

Introduction to First Peter

AUTHORSHIP

- A. Through the years, many have denied that the Apostle Peter wrote the two epistles that bear his name.
 - 1. If it is true that Peter never wrote these two epistles, it is difficult to know whether or not we can trust any word of Scripture.
 - 2. If we cannot trust the author to tell us truly who he is, how are we to trust him to direct us to God?
- B. In favor of Petrine authorship.
 - 1. The book claims to have been written by Peter (1:1).
 - 2. The author claims to have been an eyewitness of Jesus' sufferings (5:1).
 - 3. There is something of a resemblance between this epistle and Peter's speeches in Acts.
 - a. Using the words of Ps. 118:22, Peter referred to Jesus as the chief cornerstone (Acts 4:10-11; 1 Pet. 2:7-8).
 - b. Peter referred to the cross as a tree (Acts 10:39; 1 Pet. 2:24).
 - 4. The early church accepted the book as Petrine.
 - a. There is no discussion in the literature from antiquity of anyone but Peter being the author.
 - b. It seems to me that those closest to the New Testament era would have a better idea than we.
 - 5. Mark is referred to as Peter's "son" (5:13).
 - a. Tradition associates Peter and Mark.
 - b. Tradition attributes Peter as the source of Mark's gospel (This is why Mark was accepted in the canon—his association with an apostle).
- C. What arguments do some use against Petrine authorship?
 - 1. The book is written in well-polished Greek.
 - a. Critics claim that since Peter and John were "uneducated, common men" (Acts 4:13), Peter could not have written in good Greek.
 - b. The rulers in Acts really meant that Peter and John did not have a rabbinical education.
 - c. Just because Peter did not have a formal education does not mean that he couldn't have written well.
 - d. Peter also claims to have written with the ° aid of Silvanus (5:12). It is highly possible that Silvanus helped Peter with his Greek.
 - 2. The book does not mention explicit details of Jesus' life.
 - a. This argument alleges that when discussing Christ's sufferings in chapter two, the author shows no first-hand knowledge.
 - b. Just because Peter doesn't go into detail about Jesus' sufferings in no way means that he did not witness them.
 - c. This argument is rather subjective anyway.
 - 3. The book mentions persecution.
 - a. There isn't any evidence that Nero's persecution during which Peter died ever went outside of Rome.
 - b. Some claim that the persecution in 1 Peter doesn't sound anything like persecutions which occurred during Peter's life—according to this view, the persecution in 1 Peter occurred in the second century.
 - c. However, the persecution in 1 Peter sounds quite a bit like the local persecutions described in Acts.
 - 4. There are parallels between 1 Peter and the Pauline corpus.
 - a. Some examples of these parallels.
 - 1) 1 Pet. 2:11-3:7 with Eph. 5:18-6:9; Col. 3:18-4:6; and Rom. 13:1-4.
 - 2) Isaiah 28:16 is connected with 8:14 in Rom. 9:33 and 1 Pet. 2:6-8.
 - 3) The vice list in Rom. 13:13 is similar to the one in 1 Pet. 4:3.
 - 4) 1 Pet. 3:8-9; 4:7-11 give similar admonitions to Rom. 12.
 - 5) Rom. 5:3-5 uses a chain saying found in 1 Pet. 1:6-7.
 - b. The argument is that 1 Pet. is too dependent upon Paul's writings to be authentic—the author of 1 Pet. borrowed too heavily from Paul to have been an original apostle.
 - c. Refutation:
 - 1) Could Peter and Paul not have written similar instructions to different audiences?
 - 2) The Silvanus mentioned in 1 Pet. 5:12 is likely the same person mentioned in Paul's epistles (2 Cor. 1:19; 1 Thess. 1:1; 2 Thess. 1:1). These similarities could come through Silvanus.
 - 5. There is no sound reason to reject Petrine authorship.
- C. Would the early church have accepted a forgery?
 - 1. Could someone have convinced the church that he found a letter written by Peter long after Peter's death?
 - 2. Would the Christians have been so gullible, especially knowing that forgeries were circulating.
 - a. Paul tells the Thessalonians not to be troubled by a "letter purporting to be from us" (2 Thess. 2:2).
 - b. We can gather from this that false letters with the apostles' names did circulate in the early church.

- c. Yet, they were known to be forgeries.

DATE

- A. Clement quotes from the letter in AD 96.
- B. Peter likely died in AD 64-65, so the letter obviously had to have been written before then.
- C. A date a year or two before his death is likely.

RECIPIENTS

- A. Peter identifies his recipients as “the exiles of the Dispersion in Pontus, Galatia, Cappadocia, Asia, and Bithynia” (1:1).
 - 1. These territories were in the northwest quadrant of Asia Minor in what is now modern Turkey.
 - 2. This verse has often been taken to mean that the book’s recipients were Jewish.
- B. However, the book clearly identifies the readers as Gentile converts.
 - 1. The readers were not to “be conformed to the passions” of their “former ignorance” (1:14).
 - 2. The readers had been redeemed from the “futile ways inherited” from their fathers (1:18).
 - 3. The readers had once been no people but had become “God’s people” (2:10). The implication here is that the readers had never been God’s people.
 - 4. Women who are submissive to their husbands are “now” Sarah’s children (3:6).
 - 5. The Gentiles are surprised that the book’s readers no longer join them in wild parties (4:3-4).
- C. The thesis of this Book seems to be that the church is the new Israel.

PLACE OF WRITING

- A. Due to the Catholic claim that Peter was the first pope, many of our brethren want to deny that Peter was ever in Rome.
- B. However, the evidence suggests that this book was written from Rome.
 - 1. Church tradition identifies Rome as the place of Peter’s death.
 - 2. Peter ends his book by referring to the church in Babylon. (5 43)
 - a. Babylon seems to be a code word for Rome as it is in Revelation.
 - b. Many say that “Babylon” became synonymous with Rome after Peter’s death--another evidence that this book was written by someone other than Peter.
 - c. However, the best evidence suggests that Revelation was written shortly after the death of Nero.