

Notes on Peter's First Letter

Authorship and Date Issues

Polycarp is the first to cite the letter, in the middle of the II century, but nowhere does he attribute its authorship to Peter. Since the author cites the Septuagint (whereas Peter was Palestinian), it has been argued that the author could not have been Peter.

Indeed, if the subject of the letter is persecution due to the Roman government, then Peter could not have written it unless all of the traditions surrounding his death (c. 65 CE) are inaccurate. Furthermore, there are no indications within the NT or in tradition that Peter ever traveled to the cities mentioned in the letter.

However, this commentary will make a different suggestion, namely, that the subject which prompted the author's letter is not state-sponsored persecution of Christians but the same sort of Jewish persecution faced by Christians in the earlier sections of the NT. Support for the "Jewish persecution" viewpoint will be presented throughout the letter.

If we regard the issues as wholly Jewish, then an argument follows which establishes Petrine authorship for the letter:

- If the recipients of the letter were Jewish, then the letter must have been written prior to 70 CE and likely prior to 66.
The First Revolt (66 - 73 CE) was a turning point in the relationship between Christians and other Jews, essentially separating the two groups from one another. By 80 CE, the groups would not associate with one another (as evidenced in the early Talmud), and by 120 CE, both Christians and Jews were hurling insults at one another. Consider the II century "Letter of Bar-Nabas" as an example.
The letter called 1 Peter must have been written prior to the time when association between the groups had completely ceased, although there were definite hostilities present. We have no indication from the letter that Christians had been barred from the synagogues, for instance.
- The letter mentions a Christian woman who was in "Babylon" at the time of writing. While many critics point to "Babylon" as a nickname for Rome, it is more likely a name for Jerusalem. If this woman were present in Jerusalem during the first revolt, then she would have been involved in the war. No mention is made of such a situation; therefore, the letter was likely written just prior to 64 CE. The author also writes somewhat favorably about the State (2:13f.), which he certainly would not have done if a war was raging.
- If the letter was indeed written to Jewish Christians during the 60's CE, then it is quite likely that the letter claiming to have been written by Peter as an old man (5:1ff.) was indeed authored by him.

- If the recipients of the letter were largely Hellenists, Peter's use of the Septuagint to address them is logical.

I theorize the following:

During the time that Paulus was in Rome awaiting judgment by Nero, Peter took the time to write to the Jewish Christians in Asia Minor, which areas had seen conversions due in part to the actions of people like Paulus and Apollos. That Peter had had contact with Christians outside Palestine is evidenced by the fact that there was a "Peter" faction in Korinth who claimed to follow a Palestinian Jewish way of thinking. Consequently, Peter was in correspondence with Jewish Christians in the area.

The time of writing must have been close to the First Revolt against Roman oppression, for tensions between the Jewish Christians and the non-Christian Jews was growing heated. Peter sees the Second Coming as being very near, and this is identified with the destruction of the Temple in Jerusalem (and judgment upon Israel).

The place of composition was likely Peter's home in Palestine. He may have been traveling around the area, which is why he mentions his wife in Jerusalem.

The Commentary

Peter, an envoy of Anointed Jesus,

The greeting is traditional. Peter introduces himself as an envoy. Specifically, he was sent by the Anointed One (Messiah).

to chosen ones, strangers scattered to Pontus, Galatia, Kappadokia, Asia, and Bithunia, chosen according to the foreknowledge of Father God, chosen in holiness of spirit, chosen to listen to God and for a sprinkling of the blood of Anointed Jesus:

The recipients of the letter are strangers. Possibly, Peter is alluding to the passage, "stranger in a foreign land," which might very well describe the Christian converts in Asia Minor. Once part of mainstream Judaism, they now belong to a fringe element. They are not truly part of the gentile culture which surrounds them, nor are they any longer a part of the Judaism which the envoys see as about to pass away. The term "scattered" is also loaded -- an indication that the recipients were Hellenists, Jews whose families had remained among the nations after Cyrus allowed them to return to their homeland (c. 529 BCE). The locations given are all over the region, indicating that this letter was meant to circulate among them.

Next, Peter ties the term "chosen ones" to a purpose, and the notion of "purpose" will appear again in the letter. The stated purpose here, for which the readers were chosen, is "to listen" to God. That is, unlike their kinsmen, these Jews had listened to God's message -- they now realized that their Messiah had come. Thus, they were chosen "for a sprinkling of the blood of Anointed

Jesus." Sprinkling (usu. from a hyssop stalk) was a sign of cleansing in the Old Testament. Peter applies the expression figuratively, indicating that the readers' choice to listen to God had resulted in their freedom from sin.

May generosity and peace be abundant for you.

A traditional wish for the well-being of the reader.

1:3 Praised be God, the Father of our Lord, Anointed Jesus, who fathered us according to his great mercy

At this point, Peter sets up the content of the body of the letter with a word of praise for God. God fathered "us" -- all Christians, and again this "fathering" has a direction, a purpose. The "fathering" here coincides with the "choosing" in the greeting portion of the letter.

up to a living hope, through resurrecting Anointed Jesus from among the dead,

Because God raised the Messiah from the dead, those who accept him for who he was have a living hope. Peter's language is meant to contrast this with the Jews who rejected their Messiah; they are hopeless.

to an incorruptible, and undefiled, and unfading inheritance, which has been kept in the heavens for you who are being guarded by God's power through trust into a salvation which is ready to be revealed in the last season.

The Jewish people were concerned with what they perceived as their inheritance -- the land that had been promised to Abraham. But the true inheritance from God is "in the heavens". If the readers persist through the coming separation between Christianity and Judaism, by enduring they will receive the inheritance. Just as God is incorruptible, so is the inheritance that they will receive. The land withers, and its plants die, but the spiritual inheritance will not decay. The temple had been destroyed (587 BCE) and desecrated (c. 166 BCE), and it was about to be destroyed again (70 CE), but the inheritance that the readers were to receive would be "undefiled." The Jewish state was about to be destroyed by the Romans at the end of the then-present age, but the readers' inheritance was "unfading." It would never disappear.

6 Be glad about this, though (since it is necessary) for some time now you have been sorrowful in the midst of various trials, so that the proof of your trust (which is much more valuable than gold which is destroyed though tested by fire) may be found to result in praise and glory and honor, at the revealing of Anointed Jesus. You love him without having seen him. But without now looking, you trust in him and rejoice with an unspeakable and glorified joy, as you obtain the result of your trust: the salvation of souls.

Peter has written to the Jewish Christians of the region on account of their persecution by their kinsmen. This has already been seen to a great extent in Acts, where Paulus and his supporters have had to endure all sorts of troubles. But Peter looks ahead to the day of judgment on Israel, when their trust in the Messiah will be vindicated. Thus, their being persecuted now will result in

"praise and glory and honor", as those who "without now looking, trust in him" instead of taking the easier path of rejecting Jesus and returning to Judaism. Their trust will save their very lives (souls)!

About this salvation those prophets who prophesied about the generosity that is directed at you sought out and examined thoroughly. They were examining to determine what people or what season the spirit of the Anointed One within them was pointing toward when it was testifying in advance about the sufferings for the Anointed One and the glorious things to follow. It was revealed to them that they were serving not themselves but you in those things, which have now been declared to you through those who announced the good message to you with holy breath sent out from heaven. Messengers strongly desire to gaze at these things.

Peter introduces the fact that he is about to make quite a few quotations from the Torah and Prophets. He will apply these passages to them and to their situation. Thus, he frames the application in terms of the prophets all looking ahead to the Messiah and his sufferings when they wrote. And in looking ahead to the Messiah, they looked ahead to the Christians who would follow him: "they were serving not themselves but you."

Peter also points out that the people "who announced the good message" to the readers were genuine prophets. They did so "with holy breath sent out from heaven," and not merely of their own accord. Thus, when the envoys announced to them that the Messiah had come, the readers' conversions were in accord with what the prophets had foretold and desired.

13 So, armor the loins of your minds and be vigilant, and hope completely in the generosity that is being brought to you at the revelation of Anointed Jesus. As children who listen, do not conform yourselves to the former strong desires in your mindlessness, but become holy ones in all conduct, according to the fact that the one who called you is holy. And so it was written that, "You will be holy ones because I am holy."

The readers should defend themselves against their kinsmen, not physically but mentally. They should be watchful and prepared for any attacks that might be made against them, not looking at the bleakness of their present predicament but gazing ahead toward the coming judgment on their opponents, when their religion will remain.

It would be easy for them to return to complacency. It would be easy to reject Jesus and be spared persecution, and it is precisely the avoidance of this persecution that was so tempting to the readers as Peter wrote to them. Peter frames this negatively as "mindlessness." It doesn't make sense to knowingly reject what is right; this is stupid. They need to set themselves apart in all their conduct. They need to be holy -- dedicated to God -- because God himself is undefiled.

The quotation comes from Lev 11:44, in the midst of a passage indicating that God's followers should not become defiled in any way. Peter's application is that returning to non-messianic Judaism would be a defilement that God has warned them against.

And if you call on the Father, who judges according to each one's work, without personal bias, then conduct the season of your stay here in fear, knowing that it was not with corruptible things,

silver or gold, that you were redeemed from your worthless conduct that was handed down by your ancestors, but with valuable blood--the Anointed One's blood--like that of a spotless and unblemished lamb.

As an aside, the author makes mention of the fact that God judges one's deeds. His application is that the choices that the readers make will be judged. God shows no "personal bias." That is, it won't matter if they **used** to follow Jesus; the choices that they make now are of paramount importance. Therefore, all those who call on God should "conduct the season of your stay here in fear." They should continue to recognize that earthly things cannot buy a place in God's kingdom (and so apparently some of their opponents were wealthy), but that the blood of the Messiah is more valuable than anything their opponents might have to offer. Peter naturally likens Jesus' personal sacrifice to the Passover. Under the first covenant, God demanded a perfect sacrifice, and riches would not suffice, nor would they serve as a substitute. The "worthless conduct", legalistic practices, had been "handed down" by earlier Jews, and now the readers are free of such things, *if* they continue to recognize Jesus.

This was indeed known earlier, before the creation was laid down, but it was made to appear in the last of seasons on your account. You are the ones who trust in God through him--in the one who raised him up from among the dead and gave him glory. And so, your trust and hope are in God.

The coming of the Messiah had been part of God's plan since the very beginning, since "before the creation was laid down," even though the Messiah only recently came. The author turns for the moment to the positive aspects of Christian life. You, the readers, are the ones who are reaping the benefits of God's plan. You are the ones who got to see the Messiah come. You are the ones who realize that God resurrected Jesus and gave you hope. Isn't it true that your genuine hope is in the God who was powerful enough to accomplish this plan? Of course.

*Since you have purified your souls by listening to the truth to the point of having brotherly love without hypocrisy, love one another fervently from the heart, since you were born not of a corruptible seed but of an incorruptible one, through God's living and continuing message. Because **"all flesh is like an herb, and all its glory is like an herb's flower. The herb withered, and the flower fell off, but Yahweh's declaration continues for the age."** Now this is the good message that was announced to you.*

Again, the writer refers to elements of Jewish ritual. (Unlike their opponents), the readers' souls/lives have been purified. They are free from all defilements. Why? Because they heard "the truth" -- that the Messiah had come -- and they had embraced it. Peter recalls their genuine affection for one another, which Jesus taught, and urges them to continue in true love. Although he has yet to apply this, Peter's intent appears to be to stave off a more violent schism between Jewish people. The readers shouldn't respond to unkindness with more unkindness; they should show love for their kinsmen, as Jesus had taught. Why? Because unlike Judaism, which was based on the physical lineage of Abraham, the readers were now "born...of an incorruptible [seed]". The message about the Messiah, the "living and continuing" message from God, has distinguished them from their kinsmen in this fashion. Judaism is based on something that decays; Messianic Judaism will last forever.

Peter quotes Isaiah 40:6 and 40:8 -- part of a passage that referred to the coming of the Messiah (see vv. 3-5 about the Messiah and his forerunner). His application is what he has just written: that God's message -- about the Messiah and his teachings -- will endure forever, whereas physical lineage (like that of Abraham) is "like grass". Peter is not referring to each person dying but to the whole concept of lineage. A religion built on lineage is decaying and will soon wither, and he looks ahead to the destruction of the temple which would come soon.

*2:1 Therefore, put away every bad thing (including all deceit, and hypocrisies, and envy, and all harsh talking) and long for the rational milk, like newborn babies, so that by it you may grow into salvation, if you **"taste that Yahweh is an advantage."***

It would be both deceitful and hypocritical for the readers to act as though they believed like everyone else in the synagogue. How could they consider shamelessly assenting to something they knew to be wrong? But also, the readers must put away any envy (of their wealthy kinsmen) that they might have, and they must not speak ill of their Jewish brothers and sisters. Instead of this unproductive activity, Peter urges the readers to seek the genuine spiritual food -- the teachings of Jesus, which are from God. The quote is from the Septuagint text of Psalm 34:8. It is a psalm of consolation for those who follow God. Among other things, the Psalm urges its listeners to "seek peace and pursue it" (v. 14), and Peter was certainly insinuating that Jesus' teachings were to have peace whenever possible.

*Go near to him, the living **"stone which was"** indeed **"rejected"** by people but was **"chosen and valuable"** to God. And let yourselves be constructed like living stones to be a spiritual house, a holy priesthood, to offer spiritual sacrifices (through the Anointed One) that are a delight to God. Because it is contained in writing, **"Look! I am placing a stone in Zion, a corner foundation, a chosen, valuable one. And the one who trusts in it will not be disgraced."***

Rather than shying away from their Messiah, the readers should approach him. The author reminds them that the Messiah was "the stone" (from Psa 118:22) that the Jewish leaders rejected but which God made into "the cornerstone" of his new covenant -- the stone on which the entire covenant has been built. Jesus was "chosen and valuable" to God; this alludes to Isa 28:16, which Peter is preparing to quote.

If the readers too feel "rejected by people," then they should consider themselves to be like Jesus -- they are "living stones". Their maturation process is building them into a spiritual house, not a physical temple. The readers are part of "a holy priesthood," a priesthood not based on lineage and of which every one of them is a part. Instead of animal sacrifices, their good deeds are "spiritual sacrifices" to God.

The context from Isaiah (vv. 28:14ff.) is about those Jewish people who refused to listen to God. God's anger was coming for them, and they tried to hide from it. But God had built a structure for them, in which they would be free from his anger. He had built it on the cornerstone of the Messiah, which they had rejected. Therefore, they would be destroyed in the coming "scourge" (v. 18). Again, Peter is looking ahead to the imminent destruction of Priestly Judaism. The readers reliance on their Messiah will save them; they will be part of the structure (in Isaiah's language) that will shelter them from the scourge.

*Therefore, the value is for you who trust. However, for those who are untrusting **"the stone that was rejected by the builders, this one has become the cornerstone,"** and, **"a stone of tripping and a rock of stumbling."** Those who trip are unpersuaded by the message for which they were laid down.*

Those Jews who accept their Messiah have this shelter from what John the Baptizer calls the "coming anger" (Mt 3), but those who do not trust will see Jesus become the cornerstone of the way of devotion that will remain after the judgment on Israel.

*But you are a chosen race, a "royal priesthood, a holy nation", a people for **"God's possession,"** so that you may declare the virtues of the one who called you out of darkness into his wonderful light. You are those who were once **"not a people"** but now are a people of God, those who once **"did not receive mercy"** but now have received mercy.*

Israel viewed themselves as a chosen people, and rightly so, for God had chosen the Jewish people to carry his message. God had covenanted with the descendants of Abraham, and he gave them Moses and the prophets. Yet Peter says that it is the messianic Jews who are the "chosen race." He mentions Ex 19:6, where Yahweh God instructed Moses to tell the people that they would all be his priests -- a nation devoted to God. "You will be my own possession among all peoples," God said. Yet so quickly did those same people turn away from God to serve idols. By the time of Samuel, they wanted to be like the other nations, with earthly kings ruling over them (rather than judges passing on God's wisdom). Peter refers then to Messianic Jews as receiving the true intent of God's relationship with humanity -- the readers, not their opponents, are the royal priesthood. The readers are part of the holy nation. The readers are God's own people, along with all who embrace the Messiah that God sent.

Next, Peter alludes to Hosea, where the prophet has named two of his children "Not My People" (Lo-Ammi) and "Did Not Receive Mercy" (Lo-Ruhamah). This had been done at God's direction, for God viewed Israel as having broken their covenant with him: "I will have mercy no longer on the house of Israel, to forgive them at all" (Hos 1:6), and "You are not my people, and I am not your god" (Hos 1:8).

It was Israel who had spurned God, and in Peter's eyes, it is those who accept their Messiah who receive the blessing. Where once they were part of that group who was called "not my people" and "did not receive mercy," now they are God's people and have received mercy, since the readers who retain Jesus will have a covenant to cling to during and after the First Revolt. For the promise made in Hosea to Israel is that despite their rejection of him, enough will later accept him so that God will say, "You are sons of the living God." As Peter views it, these are the Messianic Jews.

*11 Beloved ones: I am advising you, as travelers and strangers, to abstain from the strong fleshly desires that war against the soul. Have your conduct be good among the gentiles, so that in whatever harsh thing they might say about you as wrongdoers, they would look on your good deeds and glorify God **"in the day of oversight."***

Peter's advice then boils down to this: although the readers feel like striking back against their fellow Jews, they should abstain from every desire to do so. The gentiles who surround the readers see the conflict that exists between the Jewish sects, and no matter what is said about the Christians, their conduct must be loving enough so that God would be glorified. "The day of oversight" is borrowed from Isaiah (10:3). God promises justice to be dealt out, and since judgment is coming soon upon Israel, Peter advises his fellow Jewish Christians to be clean-hearted when that judgment arrives.

Be submissive to every human being on the Lord's account: whether to the Emperor as superior, or to those who govern as if they were sent by him to exact justice on wrongdoers (but praise to those who do good). Because this is what God wants: that in doing good you would silence the ignorance of mindless people. Submit as free people, and not as though you have freedom covering wrong. On the contrary, do it as God's slaves.

Here, Peter gets to the specifics of the problems faced by his readers. They are tempted with striking back against their Jewish brothers and sisters, and (as we have seen) they are also tempted to acquiesce. Neither solution is palatable to Peter. In a bold move, he urges his Jewish Christian associates to trust the gentile authorities to "exact justice" from God, firmly believing that the Christian people will not be wiped out along with their fellow Jews because the Romans will see that the Christian sect do not oppose Roman rule. History has proven Peter right about one thing: there was no Christian state to wipe out, and Rome never declared war on Christianity; however, persecutions would face Christians off and on for several hundred years.

The readers should submit freely to Roman rule, resisting any tendency toward Jewish nationalism. (Remember that Jesus had foretold, Mt 24, that his followers should not fight for Jerusalem when it should be besieged.) God wants the goodness of his readers' character to be what spares them, a genuine goodness and not "freedom covering wrong."

Value all people. Love the brotherhood. Fear God. Value the Emperor.

This blanket statement sums up Peter's advice in several areas, and Peter may now move on to relationships between the readers and other Jews.

The household servants should be submissive in all fear to their masters, not only to the good and gentle ones but also to the twisted ones. For this is favor: if someone, through being conscious of God, endures sorrows and suffers unjustly. For what credit is it if you are sinning and endure a beating for it? But if you are doing good and endure suffering, this is favor with God.

Naturally, servants need to do what their masters tell them. For that matter, anyone in a subservient position should listen to his boss. This situation is more specific: there are servants among the readers who have masters who oppose Messianic Judaism. Their resistance to their masters, some of it unjustified, has caused them to be beaten. Peter reminds them that one has favor with God if one suffers for God. But if these servants suffer because they are being belligerent, this is not a good thing. Being beaten because they are sinning is no credit, but if

they are following Jesus' teachings toward love -- as Peter has just advised -- and if still they are beaten, then in that situation God recognizes their suffering and shows favor.

*For you were called into this because the Anointed One also suffered on your behalf, leaving a copy behind for you so that you might follow in his footsteps: he didn't sin, "**nor was any deceit found in his mouth.**" When he was verbally abused, he did not verbally abuse in return. When suffering, he did not threaten. Instead, he gave himself up to the one who judges justly.*

Peter quotes Isaiah 53:9, one of the "Songs of the Suffering Servant," applying it to the Messiah just as Jesus himself had done. Jesus had been verbally and physically abused, just as some of the readers are being abused. Yet he resisted all temptation to strike back. He was guiltless in the face of persecution, and the readers should "follow in his footsteps" in that respect. Jesus' example of steadfast trust in God is to be the readers' pattern of conduct. Just as Jesus submitted to God's greater sense of justice, so also should Peter's suffering servants.

*"**He took our sins**" in his body to the tree, so that we who have been made to leave our sins might live for what is right. You were healed "**by his scars.**" For you were "**like sheep going astray,**" but you have now turned back to the shepherd and overseer of your lives.*

Peter continues to quote the servant song (Isa 53), stating flatly that the readers were benefitting on account of the suffering that Jesus endured. Jesus died, so that "we... might live for what is right." The readers "were healed by his scars." The Jewish people are portrayed in the song as sheep going astray. Peter indicates that with their fellow-Jews, the readers were once lost sheep, but now that they embraced their Messiah, they have "turned back to the shepherd," a figure which may simply represent God here or may be an allusion to Ezekiel 37, where God guides his people (in the new covenant) through a shepherd (37:24).

3:1 In the same way, you wives should be submitting yourselves to your own husbands, so that if also some of them are unpersuaded by the message, they might be gained without a word through their wives' conduct, after seeing that your conduct is pure in fear. Don't let your adornment be what is external: braiding your hair, putting on golden chains, or wearing attractive clothes. On the contrary, adorn the person hidden in your heart with the incorruptible thing: a meek and tranquil spirit, which is very valuable in God's presence. For in this way also, those earlier holy women who hoped in God adorned themselves and submitted to their own husbands, just as Sarah paid attention to Abraham, calling him "sir." You have become her children by doing good and not fearing a single fright.

Here, the author begins to address an even touchier problem. Faithful Jews did not intermarry, but what if one spouse accepted Jesus as the Messiah and the other did not? If both were unyielding, this would lead to strife within the marriage. Therefore, Peter first urges the wives to be submissive to their husbands. The terms "submission" and "obedience" are often confused. What Peter hopes will happen is that the wives will treat their unbelieving husbands with the love of Jesus. Since their words are unpersuasive, perhaps their godly conduct will convince their husbands that Jesus was from God -- and they will not have had to say anything.

He most certainly does not mean that they should attempt to seduce their husbands or lure them into the way of Jesus. Instead, it is their "meek and tranquil spirit" -- the loving and peaceful attitude taught by Jesus -- that should be their "adornment." Again, Peter points to the Torah. We read in Genesis what a strong woman Sarah was, and yet at one point she called him "my lord" (Gen 18:12, usu. translated "husband"). What was the circumstance? Abraham had received a saying from God that Sarah would bear his son, even though she was very old. She laughed at that, and denied having laughed, but she went along with what God had said (and Isaac, whose name means "He laughs", was born). So long as it is not against God's will, the women should not resist their non-Christian husbands.

In the same way, so that your prayers will not be hindered, you husbands should submit, dwelling with your wife according to knowledge as with a weaker vessel, and assigning her value, since you are also joint-heirs of the free gift of life.

The use of "in the same way" indicates the same action, although many translators miss this point. Those husbands who have unbelieving Jewish wives should also be submissive and should recognize their wives' value in the relationship. Peter's mention of their knowledge that their wives are physically weaker is his kind way of saying, "Don't take out your frustrations physically." Don't beat your wives, for this sin would be a hindrance to you, spiritually. Instead, recognize your wives as equals. Being both Jews, you inherited the promises of the Messiah equally -- you are "joint-heirs".

Now finally, you should all have the same attitude: be sympathizers, people who love the brothers, compassionate people, people with humble attitudes. Do not repay bad with bad, nor verbal abuse with verbal abuse. But on the contrary, say good things, because you were called into this so that you would inherit praise.

Concluding the notion of "submitting to every human being," Peter writes of attitude. His readers' attitudes should be that of compassion and humility. Jesus had taught of turning the other cheek rather than exacting "an eye for an eye." Peter applies this to his readers' situation. They should not strike when struck, nor should they make verbal attacks when they are so attacked. Instead, they should speak **good** things when confronted with the verbal abuse that they are enduring (on account of their belief that Jesus was the Messiah). Jesus had said that in this way they would overcome evil with good; recalling this, Peter writes that Jesus had called them to repay evil with kindness, and God would bless them if they followed this teaching.

For "the one who wants to love life and see good days should restrain his tongue from wrong and his lips from speaking deceit." Now "he should bow out of wrong and do good. He should seek peace and pursue it, because Yahweh's eyes are on the just, and his ears are directed toward their prayers. But Yahweh's face scowls on those who do wrong."

Peter quotes a slightly different text of Psa 34:12-16. The application is clear. In all of their relationships with other Jews, the readers need to remember to "seek peace and pursue it." This is what God wants, and he will hear the prayers of those who seek peace. (Note that this is reminiscent of what he advised the husbands on how to treat their Jewish wives.) God will not be pleased with the readers if they provoke further arguments or violence.

13 *And who is the one who will do bad things to you if you become jealous for what is good? On the contrary, if you suffer on account of what is right, you are also blessed. "But do not fear with their fear, nor be alarmed." Instead, "make Yahweh^o holy" in your hearts, always being prepared to give a defense to all the people who ask you for an account of the hope that is in you. But have a good conscience with meekness and fear, so that those who slander your good conduct in the Anointed One might be disgraced by what they say against you.*

Compared to the blessings from God, those things that the readers' opponents might do to them are small indeed. The readers need to remember that if they suffer because they are following the teachings of the Messiah, then there is no need to fear. The quote is from Isa 8:12-3. God's warning through Isaiah was that his faithful ones should not fear as others fear, because if they fear only God and trust in him, "he will become a sanctuary and will be a stone of tripping and a rock of stumbling to both houses of Israel, a trap and a snare to the inhabitants of Jerusalem. And many shall stumble thereon..." (Isa 8:14-15a).

The readers can make God holy in their hearts by following the teachings of the Anointed One whom God sent. They can make God holy by not fighting violence with violence or slander with slander. They can make God holy by not quietly assenting to the attacks made against Jesus, but by standing up for their beliefs when those beliefs are called into question. The readers should always be prepared to do this, but at the same time they should do so humbly and meekly. If indeed they pursue peace in Jesus' name, their opponents (who slander them) will be disgraced.

For, if God's will may want it, it is better to suffer for doing good than for doing wrong, because the Anointed One also suffered once for sins -- the just one on behalf of the unjust ones -- so that you he might lead you to God.

The readers' example, Jesus, suffered and died in order to lead people to God, yet he was just and the sinners for whom he died were unjust. Certainly his having suffered "for doing good" had a greater positive effect than if someone might suffer for doing wrong.

Indeed, he was put to death physically but made alive spiritually, in which manner also Henoch went and heralded to those spirits in jail who at one time were unpersuaded, while God's longsuffering nature was waiting, in Noah's days, while an ark was being prepared in which a few (that is, eight) lives were saved through water.

And just as Jesus heralded the coming judgment, so also Henoch ascended into the heavens and heralded doom to the unpersuaded. The Greek text as we currently have it omits Henoch's name, however as Bowyer, Harris, and others have noted, the Greek phrase translated "in which (manner) also" [ἐν ᾧ καὶ] sounds almost identical to Henoch's name, [Ενοχ]. It is their conjecture and this translator's that Henoch's name originally belonged in the text. This is supported by the fact that there is no account elsewhere of Jesus having done such a thing. Furthermore, the event in question happened "in Noah's days." The apocryphal book commonly called *1 Enoch* provides an account of Henoch doing just what is described here -- he had been called into heaven spiritually and sent as a herald to the messengers who sinned (Gen 6). The book of *1 Enoch* is mentioned in 2 Peter and quoted in Jude, so we know that it was in use by early Christians (and possibly Peter in particular).

Peter uses an unusual word for "confinement" (jail), here, Τάρταρος. Tartarus is mentioned nowhere else in the NT, but it is mentioned in *1 Enoch* as a place of confinement for messengers, over which the messenger Uriel has jurisdiction. *1 Enoch* 9 describes the events of Genesis 6:4 in more detail, and finally (*1 Enoch* 12), Enoch was sent as a herald to these "Watchers" who sinned:

"Enoch, scribe of Right, go, herald to those Watchers of heaven who have left the high heaven, the holy eternal place, and have defiled themselves with women, and have done as the children of earth do, and have taken women for themselves: 'You have worked great destruction on the earth: And you will have neither peace nor forgiveness of sin.' And since they delight themselves in their children, they will observe the murder of their beloved ones, and they will cry over the destruction of their children, and they will beg forever. 'But you will not receive mercy and peace.'"

All of this happened just before the flood, and according to Genesis 7-8, it was the flood which vindicated Noah's trust in God. Although there were only eight in Noah's immediate family (and many around him), when God brought the flood, only those who publically proclaimed God were spared.

Now also, an antitype of this, baptism, saves us -- not the removal of physical dirt but an inquiry of God by a good conscience -- through the resurrection of Anointed Jesus, who went into heaven and is at God's right side, with messengers and authorities and powers submitting to him.

The physical act of baptism has no saving power. However, Christian baptism existed as a public recognition that Jesus was the Messiah. This would prove to be the readers' vindication -- their continuing to adhere to the Messiah despite trial. When God brought down the destruction of Priestly Judaism, the Christians would be spared. Peter continues to repeat this in different ways because he wants the readers to focus not on their present affliction but on the future.

He bridges this thought to the next by saying that after Jesus suffered, he went to heaven. So too will the readers who suffer receive their reward from God. In Jesus' case, those very authorities who condemned him (and even the messengers) now submit willingly to him.

4:1 Therefore, since the Anointed One suffered physically, you too should arm yourselves with the same thought -- because the one who has suffered physically has stopped sinning -- to the point of no longer living the remaining time in the flesh according to strong human desire but according to what God wants.

If the readers indeed suffer for keeping the Messiah's teachings (and not for doing wrong), then they won't be sinning. They'll be living by God's wishes, and this is what God wants.

For the time which has gone by is enough to have worked out what the gentiles want, who walked in debauchery, in strong desires, in alcoholic excess, in orgies, in drinking parties, and in unlawful idolatries. They are surprised that you are not running together with them in the same course of imprudent excess and evil speaking. They will return an account to the one who holds judgment over living and dead. Since for this reason the good message was announced also to

dead people, so that indeed they would be judged physically according to human beings but would live spiritually according to God.

The gentiles who see this conflict between Jews are surprised that the readers have not left Judaism entirely and turned to their idolatrous ways, but in the end they will give an account to God for their actions. These people are "dead" spiritually, and so the gentiles too needed the good message. But those gentiles who did not embrace God will be judged as well at the end of their natural lives. It was necessary for Peter to write this in the event that some of the readers were thinking of leaving Judaism entirely, in order to avoid dealing with the conflict.

The only proper way to conduct themselves was to continue being a Jew and to continue proclaiming their Messiah. There was no easy way out.

*7 Now the aim of all things is near. Therefore, have a sound attitude and be vigilant in prayers. Before all things, have fervent love for one another, because **"love covers a multitude of sins."** Be loving to strangers among one another without grumbling. Just as each person has received a free gift, you should use it to serve among yourselves, like nice stewards of God's diverse generosity.*

The aim or purpose of all of their patience -- the coming judgment on Israel -- was rapidly approaching. Therefore, Peter urged his readers to continue in strength, watching for the events to unfold and maintaining their relationship with God in prayer. Ahead of everything, though, they must love one their fellow Jews. "Hatred stirs up strife," reads Prov 10:12, "but love covers a multitude of sins." Even if the people among them, Messianic or not, are strangers, the readers should be loving and peaceful toward them, and they should use whatever gifts they have to serve those people; they shouldn't withhold anything good from them.

If someone speaks, it should be as the oracles of God. If someone serves, it should be as out of the strength which God supplies, so that in all things God might be glorified through Anointed Jesus. To him be glory and might for ever and ever. A-men.

The readers shouldn't speak slanderous things. They shouldn't say things in retribution for the harm done to them, but they should speak "as God's oracles." They shouldn't serve their fellow Jews half-heartedly either, but "out of the strength which God supplies." It would be noticeable if they served falsely, but if they are true to God, he will be glorified through the readers' adherence to Jesus' teachings. Peter breaks out into a doxology to God.

*12 Beloved ones: don't be surprised at the flaming trial which is happening to you, as though a strange thing were befalling you. On the contrary, rejoice as you share in the sufferings of the Anointed One, so that you may rejoice and be glad at the revelation of his glory. If you are reproached in the Anointed One's name, you are blessed, because **"the spirit"** of glory and **"of God is resting on you."** For no one among you should suffer as a murderer, or a thief, or a wrongdoer, or as a meddler. But if he suffers as an Anointed, he should not be ashamed. Instead, he should glorify God in this name.*

Are the readers surprised to see their fellow Jews attacking them so? They shouldn't be. After all, they're merely sharing the sufferings that Jesus experienced at the hands of his countrymen. The readers should be glad that they are being reproached for their Messiah. Just as the spirit of God rested upon the Messiah (see Isa 11:1-3), God is also with the readers if they suffer in the name of their Messiah. Would they rather suffer as a sinner? No. Well, there is no shame in suffering as an Anointed -- a follower of the Anointed One. (The term "Anointed", "Christian", at first indicated those Jews who embraced Jesus as Messiah. He was the Anointed, and they were called "Anointed." Lukas indicates that it was the Greek group in Antiochus who first took this designation.) The author mentions "suffering as a meddler" along with the more obvious crimes. The readers' opponents are meddling in their affairs, stirring up trouble, and this is Peter's reminder that not only shouldn't the readers participate in the same sort of troublemaking, but also that there would be shame in doing so. Instead, they should give glory to God in proclaiming the Messiah.

*Because the season is here to begin the judgment with God's house. Now if it is first for us, what will be the end result for those who are unpersuaded by God's good message? And **"if the just person is scarcely saved, where will the impious and sinner appear?"** And so, those who are suffering according to what God wants should also commit themselves to a trustworthy creator by doing good.*

The First Revolt and subsequent judgment on all Israel was coming soon. Peter indicates that in a way, the judgment has already begun -- not on all Israel yet, but beginning with the Anointed. "If what you are seeing is so harsh," he theorizes, "then how harsh do you suppose that judgment will be on your kinsmen who rejected their Messiah?" They shouldn't even think about going back to mainstream Judaism, because it would be much harsher that way -- and history proved Peter to be correct. Once again, he advises them to commit themselves completely to God.

5:1 Therefore, as an older person, and as a witness of the sufferings of the Anointed One, and as a partner in the glory that is about to be revealed, I advise the older people among you: Feed God's flock among you, not by constraint but by choice, not for financial profit but eagerly, not as being lords of the land but becoming types for the flock. And when the First Shepherd appears, you will obtain the unfading crown of glory.

Peter's closing advice begins with his own affirmation of himself. The older people in the group were most likely the more stable ones. Perhaps some of them had been Christians for ten years. Being also an older person himself, Peter gives them some advice. Even more so in this time of trouble, it would be important for them to present good examples to the younger people. No, they're not to act as superiors to those younger people, but the young ones are struggling emotionally -- what they need are good examples. Lest Peter's advice be misunderstood, he doesn't intend to force his fellow old people to do this, nor should they do this out of the thought that they might profit monetarily in some way. No, their motives should be clean; they should want to help their younger counterparts. Their reward for this will not be earthly but heavenly.

In the same way, you younger people should be submissive to the older ones.

The younger people should follow the examples set by the more stable older Christians.

*Now all of you should submit to one another and be clothed in humility, because God **"stands opposed to the high-minded, but he gives favor to the humble."** Therefore, be humbled under God's mighty hand, so that he may lift you up in a season. Cast all your anxiety on him, because he cares about you.*

And everyone should treat one another with a humble and submissive attitude. The quotation of support is from the Septuagint text of Prov 3:34. If they treat one another as equals with all humility, they may not receive anything here, but God will lift them up. All of their worries about the present distress should be cast on God, as the readers remember that he cares about them.

*Be sober. Be vigilant. Your opponent, an accuser, walks around **"like a roaring lion"** seeking someone to devour. Stand against him. Be steadfast in trust, knowing that the same kinds of suffering are being completed by the brotherhood in the world. But the God of all generosity, who has called you into his eternal glory in Anointed Jesus after you have suffered for a short time, will confirm, strengthen, and establish you. Might is his for the age. A-mein.*

The accusing opponent, the non-Christian Jew, is embodied as a roaring lion here, and Peter quotes Psa 22:13, which describes the enemies of the Messiah that way. So the readers need to maintain their spiritual strength and remember that Christians all over are now facing the same difficulties at the hands of their fellow Jews. Peter reminds them that in the long run they will only have suffered "for a short time," and God is powerful enough to see them through this troubled time. They have been called into "eternal glory" through their trust in the Messiah, and they should look ahead to this.

12 Through Silvanus, your trustworthy brother as I record it, I have written briefly, advising and testifying that this is the true generosity of God. Stand in it. The woman in "Babylon" greets you. My son Markus does also. Greet one another with a kiss of love. Peace to all of you who are in the Anointed One.

Silvanus, who had been a companion of Paulus and was probably personally familiar with the struggles that the readers faced, acted as Peter's scribe for this letter. "This is the true generosity" refers to Messianic Judiasm. Peter, a legal witness to what Jesus said and did (see also 5:1), testifies to the readers that Christianity is the right way, so that the readers should remain in it.

"Babylon" is a nickname for Jerusalem – here as in Revelation. Some try to place Peter in Rome by making "the woman" into the Roman assembly. However, given what follows it is more natural to take the other view -- that "the woman" is Peter's wife. Peter's wife is in Jerusalem at the time of writing, and so Peter passes on greetings from her. "My son Markus" is likely to mean Peter's actual son here, although later tradition equates this "Markus" with Yohanan Markus, who is mentioned in the Actions of the Envoys. Tradition is insistent on this identification, since it is the only support for the view that Markus acted as Peter's scribe (and wrote the shortest of the accounts of Jesus' life). Apart from this mention, though (which is doubtful), there is no support for the view.

A kiss of affection was a normal greeting among Christians then, and Peter wishes them both love and peace, concluding his "brief letter."

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