

## Table of Contents

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Outline 1	Introduction	7
Outline 2	1 Peter 1:1-12	11
Outline 3	1 Peter 1:13-25	19
Outline 4	1 Peter 2:1-10	25
Outline 5	1 Peter 2:11-3:12	31
Outline 6	1 Peter 3:13-22	39
Outline 7	1 Peter 4:1-11	43
Outline 8	1 Peter 4:12-19	47
Outline 9	1 Peter 5:1-14	51
Outline 10	2 Peter 1	57
Outline 11	2 Peter 2	65
Outline 12	2 Peter 3	73

## Introduction

When were they written?

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### *The first letter of Peter*

We, who believe the Scriptures, agree that this letter was written by the apostle Simon Peter. It is senseless to discuss the vain thoughts of theological critics who in the 19th century, and ever since then, have challenged the authorship of Peter. To answer the question where this letter was written, we must look at chapter 5:13. There Peter says, “She who is in Babylon, chosen together with you, sends you her greetings, and so does my son Mark.” What is meant by “Babylon”? Some scholars think it refers to the old Babylon which is beside the Euphrates; others think that it refers to a newer town with the same name in Lower Egypt. However, it is not likely that either of these is meant; we cannot find any mention either in the written history of the ancient Christian church, or in tradition, that Peter had ever been there.

In Revelation 14:18 and 17:3-18 we read “Babylon”, indicating the anti-Christian world empire, which in that time was typified by the city of Rome. That makes it plausible that Peter means Rome when he mentions “Babylon” in chapter 5:13.

We can be almost certain that the apostle, who lived his last years in Rome and was put to death there in 64 A.D., wrote this letter some time between the summers of 63 and 64 A.D.

### *The second letter of Peter*

Since the second half of the last century, many theologians have denied that the author of this second letter was “The Apostle of the Rock”. They deny this even more strongly than they deny Peter’s authorship of the first

# **A Song of Rejoicing**

The Certainty and the Glory of the  
Covenant Riches for all Believers

1 Peter 1:1-12

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## **Summary of the Contents**

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In the verses one and two, the apostle introduces himself and greets the believers with a blessing. A true apostolic song of rejoicing about the treasures of salvation in which those who believe in Christ Jesus may partake through faith follows in verses 3-12. Peter portrays how firm and sure, how great and glorious this salvation is, and that true Christian hope must motivate them to bear affliction with gladness.

## **Main Thoughts**

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Note, in particular, the background of this letter as it is described under the heading “Why Were They Written” in the introductory outline. There is nothing new under the sun: in the mighty Roman Empire the masses regard believers as “breakers of unity” (as “ecumenical” Christendom looks upon us today). They do not participate in worshipping the Emperor, and so disturb “religious” unity; they stay aloof from the labour unions, thereby breaking “social” unity; and they profess Christ as Lord of the world instead of Caesar, thus violating “political” unity.

What does Peter do now? Does he lament the difficult life of believers? Does he severely criticize them? Does he drop the hammer of God’s threats upon them? No; he demonstrates how rich they are because of the redemptive work of the Saviour. For that very reason a glorious future awaits them. The apostle rejoices in the finished work of the salvation which beckons to them. Therefore, they must live in the hope which alone can make sorrows bearable.

This section of 1 Peter is divided into three parts.

Verses 3-5: Peter explains how rich believers are on account of Christ's resurrection through which they partake of the inheritance which he has laid away for them.

Verses 6-9: Peter points out how their trials of faith are connected with becoming partakers in the complete salvation of the future.

Verses 10-12: The apostle shows how great their certainty can be in comparison with the prophets of the old dispensation who were also driven by the same Spirit from whom the believers received the message of salvation. He says that the angels long to understand the mystery of redemption.

## Notes on the Text

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### *Verse 1*

He calls himself “Peter”, not “Simon Peter” (2 Peter 1:1) – see question 1.

“Apostle of Jesus Christ” indicates the official quality of the letter — see question 2.

The RSV takes the word “chosen” as a substantive<sup>3</sup>, and places it at the beginning of verse 2; it can also read: “to those who reside as aliens... who are chosen” as in the NASB (Dr. S. Greijdanus and the author of these outlines consider this to be more logical). “Chosen” points to the gracious favour of God. An “alien”, or a “stranger”, is someone who lives among a certain people but who does not belong to them. The Hebrew has two words for “alien”: one refers to a stranger travelling through a country; the other to a stranger who is permitted to live with a certain tribe or nation. The Greek word used here has the same connotation as the second word in Hebrew for “alien”. In the ancient Eastern world, a stranger in the first sense of the word was shown hospitality, but a “sojourner” was considered an enemy of the people. They did not have to abide by the norms and laws of the tribe with a “sojourner”. That, then, is the concept we find here — see question 3.

“Dispersion” [RSV]; “Scattered” [NIV, NASB] (Greek: *diaspora*; see introductory outline) indicates that the readers of these epistles live outside their homeland, the heavenly one, the better one (cf. Philippians 3:20; Hebrews 11:15-16) — see question 4. For the geographical location regarding the

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3 - Ed. Note: a pronoun or other word or phrase functioning or inflected as a noun