

2 PETER: *True Knowledge*

How Then Shall We Live?

Simon Peter, a bond-servant and apostle of Jesus Christ This is now, beloved, the second letter I am writing to you. . ." (1:1; 3:1).

AUTHOR: The Apostle Peter is the stated author of the Second Epistle of Peter. However, it should be kept in mind that there is almost no external evidence to prove that this epistle was written by Peter. No direct quotation from it can be found in the patristic literature prior to the beginning of the third century. Eusebius, in the fourth century classes it among the doubtful books rather than among those that were accepted as of apostolic origin. The style of the two epistles is different. The letter was not widely known in the early church, and many people in the second and third centuries A. D. were writing under the name Peter. Therefore, some scholars deny authorship of the epistle to Peter.

However, conservative scholarship regards the epistle as genuine and inspired. There is strong internal evidence for Petrine authorship. The claim of the author himself (1:1; 3:1); his imminent death as predicted by Jesus (1:14; cf. Jn. 21:18); he claims to have been present at the Transfiguration (1:16, 17; Cf. Mk. 9:5-7; Matt. 17:4, 5); he identifies himself as an apostle of Jesus (3:2). It is consistent with the character of the apostle whose name it bears. If Peter used a different scribe or no scribe at all would explain for difference in style between I and II Peter. The epistle slowly gained acceptance into the Canon. It has stood the test of criticism, bears the stamp of the Spirit and speaks the truth of God's Word to each listening soul. II Peter 3:7-14 is a remarkable piece of evidence that this is inspired by the Holy Spirit. It has such a remarkable grasp of facts in the light of the discovery of atomic scientists.

DATE: Assuming Petrine authorship, Second Peter was written between A. D. 64 and 68. Since Peter is anticipating his death (1:14) shortly before A. D. 67 would be the correct date. If it was written about A. D. 67 then one reason for the letter not receiving wide publicity would be because the recipients were afraid to acknowledge the possession of it out of fear for their lives.

PLACE: Most scholars consider the city of Rome to be the place of writing.

RECIPIENTS: It was written to all believers, and especially to those who had received the previous letter three years before as described in 3:1. It was directed to Christians living in northern Asia Minor, among whom Peter had ministered at some previous time. Between the writings of the two epistles, a change had taken place in their circumstances. The first epistle warned of outside dangers, the second epistle is concerned with internal danger of apostasy and false teachers.

PURPOSE: It warns against false teachings, corrects denials concerning the Second Coming of Jesus, and urges diligence and holiness. He is dealing with dangers from within the church. They are facing serious attack from people who are "friendly" to the Christian faith. False teachers have infiltrated the churches and turning many believers from the pure and sincere faith. Every true believer has a responsibility to guard the truth.

THEME: Be on the guard against false teachings and live with a view toward the return of Christ.

KEY VERSE: 3:11

KEY WORDS: "know," "knowledge" occurs sixteen times in three chapters.

RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN JUDE AND II PETER: In content and language there is a resemblance between the two that is too strong to be accidental, though there are marked differences as well. If one is dependent on the other, which is the original? E. F. Scott writes: "Thus we have no choice but to regard II Peter as either a genuine writing of the Apostle, or as a later work which was deliberately composed in his name." Merrill C. Tenney adds: "It seems incredible that so barefaced a forgery should have been foisted on the Church without any protest. This document has not simply taken Peter's name, but it has professed to grow out of his experience."

If the internal evidence be taken at face value, it is plain that the epistle was written near the close of Peter's life, when persecution was threatening both him and the churches to whom he wrote (cf. I Pet. 4:14-19). In writing his first letter he had the aid of Silvanus (Silas) (I Pet. 5:12), who could smooth out his style, and who perhaps made several copies for general circulation, thereby insuring a wider knowledge of the epistle in the churches. The second epistle, if written without such aid, would show the cruder style of a Galilean fisherman, and would have a narrower distribution.

It is hard to avoid the conclusion that Jude is quoting Peter rather than vice-versa. If so, Jude becomes an external witness for the early date of II Peter rather than making it a late reproduction of Jude.

PROPHECY: One of the most definitive passages on inspiration in the New Testament is found in 1:21. It asserts unmistakably that the message of the Old Testament Scriptures is the authoritative voice of God which must be interpreted in the light of total revelation. Cf. II Tim. 2:15 and 3:16. The allusion to Paul's epistles as "scriptures" in II Pet. 3:16 would indicate the beginning of the canon of the New Testament, though Peter claims no more for Paul's writings than Paul did for his own (I Thess. 2:13).

DELAY IN THE COMING OF CHRIST: Undoubtedly many in Peter's day were disappointed that the Lord did not come in their lifetime. Some were skeptical of the Christian's teachings and scoffing at them. Peter reminds them the delay of Christ's return was not the result of a mistaken prediction, but was rather a sign of God's desire to give man a longer opportunity to repent and believe. God lives outside the dimension of time.

Title: Introduction to 2 Peter
Series: A Look at the Book

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