles, Christians (see 1 Peter 1:18, 2:10, and 4:3). Yet he called them **pilgrims of the Dispersion**, a name that was applied to the Jews.

- He saw the Christians of his day as sprinkled throughout the world as the Jewish people were in **the Dispersion** after the fall of Jerusalem when the Babylonians conquered Judah.

## What was the significance of the places Peter mentioned?

These specific areas were places Christianity had extended in the first several decades after the beginning of the church.

- It was probably the route that the original courier of Peter's letter followed in distributing the letter.

- This was not written to any one congregation, but intentionally written to *all* Christians.

## v2 – Why did Peter describe Christians as elect?

*Elect according to the foreknowledge:* This means simply that they are *chosen*, as the NIV uses here.

- Chosen by God in a particular and unique sense.

## Why might Peter remind his readers that we are elect?

This was meant to strengthen and encourage us in our afflictions. The doctrine of election is a "family truth" intended to foster the welfare of believers.

## What does *according to the foreknowledge of God* add to our being elect?

This describes the nature of their election. God's choosing is not random or uninformed, but **according** to His **foreknowledge**, which is an aspect of His omniscience.

- This **foreknowledge** *includes* prior knowledge of our response to the gospel, but is not *solely dependent* on it.
- Election is not election at all if it is only a cause-and-effect arrangement basing God's choice only on man's... He knew in advance that He'd choose us.

## So, in light of our being elect, what is our role in being saved?

In the Calvinism vs. Arminianism debate, both systems fail in their attempt to explain the unexplainable. Humans are incapable of fully grasping this concept.

- Yes, God is absolutely sovereign and knows all.
- Yes, human beings are called to make a genuine decision to place faith in Christ for salvation.

These two facts seem contradictory to us, but in the mind of God they make perfect sense; a **paradox!**

- A sign in heaven viewed from earth: "*Whoever will may come*" – the backside of the sign viewed from heaven: "*Chosen before the foundation of the world*"

## What does *sanctification and obedience* have to do with being elect?

An essential result of election is **sanctification and obedience**. While some would like to think that election has only to do with going to heaven or hell, Peter reminds us that it also touches earth.

- A claim to be among the **elect** is doubtful if there is no evidence of **sanctification and obedience**.

## Why is the *sprinkling of the blood of Jesus Christ* mentioned here?

Since all the elect fall short of perfect sanctification and obedience, there is cleansing from sin provided for us through the **sprinkling of the blood of Jesus Christ**.

There were three circumstances in the Old Testament where blood was sprinkled on people.

- At the establishment of Sinai or Old Covenant (Exodus 24:5-8).
- At the ordination of Aaron and his sons (Exodus 29:21).
- At the purification ceremony for a cleansed leper (Leviticus 14:6-7).

### **How does the sprinkling of the blood of Jesus represent a covenant, ordination and purification?**

The Old Testament blood sprinkling occasions accomplishes the same things. First, a covenant is formed, then we are ordained as priests to Him, and finally we are cleansed from our corruption and sin.

- Each of these is ours through the work of Jesus on the cross.

### **How is the Trinity represented in Peter's opening?**

*God the Father... the Spirit... Jesus Christ:* Peter's effortless way of combining the work of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit in our salvation displays the New Testament approach to the Trinity.

- It is not detailed as a specific doctrine, but woven into the fabric of the New Testament.

### **Why is the Trinity described as Father, Son, & Spirit?**

Jesus, the **Son**, has a **Father**, but not in the sense of being higher than He or the One who gave Him existence. The Father, Son, and Holy Spirit have existed together throughout eternity and each is equally God.

- *Father* and *Son* describe the *relationship* between these first two members of the Trinity.
- The Jews understood the term "son" to mean "same as the father."

### **How did Peter conclude his greeting?**

*Grace to you and peace be multiplied:* Peter brought a greeting that had become common among the Christians, combining elements from Greek culture (**Grace**) and Jewish culture (**peace**).

### **What applications come to mind from this passage?**

- Jesus laid the foundation for the church in the 12 apostles
- Christians are elect but still must respond to God's call to be saved.