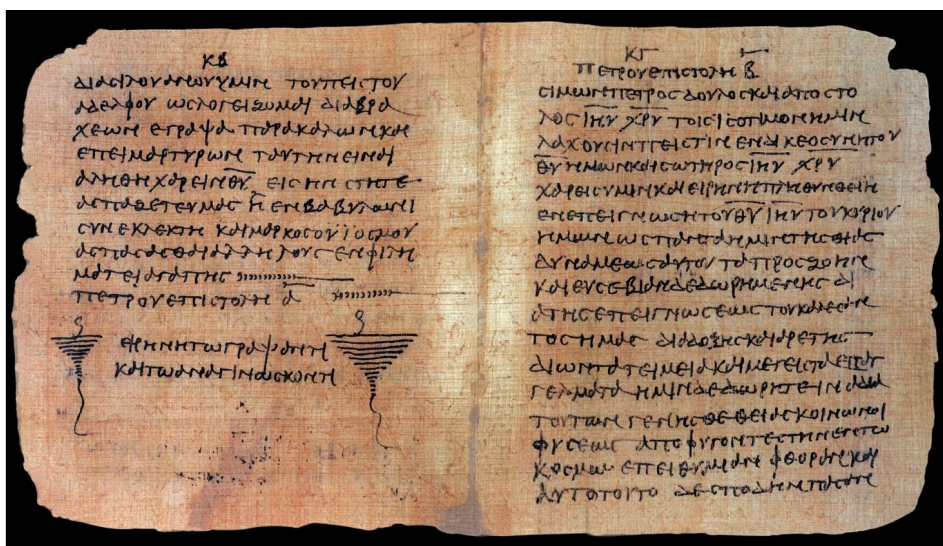


1 PETER

Living Hope

AUTHOR	Peter, one of Jesus' twelve apostles, 1:1, with help from Silvanus, 5:12. Many critical scholars think a later follower wrote in his name.
WRITTEN FROM	Rome, which Peter calls Babylon, 5:13.
DATE WRITTEN	About AD 62 to 64, shortly before Nero turned on the Christians of Rome. Critical scholars say about AD 70 to 95.
WRITTEN TO	Believers scattered across five Roman provinces in what is now Turkey: Pontus, Galatia, Cappadocia, Asia and Bithynia, 1:1.
WHY HE WROTE	To give hope to believers who were insulted and mistreated for following Jesus, and to show them how to live and suffer well.
KEY VERSE	1 Peter 1:3. He has given us new birth into a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead.



THE OLDEST COPY OF 1 PETER

Papyrus 72, copied about AD 300 and found in Egypt. The left page holds the last lines of 1 Peter, 5:12 to 14, with in Babylon and Mark my son. Under them the copyist wrote the title, Of Peter, Letter 1, and a blessing: Peace to the one who wrote and to the one who reads. The right page starts 2 Peter. Kept in the Vatican Library. Public domain.

Historical Setting

Peter was a fisherman from Galilee who became the leader of Jesus' twelve apostles. About 30 years after the cross, he writes from Rome to believers far away in what is now Turkey. Many of them were Gentiles who used to live wild, 4:3. When they turned to Jesus they quit the idol parties, and their old friends called them strange and spread lies about them, 2:12 and 4:4. There was no law yet against being a Christian everywhere in the em-

pire, but they were mocked, slandered and sometimes beaten. Soon it got worse. In AD 64 a great fire burned Rome, and the emperor Nero blamed the Christians.

What Was Going Wrong

- INSULTS.** Neighbors slandered them as evildoers, 2:12 and 4:4.
- SUFFERING.** Trials of many kinds, and a fiery trial on the way, 1:6 and 4:12.
- OLD HABITS.** The pull back to the old life of partying and idols, 2:11 and 4:3.
- HARD HOMES.** Slaves with cruel masters and wives with unbelieving husbands, 2:18 and 3:1.
- FEAR.** Fear of the people who opposed them, 3:14.
- PROUD LEADERS.** The temptation for elders to lead for money or power, 5:2 to 3.

The Idiot Proof Summary

1 Peter is a letter of hope for people having a hard time. Peter never promises that following Jesus will be easy. He says suffering is normal, it is temporary, and it is worth it, because Jesus suffered first and then rose. So live as God's people in a world that is not your home. Be holy, love one another, respect everyone, do good even when you are treated badly, and keep your hope fixed on the day Jesus is revealed.

1 Peter at a Glance

- CH 1** **A LIVING HOPE**
New birth, a safe inheritance, faith tested by fire, so be holy.
- CH 2** **LIVING STONES**
Christ the cornerstone, God's own people, honor the king, follow His steps.
- CH 3** **SUFFERING FOR DOING GOOD**
Wives and husbands, bless instead of insult, Christ died for sins, Noah's ark.
- CH 4** **THE FIERY TRIAL**
Live for God, love deeply, use your gifts, suffer as a Christian.
- CH 5** **SHEPHERDS AND THE LION**
Elders shepherd the flock, humble yourselves, resist the devil.

Where Jesus Shows Up

- 1 PETER 1:19** The precious blood of Christ, a lamb without blemish or spot.
- 1 PETER 2:6 TO 7** The chosen and precious cornerstone that the builders rejected.
- 1 PETER 2:24** He Himself bore our sins in His body on the tree.
- 1 PETER 5:4** The Chief Shepherd who will appear.

What to Watch for in 1 Peter

- MESSIANIC PROPHECIES** 1:19, 2:4, 2:6-8, 2:10, 2:22-25, 3:18, 3:22 and 1 more
- MESSIANIC FORESHADOW** 3:20-21
- END TIMES PROPHECIES** 1:5, 1:13, 4:7
- THE HEART** 1:22, 3:4, 3:15
- ARCHAEOLOGY** 5:13
- MIRACLES** 1:12
- DEMONIC** 3:19, 4:3, 5:8-9
- NOTABLE** 1:3-4, 1:6-11, 1:15, 1:23, 2:2, 2:11, 2:17 and 7 more
- JESUS SPEAKING** Words in red are Jesus speaking, or God the Father speaking from heaven.

Cool Stuff Most People Miss

THE ROCK

Jesus named him Peter, which means rock, Matthew 16:18. Here Peter calls Jesus the living stone and believers living stones, 2:4 to 5.

AN EYEWITNESS

Peter calls himself a witness of Christ's sufferings, 5:1. He was there.

THE WORD CHRISTIAN

4:16 is one of only three places the Bible uses the word Christian, with Acts 11:26 and 26:28.

WHAT THE ROMANS WROTE

Two Romans, Tacitus and Pliny, wrote about Christians who suffered just for the name. See their pages.

LUTHER'S PICK

In his 1522 New Testament Martin Luther named 1 Peter among the books that show you Christ, with John, Romans and Galatians.

What Happened Next?

In AD 64 a fire burned much of Rome, and Nero blamed the Christians. Early Christian writers say Peter was crucified in Rome under Nero, and Origen says upside down. Before he died Peter wrote one more letter, 2 Peter 1:14. Papias says Mark, Peter's son in the faith, 5:13, wrote down Peter's preaching, and it became the Gospel of Mark.

MESSIANIC PROPHECIES

END TIMES PROPHECIES

MIRACLES

OLD TESTAMENT QUOTED IN THE NEW

NOTABLE

1

CHAPTER 1 IN 30 SECONDS

Peter opens with good news: a living hope and an inheritance that cannot rot, rust or get repossessed. Trials? They are a furnace that proves your faith is real gold. The prophets wondered about all this, and even angels lean in to look. So be holy, because God is holy, and love each other from the heart.

A GREETING FROM PETER // 2 PETER 1:1-2

¹Peter, an apostle of Jesus Christ,
To the elect who are exiles of the Dispersion throughout Pontus, Galatia, Cappadocia, Asia, and Bithynia, chosen ²according to the foreknowledge of God the Father and sanctified by the Spirit for obedience to Jesus Christ and sprinkling by His blood:

Grace and peace be yours in abundance.

A LIVING HOPE

³Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ! By His great mercy He has given us new birth into a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, ⁴and into an inheritance that is imperishable, undefiled, and unfading, reserved in heaven for you, ⁵who through faith are shielded by God's power for the salvation that is ready to be revealed in the last time.

⁶In this you greatly rejoice, though now for a little while you may have had to suffer grief in various trials ⁷so that the proven character of your faith—more precious than gold, which perishes even though refined by fire—may result in praise, glory, and honor at the revelation of Jesus Christ.

⁸Though you have not seen Him, you love Him; and though you do not see Him now, you believe in Him and rejoice with an in-

- **1PE 1:1 [NOTE]** WHO WROTE IT? Peter, with help from Silvanus, 5:12. Silvanus is probably the Silas who traveled with Paul, Acts 15:40 and 1 Thessalonians 1:1. He may have helped with the smooth Greek, or carried the letter. Many critical scholars think a follower wrote it in Peter's name after his death, pointing to the polished Greek.
- **1PE 1:3 [NOTABLE]** The empty tomb is the reason for hope, and the inheritance can never spoil or fade.
- **1PE 1:5 [PROPHECY]** Kept by the power of God through faith for salvation ready to be revealed in the last time → STILL TO COME - MEDIUM
- **1PE 1:6 [NOTABLE]** Trials are like a furnace that shows faith is real gold.

expressible and glorious joy, ⁹now that you are receiving the goal of your faith, the salvation of your souls.

¹⁰Concerning this salvation, the prophets who foretold the grace to come to you searched and investigated carefully, ¹¹trying to determine the time and setting to which the Spirit of Christ in them was pointing when He predicted the sufferings of Christ and the glories to follow.

¹²It was revealed to them that they were not serving themselves, but you, when they foretold the things now announced by those who preached the gospel to you by the Holy Spirit sent from heaven. Even angels long to look into these things.

A CALL TO HOLINESS // HEBREWS 12:14-17

¹³Therefore prepare your minds for action. Be sober-minded. Set your hope fully on the grace to be given you at the revelation of Jesus Christ. ¹⁴As obedient children, do not conform to the passions of your former ignorance. ¹⁵But just as He who called you is holy, so be holy in all you do, ¹⁶for it is written: "Be holy, because I am holy."

¹⁷Since you call on a Father who judges each one's work impartially, conduct yourselves in reverent fear during your stay as foreigners. ¹⁸For you know that it was not with perishable things such as silver or gold that you were redeemed from the empty way of life you inherited from your forefathers, ¹⁹but with the precious blood of Christ, a lamb without blemish or spot. ²⁰He was known before the foundation of the world, but was revealed in the last times for your sake.

²¹Through Him you believe in God, who raised Him from the dead and glorified

- **1PE 1:8 [NOTABLE]** They never saw Jesus, and still loved Him with an inexpressible and glorious joy.
- **1PE 1:10 [NOTABLE]** The prophets saw the sufferings of Christ ahead of time, and even angels long to look into it.
- **1PE 1:12 [MIRACLE]** Even angels long to look into these things
- **1PE 1:13 [PROPHECY]** Rest your hope fully upon the grace that is to be brought to you at the revelation of Jesus Christ → STILL TO COME
- **1PE 1:15 [NOTABLE]** Holy means set apart for God, in all you do, not only on Sunday.
- **1PE 1:16 [QUOTES]** Direct ← LEV 11:44-45; 19:2; 20:7 p.-
- **1PE 1:19 [FULFILLS]** A spotless, blemish-free Lamb required for atonement and 2 more ← EX 12:5; IS 53:7; JN 1:29 p.-

MESSIANIC PROPHECIES THE HEART OLD TESTAMENT QUOTED IN THE NEW NOTABLE

Him; and so your faith and hope are in God.

THE ENDURING WORD // ISAIAH 40:6-8

²² Since you have purified your souls by obedience to the truth so that you have a genuine love for your brothers, love one another deeply, from a pure heart. ²³ For you have been born again, not of perishable seed, but of imperishable, through the living and enduring word of God. ²⁴ For,

*"All flesh is like grass,
and all its glory like the flowers of the field;
the grass withers and the flowers fall,
²⁵ but the word of the Lord stands forever."*

And this is the word that was proclaimed to you.

2

CHAPTER 2 IN 30 SECONDS

Grow up like babies who really want their milk. Jesus is the living stone the builders threw out, and now He holds the whole building up. You are living stones and a royal priesthood. Respect the government, yes, even that one. And when you suffer unfairly, remember Jesus took it without hitting back.

THE LIVING STONE AND CHOSEN PEOPLE // ISAIAH 28:14-22; 1 CORINTHIANS 3:10-15; EPHESIANS 2:19-22

¹ Rid yourselves, therefore, of all malice, deceit, hypocrisy, envy, and slander. ² Like newborn babies, crave pure spiritual milk, so that by it you may grow up in your salvation, ³ now that you have tasted that the Lord is good.

⁴ As you come to Him, the living stone, rejected by men but chosen and precious in God's sight, ⁵ you also, like living stones, are being built into a spiritual house to be a holy priesthood, offering spiritual sacri-

fices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ. ⁶ For it stands in Scripture:

*"See, I lay in Zion a stone,
a chosen and precious cornerstone,
and the one who believes in Him
will never be put to shame."*

⁷ To you who believe, then, this stone is precious. But to those who do not believe,

*"The stone the builders rejected
has become the cornerstone,"*

⁸ and,

*"A stone of stumbling
and a rock of offense."*

They stumble because they disobey the word—and to this they were appointed.

⁹ But you are a chosen people, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people for God's own possession, to proclaim the virtues of Him who called you out of darkness into His marvelous light. ¹⁰ Once you were not a people, but now you are the people of God; once you had not received mercy, but now you have received mercy.

¹¹ Beloved, I urge you, as foreigners and exiles, to abstain from the desires of the flesh, which war against your soul. ¹² Conduct yourselves with such honor among the Gentiles that, though they slander you as evildoers, they may see your good deeds and glorify God on the day He visits us.

■ 1PE 2:5 [ALLUDES TO] Refers to ← EX 19:6 p.-

■ 1PE 2:6 [FULFILLS] The precious cornerstone of the Messianic kingdom ← IS 28:16 p.-

■ 1PE 2:7 [FULFILLS] The rejected stone becomes the chief cornerstone ← PS 118:22-23 p.-

■ 1PE 2:8 [FULFILLS] A stone of stumbling and rock of offense ← IS 8:14 p.-

■ 1PE 2:9 [ALLUDES TO] Refers to ← EX 19:5-6; IS 43:20-21 p.-

■ 1PE 2:9 [NOTE] A ROYAL PRIESTHOOD. God once called Israel a kingdom of priests, Exodus 19:6. Now every believer can come to God through Jesus. Martin Luther made this famous in 1520 as the priesthood of all believers. Catholics and Orthodox also teach a priesthood of all the baptized, and keep ordained priests too. PECULIAR. The KJV says a peculiar people. In 1611 peculiar meant your own special treasure, not weird.

■ 1PE 2:10 [FULFILLS] Those called Not My People would be called sons of the living God ← HOS 1:10 p.-

■ 1PE 2:10 [FULFILLS] God would say to Not My People, You are My people ← HOS 2:23 p.-

■ 1PE 2:10 [ALLUDES TO] Refers to ← HOS 1:9-10; 2:23 p.-

■ 1PE 2:11 [NOTABLE] This world is not home. Live like visitors who belong somewhere better.

■ 1PE 2:12 [ALLUDES TO] Refers to ← IS 10:3 p.-

■ 1PE 1:22 [HEART] Love one another deeply from a pure heart.

■ 1PE 1:23 [NOTABLE] New life comes through the living and enduring word of God, like John 3:3.

■ 1PE 1:24 [QUOTES] Direct ← IS 40:6-8 p.-

■ 1PE 2:2 [NOTABLE] Babies cry for milk. New believers grow by craving the word.

■ 1PE 2:3 [ALLUDES TO] Refers to ← PS 34:8 p.-

■ 1PE 2:3 [NOTE] TASTE AND SEE. Peter borrows Psalm 34:8, taste and see that Yahweh is good. In the next verse the Lord he means is Jesus, the living stone, 2:4. He gives Jesus the name of God.

■ 1PE 2:4 [FULFILLS] The rejected stone becomes the chief cornerstone ← PS 118:22-23 p.-

MESSIANIC PROPHECIES THE HEART OLD TESTAMENT QUOTED IN THE NEW NOTABLE

SUBMISSION TO AUTHORITIES // ROMANS 13:1-7

¹³ Submit yourselves for the Lord's sake to every human institution, whether to the king as the supreme authority, ¹⁴ or to governors as those sent by him to punish those who do wrong and to praise those who do right. ¹⁵ For it is God's will that by doing good you should silence the ignorance of foolish men.

¹⁶ Live in freedom, but do not use your freedom as a cover-up for evil; live as servants of God. ¹⁷ Treat everyone with high regard: Love the brotherhood of believers, fear God, honor the king.

¹⁸ Servants, submit yourselves to your masters with all respect, not only to those who are good and gentle, but even to those who are unreasonable. ¹⁹ For if anyone endures the pain of unjust suffering because he is conscious of God, this is to be commended. ²⁰ How is it to your credit if you are beaten for doing wrong and you endure it? But if you suffer for doing good and you endure it, this is commendable before God.

CHRIST'S EXAMPLE OF SUFFERING // ISAIAH 53:1-8

²¹ For to this you were called, because Christ also suffered for you, leaving you an example, that you should follow in His footsteps:

²² "He committed no sin,
and no deceit was found in His mouth."

²³ When they heaped abuse on Him,
He did not retaliate;
when He suffered, He made no threats,
but entrusted Himself to Him who
judges justly.

²⁴ He Himself bore our sins
in His body on the tree,
so that we might die to sin

■ **1PE 2:13 [NOTE]** THE KING WAS NERO. Peter wrote while Nero was emperor, AD 54 to 68, and still said honor the king, 2:17. But Peter also told the high council, we must obey God rather than men, Acts 5:29. Respect is the rule, unless the state orders you to sin. See What Tacitus Wrote.

■ **1PE 2:17 [NOTABLE]** Four commands in one line, written when the king was Nero.

■ **1PE 2:21 [NOTABLE]** The word for example meant a pattern children traced to learn their letters.

■ **1PE 2:22 [FULFILLS]** No deceit in His mouth ← IS 53:9c p.-

■ **1PE 2:23 [FULFILLS]** Silent before His accusers ← IS 53:7b p.-

and live to righteousness.

"By His stripes you are healed."

²⁵ For "you were like sheep going astray," but now you have returned to the Shepherd and Overseer of your souls.

3

CHAPTER 3 IN 30 SECONDS

Wives, husbands, everybody: be kind, be humble, and do not trade insult for insult. Always be ready to explain your hope, but nicely. Christ died once for all. Then comes a famous head scratcher about spirits in prison, Noah's ark and baptism, and Jesus goes up to the right hand of God.

WIVES AND HUSBANDS // SONG OF SOLOMON 1:1-17; EPHESIANS 5:22-33

¹ Wives, in the same way, submit yourselves to your husbands, so that even if they refuse to believe the word, they will be won over without words by the behavior of their wives ² when they see your pure and reverent demeanor.

³ Your beauty should not come from outward adornment, such as braided hair or gold jewelry or fine clothes, ⁴ but from the inner disposition of your heart, the unfading beauty of a gentle and quiet spirit, which is precious in God's sight. ⁵ For this is how the holy women of the past adorned themselves. They put their hope in God and were submissive to their husbands, ⁶ just as Sarah obeyed Abraham and called him lord. And you are her children if you do what is right and refuse to give way to fear.

⁷ Husbands, in the same way, treat your wives with consideration as a delicate

■ **1PE 2:24 [FULFILLS]** By His stripes we are healed from sin ← IS 53:5c p.-

■ **1PE 2:24 [FULFILLS]** Bore the sin of many ← IS 53:12d p.-

■ **1PE 2:24 [QUOTES]** Direct ← IS 53:4-5, 12 p.-

■ **1PE 2:25 [FULFILLS]** The Good Shepherd who lays down His life ← PS 23:1 p.-

■ **1PE 2:25 [FULFILLS]** I will establish one Shepherd over them, My servant David; He shall be prince among them ← EZK 34:23-24 p.-

■ **1PE 2:25 [QUOTES]** Direct ← IS 53:6 p.-

■ **1PE 3:1 [NOTE]** WIVES AND HUSBANDS. Wives submit, husbands honor their wives as fellow heirs, 3:7, the same pair as Ephesians 5:21 to 33, p.-. Many believe it means the husband leads. Others say it was a way for wives of unbelievers to win them in a Roman world. See the 1 Timothy Women in the Church pages, p.-.

■ **1PE 3:4 [HEART]** True beauty is the hidden person of the heart.

■ **1PE 3:6 [ALLUDES TO]** Refers to ← GEN 18:12 p.-

vessel, and with honor as fellow heirs of the gracious gift of life, so that your prayers will not be hindered.

FROM HISTORY

WHAT TACITUS WROTE*Nero Blames the Christians, AD 64*

TACITUS, ANNALS 15.44 · 1 PETER 2:13 TO 17 · 4:12 TO 16

WHO TACITUS WAS

Publius Cornelius Tacitus was a Roman senator and governor, born about AD 56. About AD 116 he wrote the Annals, a history of the emperors. He was not a Christian, and he did not like Christians.

WHAT HE WROTE

Here is the whole passage, Annals book 15, chapter 44, in the English translation by Alfred Church and William Brodribb, 1876. It starts right after the great fire of Rome in July AD 64.

ANNALS 15.44

Such indeed were the precautions of human wisdom. The next thing was to seek means of propitiating the gods, and recourse was had to the Sibylline books, by the direction of which prayers were offered to Vulcanus, Ceres, and Proserpina. Juno, too, was entreated by the matrons, first, in the Capitol, then on the nearest part of the coast, whence water was procured to sprinkle the fane and image of the goddess. And there were sacred banquets and nightly vigils celebrated by married women. But all human efforts, all the lavish gifts of the emperor, and the propitiations of the gods, did not banish the sinister belief that the conflagration was the result of an order. Consequently, to get rid of the report, Nero fastened the guilt and inflicted the most exquisite tortures on a class hated for their abominations, called Christians by the populace. Christus, from whom the name had its origin, suffered the extreme penalty during the reign of Tiberius at the hands of one of our procurators, Pontius Pilatus, and a most mischievous superstition, thus checked for the moment, again broke out not only

in Judaea, the first source of the evil, but even in Rome, where all things hideous and shameful from every part of the world find their centre and become popular. Accordingly, an arrest was first made of all who pleaded guilty; then, upon their information, an immense multitude was convicted, not so much of the crime of firing the city, as of hatred against mankind. Mockery of every sort was added to their deaths. Covered with the skins of beasts, they were torn by dogs and perished, or were nailed to crosses, or were doomed to the flames and burnt, to serve as a nightly illumination, when daylight had expired. Nero offered his gardens for the spectacle, and was exhibiting a show in the circus, while he mingled with the people in the dress of a charioteer or stood aloft on a car. Hence, even for criminals who deserved extreme and exemplary punishment, there arose a feeling of compassion; for it was not, as it seemed, for the public good, but to glut one man's cruelty, that they were being destroyed.

Nero and the Christians

1 PETER 2:13 TO 17 · 4:12 TO 16 · ROMANS 13:1 · ACTS 5:29

THE GREAT FIRE

On July 19, AD 64, a fire broke out near the Circus Maximus in Rome. It burned for six days. Tacitus says only 4 of the city's 14 districts were left whole, 15.40. A rumor said Nero sang about the fall of Troy while Rome burned, and many believed he started the fire, because he soon built a huge new palace on the burned land.

THE SCAPEGOATS

To stop the rumor, Nero blamed the Christians. Tacitus says a huge crowd was convicted, more for hatred of mankind than for the fire. They were torn apart by dogs, nailed to crosses, or burned as torches at night in Nero's gardens.

THE KING IN 2:13

The king Peter tells believers to honor, 2:17, was this same Nero. Peter wrote to people who would soon face him at his worst.

■ **1PE 3:7 [NOTE] WEAKER VESSEL.** The Greek and the KJV say weaker vessel. Many believe Peter means physically weaker; others say weaker in Roman law and power. Either way, honor her, she is a fellow heir, or your prayers get blocked.

MESSIANIC PROPHECIES

MESSIANIC FORESHADOW

THE HEART

DEMONIC

OLD TESTAMENT QUOTED IN THE NEW

NOTABLE

THE FIERY TRIAL

Do not be surprised at the fiery trial, 4:12. If you suffer as a Christian, do not be ashamed, 4:16. Many date the letter just before the fire. Others think Nero's attack had already begun.

PETER AND PAUL

Clement of Rome, about AD 96, names Peter and Paul together as faithful to death, 1 Clement 5. Right after, he mentions a great crowd of believers who were tortured, 1 Clement 6, and many link that to Nero.

WHAT IT CONFIRMS

A Roman historian who disliked Christians says Christus was executed by Pontius Pilate under Tiberius, that the movement began in Judaea, and that by AD 64 there were huge numbers of Christians in Rome. See Exhibit A, p. 7.

IS IT REAL?

Almost all scholars accept it. It is in the oldest copy of this part of the Annals, the Second Medicean manuscript from the 1000s, kept in Florence. Under ultraviolet light the word for Christians shows it was first written Chrestians, a common Roman mix up of the name, and later corrected.

TURNING FROM EVIL

⁸ Finally, all of you, be like-minded and sympathetic, love as brothers, be tender-hearted and humble. ⁹ **Do not repay evil with evil or insult with insult, but with blessing, because to this you were called so that you may inherit a blessing.** ¹⁰ For,

*“Whoever would love life
and see good days
must keep his tongue from evil
and his lips from deceitful speech.*

¹¹ *He must turn from evil and do good;
he must seek peace and pursue it.*

¹² *For the eyes of the Lord are on the righteous,
and His ears are inclined to their prayer.
But the face of the Lord is against
those who do evil.”*

¹³ Who can harm you if you are zealous for what is good?

■ 1PE 3:9 [NOTABLE] Jesus taught the same, Luke 6:28.

Hurt people hurt people; blessed people bless.

■ 1PE 3:10 [QUOTES] Direct ← PS 34:12–16 p. 7.

SUFFERING FOR RIGHTEOUSNESS

¹⁴ But even if you should suffer for what is right, you are blessed. *“Do not fear what they fear; do not be shaken.”* ¹⁵ **But in your hearts sanctify Christ as Lord. Always be prepared to give a defense to everyone who asks you the reason for the hope that is in you. But respond with gentleness and respect,** ¹⁶ keeping a clear conscience, so that those who slander you may be put to shame by your good behavior in Christ. ¹⁷ For it is better, if it is God's will, to suffer for doing good than for doing evil.

¹⁸ **For Christ also suffered for sins once for all, the righteous for the unrighteous, to bring you to God. He was put to death in the body but made alive in the Spirit,** ¹⁹ in whom He also went and preached to the spirits in prison ²⁰ who disobeyed long ago when God waited patiently in the days of Noah while the ark was being built.

In the ark a few people, only eight souls, were saved through water. ²¹ And this water symbolizes the baptism that now saves you also—not the removal of dirt from the body, but the pledge of a clear conscience toward God—through the resurrection of Jesus Christ, ²² **who has gone into heaven and is at the right hand of**

■ 1PE 3:14 [QUOTES] Direct ← IS 8:12 p. 7.

■ 1PE 3:15 [HEART] Set apart Christ as Lord in your hearts, then give your answer.

■ 1PE 3:15 [QUOTES] Quotes ← IS 8:13 p. 7.

■ 1PE 3:15 [NOTE] TEXT. The oldest copies say sanctify Christ as Lord; later copies and the KJV say the Lord God. Isaiah 8:13 says this about Yahweh of Hosts, so Peter gives Jesus Yahweh's honor. A DEFENSE. The Greek is apologia, a reasoned answer, where we get the word apologetics.

■ 1PE 3:18 [FULFILLS] God's righteous Servant would justify many ← IS 53:11b p. 7.

■ 1PE 3:18 [NOTE] TEXT. Some old copies say Christ died for sins, others say suffered for sins. The meaning is the same.

■ 1PE 3:19 [DEMONIC] Christ preached to the spirits in prison.

■ 1PE 3:19 [NOTE] SPIRITS IN PRISON. One of the hardest verses in the Bible. Even Martin Luther said he did not know for sure what Peter meant. See the Two Big Question pages.

■ 1PE 3:20 [FULFILLS] Noah's family is saved by going into the ark. The ark pictures salvation through Christ ← GEN 7:1 p. 7.

■ 1PE 3:21 [NOTE] BAPTISM NOW SAVES YOU. Peter adds: not the removal of dirt from the body, but the pledge of a clear conscience toward God, through the resurrection. Catholics, Orthodox and Lutherans say baptism really washes away sin. Churches of Christ say it is the moment a believer is saved. Baptists and most evangelicals say the water is a picture and faith saves. See Does Baptism Save? in Titus, p. 7.

God, with angels, authorities, and powers subject to Him.

DEBATED THE BIG QUESTION

SPIRITS IN PRISON

What Did Peter Mean?

1 PETER 3:18 TO 22 · 4:6 · GENESIS 6:1 TO 8 · 2 PETER 2:4 TO 5 · JUDE 6

WHAT PETER SAID

Christ was put to death in the body but made alive in the Spirit, in whom He also went and preached to the spirits in prison who disobeyed long ago, in the days of Noah, 3:18 to 20. Later Peter adds that the gospel was preached even to those who are now dead, 4:6.

WHY IT IS HARD

Who are the spirits? When did Jesus go? What did He preach? Martin Luther wrote in 1523 that this is a strange text, more obscure than any other passage in the New Testament, and that he did not know for sure what Peter meant.

THE BOOK OF ENOCH

Jews in Peter's day knew 1 Enoch, written about 300 to 200 BC. It says the angels who sinned in Genesis 6 were locked up until judgment, and that Enoch went to announce their doom, 1 Enoch 6 to 16. 2 Peter 2:4 to 5 and Jude 6 also speak of angels kept in chains, right next to Noah. See 1 Enoch, p. ...

THE EARLY CHURCH

Many early Christians taught that Christ went down to the dead between the cross and Easter. Irenaeus, about AD 180, says He went to the regions under the earth preaching His coming. Clement of Alexandria, about AD 200, said He offered salvation to the dead there.

THE CREED

The words He descended into hell, or to the dead, show up in creeds in the 300s, and became part of the Apostles' Creed. Eastern churches paint it at Easter as Christ pulling Adam and Eve out of their graves, the harrowing of hell.

AUGUSTINE

About AD 414 Augustine wrote a long

letter on this verse, Letter 164. He decided Christ preached in the Spirit through Noah to the people of Noah's day, whose spirits are now in prison. Thomas Aquinas and many later teachers followed him.

THE REFORMERS

Luther, after his doubts, taught that Christ went down to hell in victory, and the Lutheran Formula of Concord, 1577, says so. John Calvin read the creed's descent into hell as Christ suffering hell's agony for us on the cross.

TODAY

In 1965 William Dalton argued that the risen Christ announced His victory to the fallen angels of Genesis 6, and many scholars now agree. Others hold Augustine's view or the descent to the dead. The next page gives every view.

The Case Each Side Makes

1 PETER 1:11 · 3:18 TO 22 · 4:6 · EPHESIANS 4:8 TO 10 · 2 PETER 2:4 TO 5

CHRIST PREACHING THROUGH NOAH

The Spirit of Christ, who spoke in the prophets, 1:11, spoke through Noah, a preacher of righteousness, 2 Peter 2:5, to the people of his day. They refused, died in the flood, and their spirits are now in prison. Held by Augustine and many Reformed teachers. Best case: it fits 1:11 and leaves no second chance after death, Hebrews 9:27.

VICTORY OVER FALLEN ANGELS

After rising, on His way to heaven, Christ announced His win to the angels who sinned in Noah's day, Genesis 6:1 to 4. In the New Testament spirits usually means angels or demons, and preached can mean announced. The same word went is used in 3:22, where angels and powers are made subject to Him. Best case: it matches 3:22, 2 Peter 2:4 and Jude 6, and Jewish readers knew the Enoch story.

THE GOSPEL OFFERED TO THE DEAD

Between His death and resurrection Christ went to the dead and offered them the gospel, and 4:6 says the gospel was preached to those who are now dead. Clement of Alexandria and some modern teachers hold this. Best

■ 1PE 3:22 [MIRACLE] Angels, authorities and powers are subject to the risen Jesus

■ 1PE 3:22 [FULFILLS] David's Lord sits at God's right hand until His enemies are His footstool ← PS 110:1 p. ...

END TIMES PROPHECIES DEMONIC OLD TESTAMENT QUOTED IN THE NEW NOTABLE

case: it reads 3:19 and 4:6 plainly and shows God's mercy to those who never heard.

THE HARROWING OF HELL

Christ went down to the place of the dead and freed the faithful who died before Him, from Adam to the prophets, and led them out, Ephesians 4:8 to 10 and Matthew 27:52 to 53. This is the Orthodox Easter teaching, and the Catholic Catechism, 632 to 635, says Christ went to free the just, not to rescue the damned. Best case: it is very old and fits the creed.

LUTHERAN

Christ, body and soul, went down to hell after His burial, defeated the devil and broke hell's power. It was a victory march, not more suffering, Formula of Concord, 1577. Best case: it takes went and preached as a real event and fits 3:22.

WHAT ABOUT 4:6?

Most read the dead in 4:6 as people who heard the gospel while alive and have since died. Others link it to 3:19. Your view of one usually shapes the other.

WHAT ALL SIDES AGREE ON

Christ really died and rose. He now sits at the right hand of God with angels and powers under Him, 3:22. God was patient in Noah's day, 3:20, and is patient now. And Peter's point for suffering believers is clear: suffering for doing good is not defeat, because Christ suffered and won.

4

CHAPTER 4 IN 30 SECONDS

You partied enough in the old days. Your old friends think you are weird now, and that is fine. Love covers a multitude of sins, so love big. Use your gifts. Do not be shocked by the fiery trial. If you suffer as a Christian, do not be ashamed. Wear the name.

LIVING FOR GOD'S GLORY // 1 CORINTHIANS 10:23-33

¹Therefore, since Christ suffered in His body, arm yourselves with the same resolve, because anyone who has suffered in his body is done with sin. ²Conse-

quently, he does not live out his remaining time on earth for human passions, but for the will of God. ³For you have spent enough time in the past carrying out the same desires as the Gentiles: living in debauchery, lust, drunkenness, orgies, carousing, and detestable idolatry.

⁴Because of this, they consider it strange of you not to plunge with them into the same flood of reckless indiscretion, and they heap abuse on you. ⁵But they will have to give an account to Him who is ready to judge the living and the dead. ⁶That is why the gospel was preached even to those who are now dead, so that they might be judged as men in the flesh, but live according to God in the spirit.

⁷The end of all things is near. Therefore be clear-minded and sober, so that you can pray. ⁸Above all, love one another deeply, because love covers over a multitude of sins. ⁹Show hospitality to one another without complaining.

¹⁰As good stewards of the manifold grace of God, each of you should use whatever gift he has received to serve one another.

¹¹If anyone speaks, he should speak as one conveying the words of God. If anyone serves, he should serve with the strength God provides, so that in all things God may be glorified through Jesus Christ, to whom be the glory and the power forever and ever. Amen.

SUFFERING AS CHRISTIANS

¹²Beloved, do not be surprised at the fiery trial that has come upon you, as though something strange were happening to you. ¹³But rejoice that you share in the

■ 1PE 4:3 [DEMONIC] You spent enough time in detestable idolatry

■ 1PE 4:6 [NOTE] PREACHED TO THE DEAD. Most read it as people who heard the gospel while alive and have since died. Others tie it to 3:19. See the Big Question pages.

■ 1PE 4:7 [PROPHECY] The end of all things is at hand; therefore be serious and watchful in your prayers → STILL TO COME - MEDIUM

■ 1PE 4:8 [QUOTES] Quotes ← PROV 10:12 p.-

■ 1PE 4:8 [NOTE] CHARITY. The KJV says charity shall cover the multitude of sins. In 1611 charity meant love. Today it means giving money, so this Bible says love. From Proverbs 10:12, also James 5:20.

■ 1PE 4:9 [NOTABLE] Every believer has a gift. Use it to serve, not to show off.

■ 1PE 4:12 [NOTABLE] Suffering for Jesus is not strange. It means you share in His sufferings and His glory.

OLD TESTAMENT QUOTED IN THE NEW **NOTABLE**

sufferings of Christ, so that you may be overjoyed at the revelation of His glory.

¹⁴ If you are insulted for the name of Christ, you are blessed, because the Spirit of glory and of God rests on you. ¹⁵ Indeed, none of you should suffer as a murderer or thief or wrongdoer, or even as a meddler. ¹⁶ But if you suffer as a Christian, do not be ashamed, but glorify God that you bear that name. ¹⁷ For it is time for judgment to begin with the family of God; and if it begins with us, what will the outcome be for those who disobey the gospel of God? ¹⁸ And,

“If it is hard for the righteous to be saved, what will become of the ungodly and the sinner?”

¹⁹ So then, those who suffer according to God's will should entrust their souls to their faithful Creator and continue to do good.

FROM HISTORY

WHAT PLINY WROTE

Trials for the Name, About AD 112

PLINY, LETTERS 10.96 · 1 PETER 1:1 · 4:14 TO 16

WHO PLINY WAS

Pliny the Younger was a Roman lawyer and senator. About AD 110 the emperor Trajan sent him to govern Pontus and Bithynia, in what is now northern Turkey. Those are two of the places 1 Peter was sent to, 1:1.

WHAT HE WROTE

Here is his whole letter to Trajan, Letters book 10, number 96, in William Melmoth's English translation as revised by F. C. T. Bosanquet. Sir means the emperor.

LETTERS 10.96

It is my invariable rule, Sir, to refer to you

in all matters where I feel doubtful; for who is more capable of removing my scruples, or informing my ignorance? Having never been present at any trials concerning those who profess Christianity, I am unacquainted not only with the nature of their crimes, or the measure of their punishment, but how far it is proper to enter into an examination concerning them. Whether, therefore, any difference is usually made with respect to ages, or no distinction is to be observed between the young and the adult; whether repentance entitles them to a pardon; or if a man has been once a Christian, it avails nothing to desist from his error; whether the very profession of Christianity, unattended with any criminal act, or only the crimes themselves inherent in the profession are punishable; on all these points I am in great doubt. In the meanwhile, the method I have observed towards those who have been brought before me as Christians is this: I asked them whether they were Christians; if they admitted it, I repeated the question twice, and threatened them with punishment; if they persisted, I ordered them to be at once punished: for I was persuaded, whatever the nature of their opinions might be, a contumacious and inflexible obstinacy certainly deserved correction. There were others also brought before me possessed with the same infatuation, but being Roman citizens, I directed them to be sent to Rome. But this crime spreading (as is usually the case) while it was actually under prosecution, several instances of the same nature occurred. An anonymous information was laid before me containing a charge against several persons, who upon examination denied they were Christians, or had ever been so. They repeated after me an invocation to the gods, and offered religious rites with wine and incense before your statue (which for that purpose I had ordered to be brought, together with those of the gods), and even reviled the name of Christ: whereas there is no forcing, it is said, those who are really Christians into

- **1PE 4:12 [NOTE]** FIERY TRIAL. Some think this points to Nero's attack in AD 64, when Christians were burned alive. Others say Peter means trials in general, like gold in a furnace, 1:7. See What Tacitus Wrote.
- **1PE 4:14 [ALLUDES TO]** Refers to ← IS 11:2 p.–
- **1PE 4:14 [NOTE]** TEXT. The KJV adds: on their part He is evil spoken of, but on your part He is glorified. These words are missing from the oldest copies.
- **1PE 4:16 [NOTABLE]** One of only three times the word Christian is in the Bible, with Acts 11:26 and 26:28.
- **1PE 4:16 [NOTE]** CHRISTIAN. At first a nickname outsiders used, Acts 11:26. Roman judges later asked just one question: are you a Christian? See What Pliny Wrote.
- **1PE 4:17 [ALLUDES TO]** Refers to ← EZK 9:6 p.–
- **1PE 4:18 [QUOTES]** Direct ← PROV 11:31 p.–

any of these compliances: I thought it proper, therefore, to discharge them. Some among those who were accused by a witness in person at first confessed themselves Christians, but immediately after denied it; the rest owned indeed that they had been of that number formerly, but had now (some above three, others more, and a few above twenty years ago) renounced that error. They all worshipped your statue and the images of the gods, uttering imprecations at the same time against the name of Christ. They affirmed the whole of their guilt, or their error, was, that they met on a stated day before it was light, and addressed a form of prayer to Christ, as to a divinity, binding themselves by a solemn oath, not for the purposes of any wicked design, but never to commit any fraud, theft, or adultery, never to falsify their word, nor deny a trust when they should be called upon to deliver it up; after which it was their custom to separate, and then reassemble, to eat in common a harmless meal. From this custom, however, they desisted after the publication of my edict, by which, according to your commands, I forbade the meeting of any assemblies. After receiving this account, I judged it so much the more necessary to endeavor to extort the real truth, by putting two female slaves to the torture, who were said to officiate in their religious rites: but all I could discover was evidence of an absurd and extravagant superstition. I deemed it expedient, therefore, to adjourn all further proceedings, in order to consult you. For it appears to be a matter highly deserving your consideration, more especially as great numbers must be involved in the danger of these prosecutions, which have already extended, and are still likely to extend, to persons of all ranks and ages, and even of both sexes. In fact, this contagious superstition is not confined to the cities only, but has spread its infection among the neighbouring villages and country. Nevertheless, it still seems possible to restrain its progress. The temples, at least,

which were once almost deserted, begin now to be frequented; and the sacred rites, after a long intermission, are again revived; while there is a general demand for the victims, which till lately found very few purchasers. From all this it is easy to conjecture what numbers might be reclaimed if a general pardon were granted to those who shall repent of their error.

Are You a Christian?

PLINY, LETTERS 10.97 · 1 PETER 1:1 · 3:15 · 4:14 TO 16

TRAJAN'S ANSWER

The emperor wrote back, Letters 10.97. Here is his whole reply, same translation: You have adopted the right course, my dearest Secundus, in investigating the charges against the Christians who were brought before you. It is not possible to lay down any general rule for all such cases. Do not go out of your way to look for them. If indeed they should be brought before you, and the crime is proved, they must be punished; with the restriction, however, that where the party denies he is a Christian, and shall make it evident that he is not, by invoking our gods, let him (notwithstanding any former suspicion) be pardoned upon his repentance. Anonymous informations ought not to be received in any sort of prosecution. It is introducing a very dangerous precedent, and is quite foreign to the spirit of our age.

PUNISHED FOR THE NAME

Pliny did not ask what crime they did. He asked one question: are you a Christian? Saying yes three times was enough to be executed. That is just what Peter wrote about: if you are insulted for the name of Christ, you are blessed, 4:14, and if you suffer as a Christian, do not be ashamed, 4:16.

WHAT CHRISTIANS DID

They met on a set day before dawn, sang a hymn to Christ as to a god, and promised not to steal, cheat or commit adultery. Later they ate a simple meal together. Pliny's Latin says they sang a hymn; this translation says a form of

MESSIANIC PROPHECIES

ARCHAEOLOGY

DEMONIC

OLD TESTAMENT QUOTED IN THE NEW

NOTABLE

prayer. Even their enemy found no crime.

TWO WOMEN

The two slave women were called *ministrae* in Latin, which means servants. Many think they were deaconesses. See Phoebe, Pliny and Sophia in 1 Timothy, p. 7.

THE TEMPLES WERE EMPTY

Pliny says the temples had been almost deserted and few people bought animals for sacrifice. The faith had spread to towns and villages and to people of every age and rank.

WHAT IT DOES NOT PROVE

Pliny wrote about 50 years after Peter, so he shows what believers in Bithynia faced later, not in Peter's own day. But some told him they had left the faith 20 years earlier, so there were Christians there by about AD 90.

5

CHAPTER 5 IN 30 SECONDS

Elders, be shepherds, not bosses, and do not do it for the money. Everybody, tie on humility like a servant's apron. Throw your worries on God, because He cares about you. Stay alert, because the devil prowls like a roaring lion. After a little while of suffering, God Himself will restore you. Mark says hi.

INSTRUCTIONS TO ELDERS // 1 TIMOTHY 3:1-7; TITUS 1:5-9

¹As a fellow elder, a witness of Christ's sufferings, and a partaker of the glory to be revealed, I appeal to the elders among you: ²Be shepherds of God's flock that is among you, watching over them not out of compulsion, but willingly, as God would have you; not out of greed, but out of eagerness; ³not lording it over those entrusted to you, but being examples to the flock. ⁴And when the Chief Shepherd appears, you will receive the crown of glory that will never fade away.

■ **1PE 5:2 [NOTABLE]** Lead willingly, not for money and not as a boss, but as an example.

■ **1PE 5:2 [NOTE] TEXT.** Watching over them is missing in Codex Sinaiticus and Vaticanus. As God would have you is missing in Vaticanus and the KJV.

■ **1PE 5:4 [FULFILLS]** I will establish one Shepherd over them, My servant David; He shall be prince among them ← EZK 34:23-24 p. 7.

CAST YOUR CARES ON HIM

⁵Young men, in the same way, submit yourselves to your elders. And all of you, clothe yourselves with humility toward one another, because,

*"God opposes the proud,
but gives grace to the humble."*

⁶Humble yourselves, therefore, under God's mighty hand, so that in due time He may exalt you. ⁷Cast all your anxiety on Him, because He cares for you.

⁸Be sober-minded and alert. Your adversary the devil prowls around like a roaring lion, seeking someone to devour. ⁹Resist him, standing firm in your faith and in the knowledge that your brothers throughout the world are undergoing the same kinds of suffering.

BENEDICTION AND FAREWELL

¹⁰And after you have suffered for a little while, the God of all grace, who has called you to His eternal glory in Christ, will Himself restore you, secure you, strengthen you, and establish you. ¹¹To Him be the power forever and ever. Amen.

¹²Through Silvanus, whom I regard as a faithful brother, I have written to you briefly, encouraging you and testifying that this is the true grace of God. Stand firm in it.

¹³The church in Babylon, chosen together with you, sends you greetings, as does my son Mark.

■ **1PE 5:5 [QUOTES]** Direct ← PROV 3:34 p. 7.

■ **1PE 5:6 [NOTABLE]** The way up is down, and God picks the timing.

■ **1PE 5:7 [ALLUDES TO]** Refers to ← PS 55:22 p. 7.

■ **1PE 5:8 [DEMONIC]** The devil prowls like a roaring lion

■ **1PE 5:10 [NOTABLE]** Suffering is for a little while. God Himself promises four things: restore, secure, strengthen, establish.

■ **1PE 5:12 [NOTE] SILVANUS.** Probably Silas, Paul's partner, Acts 15:40. Through Silvanus can mean he helped write the letter or that he carried it.

■ **1PE 5:13 [ARCHAEOLOGY]** Roman tombs under St Peter's Basilica, dug out 1939 to 1949, with a small shrine from about AD 160 that Christians said marked Peter's grave → FIELD NOTES p.15

■ **1PE 5:13 [ARCHAEOLOGY]** A granite obelisk that stood in the Circus of Gaius and Nero on the Vatican hill, now in St Peter's Square → FIELD NOTES p.15

■ **1PE 5:13 [NOTE] BABYLON.** Most believe this is a code name for Rome, as in Revelation 17 to 18. Papias and Clement of Alexandria, quoted by Eusebius, said Peter wrote from Rome and called it Babylon. A few say the real Babylon in Iraq; the Coptic church points to a Roman fort called Babylon in old Cairo. MARK MY SON. John Mark, Acts 12:12, Peter's son in the faith. Papias says Mark wrote down Peter's preaching as his Gospel.

DEBATED FIELD NOTES · ARCHAEOLOGY · CONFIDENCE: MEDIUM · DEBATED

PETER'S TOMB?

1 PETER 5:13 · JOHN 21:18 TO 19 · 2 PETER 1:14



Gravestone of Licinia Amias from the Vatican hill, early 200s AD, National Roman Museum, Baths of Diocletian, Rome. Photo Marie-Lan Nguyen, public domain.

WHAT IT IS

A Christian gravestone from the Vatican hill in Rome. At the top are D M, short for to the spirits of the dead, an old pagan habit. Under it in Greek: ICHTHYS ZONTON, fish of the living. Then two fish and an anchor, and in Latin: to Licinia Amias, well deserving, she lived. The rest is broken off.

HOW OLD IT IS

Early 200s AD, about 150 years after Peter. It is one of the oldest Christian gravestones known. The tombs under St Peter's Basilica date from about AD 100 to 300.

THE DIG

In 1939, while making room for the grave of Pope Pius XI, workers broke into an old Roman street of tombs under the church. Pope Pius XII ordered a quiet dig that lasted until 1949. Right under the high altar they found a small shrine built against a red plastered wall, about AD 160.

THE TROPHY

About AD 200 a Roman Christian named Gaius wrote: I can show the trophies of the apostles. If you go to the Vatican or to the Ostian Way, you will find them. Eusebius quotes him, Church History 2.25.

Many think the little shrine is Peter's trophy, his monument.

PETER IS HERE?

Next to the shrine stood a wall covered in Christian scratchings. The scholar Margherita Guarducci read one Greek scrap as Petros eni, Peter is within. Others read it differently.

THE BONES

Bones from a hollow in that wall belonged to a man about 60 to 70 years old, wrapped in purple cloth with gold thread. In 1968 Pope Paul VI said they had been identified as Peter's in a convincing way. Many archaeologists, Catholic ones included, are not sure.

WHY IT MATTERS HERE

Peter writes from Babylon, 5:13, which most take to mean Rome. Jesus told him how he would die, John 21:18 to 19.

WHAT IT DOES NOT PROVE

No grave there has Peter's name on it. The dig shows Christians honored this spot as Peter's grave by about AD 160, about 100 years after his death. Most historians accept that Peter died in Rome. Whether these are his bones is still debated.

¹⁴ Greet one another with a kiss of love.
Peace to all of you who are in Christ.

FIELD NOTES · ARCHAEOLOGY · CONFIDENCE: HIGH
FOR THE OBELISK · MEDIUM FOR PETER

NERO'S CIRCUS

1 PETER 5:13 · TACITUS, ANNALS 15.44 · JOHN 21:18 TO 19



Left: the Vatican obelisk, St Peter's Square; the cross on top was added in 1586. Photo Livioandronico2013, CC BY SA 4.0. Right: the Roman bronze ball that once sat on its tip, Capitoline Museums, Rome. Photo Sailko, CC BY 3.0.

WHAT IT IS

A red granite obelisk from Egypt, about 83 feet tall, with no hieroglyphs on it. Beside it is the bronze ball that once sat on its tip.

HOW OLD IT IS

It was cut in Egypt long before Jesus; with no hieroglyphs, nobody knows exactly when. The emperor Caligula shipped it to Rome in AD 37. Pliny the Elder, who died in AD 79, says it stood in the circus of the emperors Gaius and Nero on the Vatican hill, Natural History 36.74. The bronze ball is Roman, about AD 1 to 50.

THE OLD WORDS

Carved on the shaft in Latin is a dedication to the divine Augustus and to Tiberius, the emperor when Jesus was crucified. Holes from older bronze letters show it first stood in Alexandria, Egypt, set up by Cornelius Gallus, Egypt's first Roman governor, about 30 BC.

NERO'S CIRCUS

Caligula built a racetrack on the Vatican hill, and Nero raced chariots there. Tacitus says Nero offered his gardens for killing Christians and held a show in the

circus, Annals 15.44. Most scholars think this is that circus, because Nero's gardens were on the Vatican hill.

PETER'S DEATH

Clement of Rome, about AD 96, says Peter died a faithful witness. Tertullian, about AD 200, says Peter died in Rome like his Lord, on a cross. Origen, quoted by Eusebius, says upside down. Later tradition puts the cross near Nero's circus. If so, this obelisk stood nearby.

MOVED IN 1586

For 1,500 years it stood beside the old church of St Peter, the only obelisk in Rome that never fell. In 1586 Pope Sixtus V had the engineer Domenico Fontana move it to St Peter's Square, with about 900 men and 140 horses. The cross went on top, and the bronze ball came down.

THE BALL

People in the Middle Ages said the ball held the ashes of Julius Caesar. When it came down, it held only dust. The dents are said to be bullet marks from the Sack of Rome in 1527.

WHAT IT DOES NOT PROVE

No ancient writer says Peter died at this obelisk. It does show that the circus where Christians died was a real place.