

1 PETER 1

1. 1 Peter has a curious property: almost every verse can be read as a parallel to some other NT passage (see below). What can you infer from this about the author's theology and/or when 1 Peter was written? How does this fit with your theory (if any) of authorship?

Parallels between 1 Peter and other NT writings:

1:1	Heb 11:13; James 1:1	2:1	Eph 4:25, 31; Tit 3:1; James 1:21	2:25	Heb 13:20
1:2	Heb 12:24	2:2-6	Eph 2:18-22	3:1	Eph 5:22
1:3	Eph 1:3	2:5	Rom 12:1	3:1-6	1 Tim 2:9-14
1:3-5	Tit 3:4-7	2:6-8	Rom 9:32-33	3:8-9	Rom 12:16-17
1:4	Mt 6:20	2:7	Mt 21:42	3:9	Lk 6:28; Heb 12:17
1:6-7	Rom 5:3-5; James 1:2-3	2:9	Tit 2:14; Rev 1:6; 5:10	3:14	Mt 5:10
1:10-12	Eph 3:2-6	2:10	Rom 9:25	3:18	Rom 6:10; Eph 2:18; Heb 9:28
1:13	Mt 13:17	2:11	Heb 11:13; James 4:1	3:22	Eph 1:20-22; Col 2:15
1:14	Rom 12:2; Eph 2:2-3	2:12	Mt 5:16	4:8	James 5:20
1:17	Lk 11:2	2:13-17	Rom 13:1-7	4:10-11	Rom 12:6-7
1:20	Eph 1:4	2:16	Gal 5:13	4:13	Mt 5:10
1:22	Rom 12:9-10	2:19-20	Lk 6:32-33	4:14	Mt 5:11; Heb 13:13
1:23-2:2	James 1:10-11, 18-22;	2:24	Rom 6:2, 11; Heb 10:10	5:2	Acts 20:28
				5:4	Heb 13:20
				5:5-9	James 4:6-10

2. More than any other epistle save Hebrews and Revelation, 1 Peter draws upon OT images and ideas. For instance, chapter 1 draws a parallel between the exodus and the first-century church context.

Following are elements of the exodus story¹. Find their equivalent elements in 1 Peter 1.

- i. Hebrews leaving Egypt were told to gird up their loins for quick departure (Ex 12:11)
- ii. In the desert the Israelites murmured and wanted to return to the fleshpots of Egypt (Ex 16:2-3)

¹ This list is taken, including wording, from Raymond Brown's *The Churches the Apostles Left Behind*, ch. 5, p. 77-8. His answers are (i) 1:13; (ii) 1:14; (iii) 1:15-16; (iv) 1:17, 1:4; (v) 1:18; (vi) 1:18-19

- iii. Moses was ordered to tell the people whom God was making his own, “Be holy, for I, the Lord your God, am holy” (Lev 19:2)
 - iv. Israel wandered in the desert before it reached its inheritance in the promised land
 - v. Prophets and patriarchs use redemption and even the paying of a ransom as figures of speech to describe God’s liberation of his people from Egypt (Ex 6:5-6; Deut 7:8; Isa 52:3)
 - vi. Israelites worshiped the a calf made with silver and gold taken from their Egyptian neighbors at the time of the tenth plague; yet were spared from that plague by the blood of the unblemished Passover lamb marking their houses (Ex 32:1-12; 11:2; 12:5-7)
- a. How did the Passover and Exodus stories give comfort to Jews of Peter’s day?
 - b. How would Peter’s words have brought comfort to first-century Christians suffering in Asia Minor? What exhortations does Peter give in 1:13-16? How would Peter’s parallel with the story of Israel have motivated his readers to obey Peter’s exhortations in 1:13-16?
 - c. Jewish cultural identity in the first century was strengthened and maintained even in dispersion by the key cultural markers of the kosher laws, the Sabbath, and circumcision. Each of these was radically altered or removed by the Gospel of Jesus. How, then, was it possible for a Gentile convert to see identify him or herself with the chosen people—as Peter does for them here? How, without these markers, has the church survived?
 - d. Just as 21st-century Western culture differs from first-century Roman culture, so our context differs from that of the early church. Are Peter’s words relevant to us as well? Is there any way in which it would encourage you or strengthen your faith to explore your identity as a member of the chosen people?
3. Peter encourages the churches in Asia Minor by emphasizing their new birth. He articulates the way it affects their attitudes, how it locates them in the eschatological timeline, and discussed the basis of this new birth in Christ, particularly from the perspective of God’s redemptive plan in history.
- Joel Green refers to the affect of new birth on attitudes as a “conversion of the imagination”:

Granted that the phrase “conversion of the imagination” is alien to 1 Peter, it is nonetheless helpful shorthand for grasping Peter’s basic emphasis. By “imagination” I mean “a basic image-schematic capacity for ordering our experience,” a life-world employing patterns of thought that are at once *conceptual* (a way of seeing things), *conative* (a set of beliefs and values to which a group and its members are deeply

attached), and *action-guiding* (we live according to its terms). The issue is this: life-events do not come with self-contained and immediately obvious interpretations; rather, we conceptualize them in terms of imaginative structure that we take to be true, normal, and good. As a rule, the world-at-large casts a thick, dark cloud of despair over experiences of suffering, distress, trials and alien status. Peter insists that such experiences on the part of his audience must be read according to a radically different pattern of thought—one that grows out of new birth. “New birth,” then, as a dramatic metaphor for the decisive transformation of life that has come in accordance with God’s mercy and by means of the resurrection of Jesus. What Peter announces, then, is a conversion of the imagination: personal reconstruction within a new web of relationships, resocialization within the new community, and the embodiment of a new life-world evidenced in altered dispositions and attitudes.

So Peter can exhort them not to “conform to the evil desires you had when you lived in ignorance” (14), using the same word Paul uses in Rom 12:2 where he discussed transformation of our patterns of thought.

Discuss.



Fun fact: “The idea that Peter was crucified upside down actually comes from the apocryphal *Acts of Peter*, a fanciful second-century work that usually is given little credibility by religious scholars. In this case, however, the work devotes several paragraphs to explaining why Peter was crucified in this manner: Peter himself requested it and then explained the elaborate and esoteric symbolism of the act (something like birth imagery, recalling Adam). Elsewhere, the Jewish historian Josephus notes that soldiers sometimes amused themselves by crucifying criminals in different positions, so it is possible that the *Acts of Peter* is not inventing the story but rather supplying theological reasons to explain an actual fact regarding Peter’s execution (a humiliating detail passed over by others).” [Powell, 466]

Shorter Fun Fact: Vv 3-12 are, in the Greek, a single sentence.