

2 Peter

Author: The Apostle Peter

Date of Writing: c. A.D. 65–66

Place of Writing: Probably Rome

Purposes in Writing:

1. To challenge the readers to grow in their knowledge of Jesus Christ (1:2-15)
2. To reaffirm the truthfulness and the trustworthiness of the prophetic Word of God (1:16-21)
3. To warn of the danger of false teachers and their destructive doctrines (2:1-22)
4. To encourage watchfulness and steadfastness in light of our Lord's certain return (3:1-18)

A Study of 2 Peter

Purpose: To warn against false teaching, doctrinal error, and moral compromise as we live in the last days.

Date: A.D. 65-66

Key Words: Lord Jesus Christ, Knowledge, Diligence, Destruction, Beloved, Remember/Remind, Corruption

Tone: Urgent, Intense, Encouraging

| | Spiritual Growth | Doctrinal Compromise | Eschatological Hope | |
|----------------------------------|---|--|---------------------------------------|----------------------------------|
| Introduction 1:1-4 | How can I grow in godliness? Chapter 1 | How can I recognize false prophets? Chapter 2 | How will it all end? Chapter 3 | Conclusion 3:14-18 |
| Warning | Add to your faith. (v. 5) | Know the truth. (v. 3) | Be diligent! (v. 14) | |
| Promise | “You will never stumble.” (v. 10) | “God will deliver you.” (v. 9) | “Jesus is coming!” (v. 12) | |
| Perspective | Looking within | Looking back | Looking ahead | |

Introduction to 2 Peter

Author: Simon Peter is the stated author of this letter (1:1). This affirmation is supported by the text of the epistle by the following evidence: (1) the use of the first person pronoun in the context of Jesus' prediction of his death (cf. 1:14), (2) the claim to be an eyewitness of the transfiguration of Jesus (cf. 1:16-18), (3) the acknowledgement to the readers that this is his second epistle (3:1), (4) his references to Paul as "our beloved brother" (3:15), and (5) his honest admission that in Paul's letters are "some things hard to understand" (3:16).

External evidence for the authenticity of 2 Peter also exists, though it must be admitted, it is not as strong as it is for the first epistle. 1 Clement (c. A.D. 95) and the Didache (c. A.D. 100) may allude to it. In the late second and early third centuries, support for its canonicity (inclusion in Holy Scripture) grows, though some doubted its genuineness. Eusebius (A.D. 265-340) classified the book as *antilegomena* or disputed (other N.T. books disputed but eventually recognized as divinely inspired include Hebrews, James, 2 and 3 John, Jude, and Revelation). By the end of the fourth century, the epistle was generally accepted by the vast majority of the Christian world. Modern critical scholars have attacked this book more than any other in the New Testament as to its authenticity. Many have judged it as pseudepigraphic (meaning a "false writing"), i.e., a forgery, and date it well after the time of Peter's death (c. A.D. 67-68). Some would even date it in the second century. Most skeptical scholars do not wish to remove the book from its authoritative place in Holy Scriptures (though some do), but they argue that the style and vocabulary of 2 Peter is so different from that of 1 Peter that it rules out a common author. Some believe the differences to be so significant that if the two letters had been anonymous, no one would have ever thought to attribute them to a common authorship. How should we respond to these issues?

There is indeed a difference in style. However, the real difference is between the Petrine epistles and the rest of the New Testament. The fact is no other book is as much like 1 Peter as 2 Peter (with the exception of Jude). The differences that do exist may be explained by a change in subject matter, by time and circumstances of writing, and especially by the part played by an amanuensis (secretary). In 1 Pet. 5:12, Peter suggests the strong possibility that Silvanus (Silas) served as the amanuensis for this epistle. 2 Peter has no such reference.

Perhaps some differences in style and vocabulary can be attributed to the service of Silvanus as an amanuensis for the writing of 1 Peter, whereas Peter himself (or some other secretary) is responsible for the actual and direct penning of 2 Peter. When a careful study and a balanced investigation is made, there is no compelling reason for rejecting 2 Peter as genuine. The letter should be viewed as authentic. It comes from the apostle whose name it carries.

Date: The second epistle appears to have been written shortly after the first and from the same location, probably from Rome (cf. 1 Pet. 5:13 and the cryptic use of “Babylon” for Rome). Proper assignment then is c. A.D. 65-66, during the latter part of the reign of the infamous Roman emperor Nero (A.D. 54-68), and toward the end of Peter’s life (cf. 1:12-15).

Recipients: The reference in 2 Pet. 3:1 to the present epistle as the second letter indicates that the recipients were the same believers who were addressed in 1 Peter (cf. 1 Pet. 1:1).

Theme: A variety of subjects is discussed in 2 Peter, but all reaffirm the truthfulness of the apostolic witness and the need to be forewarned of the imminent danger of the testimony by false teachers. The book concludes with an eschatological note designed to encourage and fortify the faith of believers. 2 Peter is a short letter of just 61 verses and three chapters. Its message, however, is concise and clear: beware of false teachers, theological error and moral corruption as we live in the last days before Jesus comes again.

Purposes:

- 1) To encourage spiritual growth (chapter 1)
- 2) To counter false teaching (chapter 2)
- 3) To foster watchfulness in light of our Lord’s certain return (chapter 3)

| | Characteristics of Spiritual Teachers |
|-------------------------|---|
| False Teacher | <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Controlled by the flesh 2. Immoral 3. Slave of sin 4. Starves sinners 5. Destination: Lake of Fire |
| Faithful Teacher | <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Controlled by the Spirit 2. Moral 3. Slave of the Savior 4. Feeds sinners 5. Destination: Heaven |

The Relation of 2 Peter and Jude:

There is a close relationship between 2 Peter and Jude. The resemblances are largely between 2 Pet. 2:1-18; 3:1-3 and Jude 4-13, 16-18. There are four possible explanations for this close resemblance. (1) Jude is dependent on 2 Peter; (2) 2 Peter is dependent on Jude; (3) Both letters were dependent on a common source; or (4) Common authorship. The majority view is that 2 Peter is dependent on Jude. Since Jude is shorter, there seems to be no reason to suppose that it would have been published after 2 Peter if all the common points had been covered. Some also argue that Jude is more harsh, and that 2 Peter softens the tone. Jude makes use of apocryphal material, and Peter allegedly corrects this in his letter. However, it is certainly conceivable that Jude may have used 2 Peter to meet his particular situation. Just because it is shorter does not mean that Jude could not have used the pertinent parts and adapted them to suit his own purpose. It is also possible that Jude saw the need to adopt a stronger approach as the threat of false teaching was growing stronger.

It is quite probable that Jude makes a reference to 2 Peter. This is seen most clearly in Jude 17, which exhorts the readers to remember the apostles' predictions and the words cited occur almost verbatim in 2 Pet. 3:3. Further, **it seems that Jude is experiencing what Peter prophesied. Peter said false prophets were coming and Jude says**

that false prophets are here. This could also help to explain the harsher tone of Jude. Another reason to hold to Petrine priority is that it is more difficult to conceive of Peter (a well-known apostle) making use of a lesser known non-apostle, than it is to conceive of Jude referring to Peter.



Comparing First and Second Peter

| 1 Peter | 2 Peter |
|--|---|
| Major Focus: Hope in the midst of suffering | Major Focus: The danger of false teaching and practices |
| Christology: The sufferings of Christ for our salvation and the example of His life. | Christology: The glory of Christ and the consummation of history at His return. |
| The day of salvation when Christ suffered, died and rose from the dead. | The day of the Lord when Christ returns in judgment. |
| Be encouraged in your present trials. | Be warned of eschatological judgment. |
| We need hope to face our trials. | We need full knowledge to face error. |
| Numerous similarities to Paul (especially Ephesians and Colossians) | Almost identical similarities to Jude (compare 2 Peter 2 with Jude 4-18) |

Outline of 2 Peter

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| I. | <u>Introduction</u> | |
| II. | <u>The condition of the Christian</u> | 1:3-11 |
| | 1. The believer's resources | 1:3-4 |
| | 2. The believer's needs | 1:5-9 |
| | 3. The believer's adequacy | 1:10-11 |
| III. | <u>The authority for the Christian</u> | 1:12-21 |
| | 1. The need for teaching | 1:12-15 |
| | 2. The apostles' witness | 1:16-18 |
| | 3. The divine origin of Scripture | 1:19-21 |
| IV. | <u>The danger to the Christian</u> | 2:1-22 |
| | 1. The characteristics of false teachers | 2:1-3 |
| | 2. The consequences of false teaching | 2:4-10a |
| | 3. The conduct of false teaching | 2:10b-19 |
| | 4. The condemnation of false teachers | 2:20-22 |
| V. | <u>The prospect for the Christian</u> | 3:1-6 |
| | 1. The purpose of this second epistle | 3:1-2 |
| | 2. Scoffers in the last days | 3:3-6 |
| | 3. End-time events | 3:8-9 |
| | 4. Living in view of the future | 3:10-12 |
| VI. | <u>Conclusion</u> | 3:14-18 |

Until Then

(Jesus is coming again: What should I do?)

2 Peter 3:14-18

- I. Be diligent to maintain certain priorities 3:14
 - 1. Pursue peace
 - 2. Pursue purity

- II. Be devoted to meditate on our Master's patience 3:15-16
 - 1. It expresses His heart 3:15 (cf. 3:9)
 - 2. It exposes the heretic 3:16 (cf. 2:1-2)

- III. Be determined to mark your position 3:17
 - 1. Remember what you were taught
 - 2. Remain where you stand

- IV. Be dedicated to magnify God's praise 3:18
 - 1. Grow in grace daily
 - 2. Give God glory eternally