

## 24. The General Epistles of 1 and 2 Peter

*“Forasmuch as ye know that ye were not redeemed with corruptible things, as silver and gold, from your vain conversation received by tradition from your fathers; But with the precious blood of Christ, as of a lamb without blemish and without spot . . .” (1:18–19)*

### “O Thou, Before the World Began” (hymn no. 189)

*“For even hereunto were ye called: because Christ also suffered for us, leaving us an example, that ye should follow his steps: Who did no sin, neither was guile found in his mouth . . . Who his own self bare our sins in his own body on the tree, that we, being dead to sins, should live unto righteousness: by whose stripes ye were healed.” (1 Peter 2:21–24)*

1. O thou, before the world began,  
Ordained a sacrifice for man,  
And by th’eternal Spirit made  
An off’ring in the sinner’s stead;  
Our everlasting Priest art thou,  
Pleading thy death for sinners now.

2. Thy off’ring still continues new  
Before the righteous Father’s view.  
Thyself the Lamb forever slain;  
Thy priesthood doth unchanged remain.  
Thy years, O God, can never fail,  
Nor thy blest work within the veil.

3. Oh, that our faith may never move  
But stand unshaken as thy love,  
Sure evidence of things unseen;  
Now let it pass the years between  
And view thee bleeding on the tree:  
My Lord, my God, who dies for me.

Text: William H. Turton, 1856–1938  
Music: Frank W. Asper, 1892–1973

# 1 Peter Background

- **Date:** A.D. 60–63 (Peter's traditional martyrdom date is A.D. 64)
- **To:** **Christian congregations, mostly in northern Asia Minor** and perhaps proselytized by the Jerusalem Church rather than by Paul
  - Referred to as "**exiles of the diaspora**," this is probably an application of the "scattering" image to Christian Gentiles
- **From:** **Probably Rome**, although "Babylon" as a name for the imperial capital was more common after the destruction of Jerusalem in A.D. 70
  - **Here it could be used for Rome in the sense of the capital of "the world"**
  - a minority propose identification with historical Babylon on the Euphrates (although there is no attested mission of Peter to this area)
- **Authenticity:** **Quality of the Greek may be explained by the use of a secretary**, apparently **Silvanus** (cf. *Silas* of Acts 15ff), although 5:12 could refer to Silvanus' serving as a courier
  - Some scholars see pseudonymity, with composition by a disciple in a "Petrine School" or tradition
- **Genre:** Some see this as a **homily** or as baptismal instruction, but it otherwise seems to be a **encyclical letter (general epistle)**
- **Theme:** Rather than abandon the world, **Christians must make a positive difference in society and set an example of the believers**

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## To the Strangers Scattered throughout . . .



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## Overview of 1 Peter

- **Opening Formula (1:1–2)**
- **Body (1:3–5:11)**
  - Affirmation of Christian Dignity (1:3–2:10)
  - **Christian Behavior in a Pagan World** (Household Code; 2:11–3:12)
  - **Christian Behavior in the Face of Hostility** (Persecution and/or Alienation; 3:13–4:19)
  - **Pastoral Section: Tending the Flock of God** (5:1–11)
- **Concluding Formula (5:12–14)**

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## Affirmation of Christian Dignity (1:3–2:10)

- **Lively hope in the face of trials (1:3–9)**
  - A living, growing hope
- **Redeemed by the precious blood of the Lamb (1:10–25)**
  - “Forasmuch as ye know that ye were not **redeemed** with corruptible things, as silver and gold, from your vain conversation received by tradition from your fathers; **But with the precious blood of Christ**, as of a lamb without blemish and without spot . . .” (1:18–19)
  - **Following the Example of Christ’s Sufferings (1:21–25a; see below—a hymn!)**
- **God’s People: a Royal Priesthood (2:1–10)**
  - “But ye are a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a **peculiar people**; that ye should shew forth the praises of him who hath called you out of darkness into his marvellous light: Which in time past were not a people, but are now the people of God: which had not obtained mercy, but now have obtained mercy.” (2:9–10)
  - “***But you are a chosen race, a kingdom of priests, a holy nation, a people to be a personal possession to sing the praises of God. . .***” (2:9 NJB; peculiar means “made one’s own . . .”)

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## Following the Example of Christ's Sufferings

[You] who by him do believe in God,  
that raised him [Christ] up from the dead, and gave him glory;  
that your faith and hope might be in God.

Seeing ye have purified your souls  
in obeying the truth through the Spirit  
unto unfeigned love of the brethren,

see that ye love one another with a pure heart fervently:  
Being born again,  
not of corruptible seed, but of incorruptible,  
by the word of God, which liveth and abideth for ever.

For all flesh is as grass,  
and all the glory of man as the flower of grass.  
The grass withereth,  
and the flower thereof falleth away:  
But the word of the Lord endureth for ever.

(1 Peter 1:21–25a, quoting Isaiah 40:6–8 in vv. 24–25a)

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## Christian Behavior in a Pagan World (Household Code; 2:11–3:12)

- **Honorable Conduct an Example to the Gentiles (2:11–12)**
  - “Beloved, I urge you as aliens and exiles to abstain from the desires of the flesh that wage war against the soul. *Conduct yourselves honorably among the Gentiles*, so that, though they malign you as evildoers, *they may see your honorable deeds and glorify God* when he comes to judge.” (2:11–12 NRSV; KJV “conversation” = “conduct, way of life”)
- **Respecting Government (2:13–17)**
  - For the Lord’s sake **accept the authority of every human institution**, whether of the emperor as supreme, or of governors, as sent by him to punish those who do wrong and to praise those who do right. For it is God’s will that by doing right you should silence the ignorance of the foolish. As servants of God, live as free people, yet do not use your freedom as a pretext for evil. **Honor everyone. Love the family of believers. Fear God. Honor the emperor.**” (2:13–17 NRSV; cf. D&C 98:5–10, etc.)
- **Duty of Slaves (2:18–25, household code)**
- **Wives and Husbands (3:1–12, household code)**

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## Christian Behavior in the Face of Hostility (3:13–4:19)

### • Persecution and/or Alienation

- There were **specific, short-term persecutions of Christians under Nero** after the fire of A.D. 64 in Rome, but **no empire-wide policy against Christians** until at least the time of Trajan (A.D. 96–117)
- Instead we should see **local persecution** or, more probably, **feelings of alienation because Christians were cut off socially from friends and neighbors**
  - They could not engage in civic events, festivals, pagan sacrifices
  - *Perhaps increasingly they were brought under pressure to participate in the emperor cult as a sign of political loyalty*

### • 1 Peter pericopes dealing with persecution

- **Suffering for Doing Right** (3:13–22)
- **Old Lives Versus Life in Christ** (4:1–6)
  - **Gospel Proclaimed to the Dead** (3:18–20; 4:6; next slide—how does this fit in the pericope?)
- **Stewards of God's Grace: Minister to Each Other Even as You Have Received** (4:7–11)
- **The Fiery Trial: Suffering as a Christian** (4:12–19, further below)

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## Gospel Proclaimed to the Dead (3:18–20; 4:6)



Joseph F. Smith  
D&C 138 in 1918

- “For Christ also has once suffered for sins, the just for the unjust, that he might bring us to God, **being put to death in the flesh**, but **quickened by the Spirit**. **By which also he went and preached unto the spirits in prison**; which [at] sometime were disobedient.” (1 Pet. 3:18–20)
- “The Lord went not in person among the wicked and the disobedient who had rejected the truth, to teach them... Our Redeemer spent his time during his sojourn in the world of spirits, instructing and preparing the faithful spirits of the prophets who had testified of him in the flesh; that they might carry the message of redemption unto all the dead, unto whom he could not go personally.” (D&C 138:29, 36–37)
- “**For this cause was the gospel preached also to them that are dead**, that they might be judged according to men in the flesh, but live according to God in the spirit.” (1 Pet. 4:6)
  - “Thus was the gospel preached to those who had died in their sins, without a knowledge of the truth, or in transgression, having rejected the prophets ... And so it was made known among the dead, both small and great, the unrighteous as well as the faithful.” (D&C 138:31–32)
  - “These were taught faith in God, repentance from sin, vicarious baptism for the remission of sins, the gift of the Holy Ghost by the laying on of hands, And all other principles of the gospel that were necessary for them to know in order to qualify themselves that they might be judged according to men in the flesh, but live according to God in the spirit.” (D&C 138:33–35)

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## The Fiery Trial: Suffering as a Christian (4:12–19)

- “**Think it not strange concerning the fiery trial which is to try you**, as though some strange thing happened unto you. But **rejoice, inasmuch as ye are partakers of Christ’s sufferings**... If ye be reproached for the name of Christ, happy are ye... Yet if any man suffer as a Christian, let him not be ashamed; but let him glory God on this behalf.” (1 Pet. 4:12–14, 16)
  - “fiery trial” may conjure allusions to smelting, purifying by fire
  - Note the almost Pauline participation model!

## 2 Peter

• ————— •  
*“... We have also a more sure word of prophecy; whereunto ye do well that ye take heed, as unto a light that shineth in a dark place, until the day dawn, and the day star arise in your hearts” (2 Pet. 1:16–19)*

## 2 Peter Background

- Date: **Shortly before Peter's martyrdom**, c. A.D. 64/65 (compare to 2 Timothy)
- To: **Same audience as 1 Peter** (3:1)
  - *it is assumed that the recipients are by this time familiar with some of Paul's letters (3:15-16)*
- From: Probably **Rome**
- Genre: **a general letter**, but it reflects much of the Jewish "**testament**" genre (cf. 2 Timothy)
  - *provides for teachings to be remembered and the future to be foreseen*
- Authenticity: **Many secular scholars propose pseudonymity**, citing the significant differences in style and outlook (particularly the acceptance of a delayed Parousia).
- Purpose: Further addresses the ethical transition from a Jewish to pagan environment; **stresses the scriptural and authoritative basis necessary to counter false teaching**; teaches **the reality of the Parousia, even if it is delayed**

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## Overview of 2 Peter

- **Opening Formula (1:1-2)**
- **Body (1:3-3:16)**
  - **Exhortation: Strive to make you calling and election sure (1:3-11)**
    - "Wherefore the rather, brethren, give diligence to make your calling and election sure: for if ye do these things, ye shall never fall." (1:10)
  - **Peter's Testament (1:12-15)**
    - "I think it meet, as long as I am in this tabernacle, to stir you up by putting you in remembrance; **knowing that shortly I must put off this my tabernacle.**" (2 Pet. 1:13-14)
  - **The Grounds of Christian Hope (1:16-21)**
    - Apostolic Witness and the Sure Word of Prophecy (1:16-19)
    - Scripture and Prophecy (1:20-21)
  - **Condemnation of False Teachers** (polemic borrowed and adapted from Jude; 2:1-22)
  - **Delay of the Second Coming (3:1-16)**
- **Concluding Exhortation and Doxology (3:17-18)**

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## More Sure Word of Prophecy (1:16–19)

- “For **we** have not followed cunningly devised fables...but **were eyewitnesses of his majesty**. For he received from God the Father...a voice... when we were with him in the holy mount. We have also **a more sure word of prophecy**, whereunto ye do well that ye take heed.” (2 Pet. 1:16–19)
  - Peter, James, and John (Cephas, Jacob, and Jonah!) **witnessed Christ’s glory on the Mount of Transfiguration**, confirming and strengthening their apostolic witness
  - “The more sure word of prophecy means a man’s **knowing that he is sealed up unto eternal life, by revelation and the spirit of prophecy**, through the power of the Holy Priesthood.” (D&C 131:5)
- **Also applied to authoritative interpretation of scripture**
  - “We have also a more sure knowledge of the word of prophecy... **No prophecy of the scripture is of any private interpretation**. For the prophecy came not in old time by the will of man; but **holy men of God spoke as they were moved by the Holy Ghost**.” (JST 2 Pet. 1:19–21)

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## Condemnation of False Teachers (2:1–22)

- **Peter draws freely from Jude**, but **he omits the non-canonical material**
- “**There shall be false teachers among you, who privily shall bring in damnable heresies**... And many shall follow their pernicious ways... And through covetousness shall they with feigned words make merchandise of you.” (2 Pet. 2:1–3)
- “**There shall come in the last days scoffers, walking after their own lusts**. And saying, ‘Where is the promise of his [Second] coming? For since the fathers fell asleep, all things continue as they were from the beginning of the creation.’” (2 Pet. 3:3–4)

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## Delay of the Second Coming (3:1–16)

- “What manner of person ought ye to be in all holy conversation [conduct] and godliness, looking for and hasting unto the coming of the day of God...? Nevertheless we, according to his promise [to return], look for new heavens and a new earth... **Wherefore, beloved, seeing that ye look for such things, be diligent that ye may be found of him in peace, without spot, blameless.**” (2 Pet. 3:11–14)
- “If the people had lived according to the gospel that was delivered to them, the Apostles would have had power to accomplish a great deal more than they did, **although there can be no doubt but they were mistaken with regard to the time of the winding up scene, thinking it was much nearer than it really was**, and they might have made mistakes in other respects.” (Brigham Young, *Journal of Discourses* 12:65 [23 June 1867]).
- “**There is no point in speculating concerning the day and the hour. Let us rather live each day so that if the Lord does come while we yet are upon the earth we shall be worthy... And if we should die before he comes, then — if our lives have conformed to his teachings — we shall arise in that resurrection morning** and be partakers of the marvelous experiences designed for those who shall live and work with the Savior in that promised Millennium.” (*Teachings of Gordon B. Hinckley*, 576)

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## Peter on Paul

- “Our beloved brother **Paul** also, according to the wisdom given unto him, has written unto you. As also **in all his epistles, speaking in them of these things, in which are some things hard to be understood, which they that are unlearned and unstable wrest, as they do also the other scriptures, unto their own destruction.**” (2 Pet. 3:15–16)

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