



Coffee & Conversations *on the book of 2 Peter*

Vital Statistics

Purpose:	To warn Christians about false teachers and to exhort them to grow in their faith in and knowledge of Christ
Author:	Peter
Original audience:	The church at large
Date written:	Approximately A.D. 67, three years after 1 Peter was written, possibly from Rome
Setting:	Peter knew that his time on earth was limited (1:13, 14), so he wrote about what was on his heart, warning believers of what would happen when he was gone - especially about the presence of false teachers. He reminded his readers of the unchanging truth of the gospel
Key verse:	His divine power has given us everything we need for a godly life through our knowledge of him who called us by his own glory and goodness. (1:3)
Key people:	Peter, Paul
Special features:	the date and destination are uncertain, and the authorship has been disputed. Because of this, 2 Peter was the last book

	admitted to the canon of the New Testament Scripture. Also, there are similarities between 2 Peter and Jude
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Author

The author identifies himself as Simon Peter (1:1). He uses the first person singular pronoun in a highly personal passage (1:12-15) and claims to be an eyewitness of the transfiguration (1:16-18); cf. Mt 17:1-5). He asserts that this is his second letter to the readers (3:1) and refers to Paul as "our dear brother" (3:15). In short , the letter claims to be Peter's, and its character is compatible with that claim.

Although 2 Peter was not as widely known and recognized in the early church as 1 Peter, some may have used and accepted it as authoritative as early as the second century and perhaps even in the latter part of the first century (1 Clement [A.D.95] may allude to it). It was not ascribed to Peter until Origen's time (185-253), and he seems to reflect some doubt concerning it. Eusebius (265-340) placed it among the questioned books, though he admits that most accept it as from Peter. After Eusebius's time, it seems to have been quite generally accepted as canonical.

In recent centuries, however, its genuineness has been challenged by a considerable number of interpreters. One of the objections that has been raised is the difference in style from that of 1 Peter. But the difference is not absolute; there are noteworthy similarities in vocabulary and in other matters. In fact, no other known writing is as much like 1 Peter as 2 Peter. The differences that do exist may be accounted for by variations in subject matter, in the form and purpose of the letters, in the time and circumstances of writing, in sources used or models followed, and in scribes who may have been employed. Perhaps most significant is the statement in 2

Pe 5:12 that Silas assisted in the writing of 1 Peter. No such statement is made concerning 2 Peter, which may explain its noticeable difference in style.

Other objections arise from a secular reconstruction of early Christian history or misunderstanding or misconstructions of the available data. For example, some argue that the reference to Paul's letter in 3:15-16 indicates an advanced date for this book - beyond Peter's lifetime. But it is quite possible, that Paul's letters were gathered at an early date, since since of them had been in existence and perhaps in circulation for more than ten years (Thessalonians by a much as 15 years) prior Peter's death. Besides, what Peter says may only indicate that he was acquainted with some of Paul's letters (communication in the Roman world and in the early church was good), not that there was a formal, ecclesiastical collection of them.

Date

2 Peter was written toward the end of Peter's life (c.f. 1:12-15), after he had written a prior letter (3:1) to the same readers (probably 1 Peter). Since Peter was martyred during the reign of Nero, his death must have occurred prior to A.D. 68; so is very likely that he wrote 2 Peter between 65 and 68.

Some have argued that this date is too early for the writing of 2 Peter, but nothing in the book requires a later date. The error combated is comparable to the kind of heresy present in the first century. To insist that the second chapter was directed against second-century Gnosticism is to assume more than the contents of the chapter warrant. While the heretics referred to in 2 Peter may well have been among

the forerunners of second-century Gnosticism, nothing is said of them that would not fit into the later years of Peter's life.

Some have suggested a later date because they interpret the reference to the fathers in 3:4 to mean an earlier Christian generation. However, the word is most naturally interpreted as the OT patriarchs (cf. Jn 6:31, "forefathers", Ac 3:13; Heb 1:1). Similarly, reference to Paul and his letters (3:15-16) does not require a date beyond Peter's lifetime.

2 Peter and Jude

There are conspicuous similarities between 2 Peter and Jude (compare 2Pe 2 with Jude 4-18), but there are also significant differences. It has been suggested that one borrowed from the other or that they both drew on a common source. If there is borrowing, it is not a slavish borrowing but one that adapts to suit the writer's purpose. While many have insisted that Jude used Peter, it is more reasonable to assume that the longer letter (Peter) incorporated much of the shorter (Jude). Such borrowing is fairly common in ancient writings. For example, many believe that Paul used parts of early hymns in Php 2:6-11 and 1Ti 3:16.

Purpose

In his first letter Peter feeds Christ's sheep by instructing them how to deal with persecution from outside the church (see 1Pe 4:12); in this second letter he teaches them how to deal with false teachers and evildoers who have come into the church (see 2:1; 3:3-4). While the particular situations naturally call for variations in content and emphasis, in both letters Peter as a pastor ("shepherd") of Christ's sheep (Jn

21:15-17) seeks to comment to his readers a wholesome combination of Christian faith and practice. More specifically, his purpose is threefold:

1) to stimulate Christians growth (ch. 1)

2) to combat false teaching (ch. 2)

3) to encourage watchfulness in view of the Lord's certain return (ch. 3).

How to read 2 Peter

Information overload! We can be swamped with a barrage of information. How do we sort it all out? How do we tell which information is important—or true? The danger of receiving false information existed in the church in Peter's day—as in ours. That's why the message of 2 Peter is so critical today.

Peter confronts those spreading doubts about Jesus' deity with great personal authority, for he himself was an eyewitness to "his majesty" (2Pe 1:16). Jesus is who he says he is! He is the glorious son of God. You can take him at his word!

As a result Peter challenges believers to resist the temptation to compromise morally or to turn their backs on the gospel. He also counsels us to pursue a godly lifestyle anticipating Jesus' return. Peter tells us that we can hurry along the day of Jesus' coming (2Pe 3:12) by actively sharing our faith with others. The reason God has delayed his return is to give us an opportunity to draw more people into his kingdom, for he does not want "any should perish, but that all should come to repentance" (2Pe 3:9). This is God's deepest desire, his most heartfelt longing. We can bring great joy to his heart as we lead others into living relationship with him.

2 Peter Interpretive Challenges

Perhaps the most important challenge in the epistle is to rightly interpret 1:19-21, because of its far-reaching implications with regard to the nature and authenticity of Scripture. That passage, along with 2Ti 3:15-17, is vital to a sound view of the Bible's inspiration. Peter's remark that the Lord "bought" false teachers (2:1) poses a challenge interpretively and theologically with regard to the nature of the atonement.

The identity of the angels who sinned (2:4) also challenges the interpreter. Many who believe that the saved can be lost again, use 2:18-22 for their argument. That passage, directed at false teachers, must be clarified so as not to contradict a similar statement to believers in 1:4. Further, whom does God not want to perish (3:9)?