



## 2 Peter - An introduction

### Author and Title

Within 2 Peter itself there is strong evidence for authorship by the apostle Simon Peter. Also, in 1 Peter 1:1a the author claims to be: <<**Peter, an apostle of Jesus Christ**>>. Moreover, in this second letter he claims to have been an eyewitness of the transfiguration, which will be fully discussed in 2 Peter 1:16-18, an event where Peter is featured prominently in the Gospel accounts.

If someone other than Peter wrote the letter under his name, as some scholars have claimed, it would be a case of deliberate deception, especially given the author's claims to have witnessed the transfiguration. But there is no historical evidence in support of such a theory.

Furthermore, writing in another person's name was condemned among early Christians: <<**Concerning the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ and our being gathered to him, we ask you, brothers, not to become easily unsettled or alarmed by some prophecy, report or letter supposed to have come from us, saying that the day of the Lord has already come**>> (2 Thessalonians 2:1-2), and: <<**I, Paul, write this greeting in my own hand, which is the distinguishing mark in all my letters. This is how I write**>> (2 Thessalonians 3:17).

Some have suggested that the literary style of 2 Peter, which differs from that of 1 Peter, indicates an author other than Peter. But Peter may have used a secretary to help write this second letter, just as it may have been with Silas in 1 Peter 5:12, which would not affect the genuineness of his authorship providing he ultimately approved what was written.

Scholars have also questioned Petrine authorship of 2 Peter because of the similarities between Chapter 2 of this letter and the Book of Jude. But this is not a problem for apostolic authorship, since Peter may have included elements from Jude in this letter that he thought would be helpful for his readers. It could also have worked the other way round, with Jude using Peter's letter as his source. The parallels are close but almost never exact, so it is difficult to sort out the relationship between 2 Peter and Jude with any degree of certainty.

It is reasonable in light of all the evidence, and clearly supported by the claims of the letter itself, to conclude that the apostle Peter wrote Second Peter.

### Date

Peter probably wrote this letter from Rome not too long before his martyrdom, sometime during AD64-67. Elements within the letter lead many scholars to conclude that Peter wrote during a time of persecution by Rome, most probably during the reign of Nero, who died in AD68, and while Peter himself was in a Roman prison awaiting imminent execution, see 2 Peter 1:12-15. The dating of the letter then depends largely on the dating of Peter's death, which many hold to be during the early part of the period indicated.

### Theme

Second Peter teaches that the grace of God in Christ truly transforms and empowers Christians to live righteously, even in the face of opposition and suffering. This grace, introduced in 2 Peter 1:2-4, serves as the foundation for the remainder of his exhortations. The indwelling Holy Spirit (2 Peter 1:4), which characterises Christians as 'participants in the divine nature', produces virtuous qualities in followers of Christ (2 Peter 1:8-12), which in turn results in fruitful lives.

### Purpose of 2 Peter

Peter writes this brief, final reminder to the churches so that his readers will, by God's grace, live a life that is pleasing to God. In doing so, Peter must also combat the false teachers, who were apparently exerting pressure on the churches to depart from the true knowledge of Christ.

The false teaching is not only a theological challenge but also a moral one, holding forth some form of sexual permissiveness as a legitimate Christian lifestyle. While the false teaching can be described based on what Peter writes, it is historically impossible to identify who the false teachers were. For example, there is no clear historical evidence that these teachers were Gnostic or proto-Gnostic.

### Summary of Salvation History

Christians are to hold fast to the truth in Christ while patiently awaiting his Second Coming.

### Writing Style

The primary form is the epistle, with its usual elements. Partly on the basis of 2 Peter 1:13-14, where Peter asserts that he will soon depart this life, it is customary to view 2 Peter as adhering to some of the conventions of the farewell discourse.

Motifs that belong to that genre include the author's:

- a. announcing that he is near the end of his earthly life,
- b. reminding his followers of what he has taught them,
- c. commanding his followers how to live, and

d. predicting what will happen in the future.

In a farewell discourse, a leader has his last chance to influence his followers in the right direction for the sake of the movement in which he has been a guiding light. Second Peter is also filled with famous proverbs and aphoristic statements, vivid poetry and imagery, and an eschatological, i.e. end-times, discourse in Chapter Three.

Much of the letter falls into place if one grasps Peter's horror at false teaching, see especially Chapter Two, which is set against the reliability of God's prophetic Word in 2 Peter 1:19-21 and 3:1-2.

These two motifs converge in the vision of the last chapter, where biblical prophecy about the return of Christ is aggressively offered as a rebuttal of scoffers, that is, the false teachers, who denigrate biblical prophecy. In 2 Peter, true and false teaching engage in a combat of huge proportions.

### Key Themes

<u>Theme</u>	<u>Verses</u>
1. God, through his grace in Jesus Christ, has granted to Christians the privilege of partaking of the divine nature.	1:2-4.
2. God's grace results in godliness.	1:5-15.
3. The revelation of truth in Christ and in Scripture is sure because it is from God, and not from man-made myths.	1:16-21.
4. False teachers are bound over for destruction at the hand of God.	2:1-10.
5. False teachers are ethically and morally bankrupt.	2:11-22.
6. The Lord is patient with his creation, but will surely return in judgment like a thief in the night.	3:8-10.
7. God rescues the righteous.	2:7-9; 3:13-18.

### The Setting of 2 Peter

Peter addressed his first epistle to believers in Pontus, Galatia, Cappadocia, Asia, and Bithynia. He also writes: <<***Dear friends, this is now my second letter to you. I have written both of them as reminders to stimulate you to wholesome thinking***>> (2 Peter 3:1), indicating the same recipients here; although it is always possible that he wrote another letter to other recipients that is now lost to us. Therefore, we cannot be certain of the original recipients.



The map shows all the places named in 1 Peter and Peter writes this is his second letter most likely to the same recipients.

## Outline

- I. Initial Greeting (1:1-2)
- II. Making One's Calling and Election Sure (1:3-11)
  - a. God's power exercised on our behalf (1:3-4)
  - b. Making every effort to live a godly life (1:5-7)
  - c. Living an effective life for Christ (1:8-11)
- III. Prophecy of Scripture (1:12-21)
  - a. Stirring up Christians to holiness (1:12-15)
  - b. Peter's preaching results from his own eyewitness experience (1:16-18)
  - c. Truth about Jesus Christ anchored in the prophetic word of Scripture (1:19-21)
- IV. False Teachers and Their Destruction (2:1-22)
  - a. Influence of false teachers (2:1-3)
  - b. Judgment of false teachers (2:4-10a)
  - c. Character of false teachers (2:10b-16)
  - d. Influence of false teachers revisited (2:17-22)
- V. The Day of the Lord (3:1-13)
  - a. Scoffers challenge the truth of Scripture concerning the coming of the Lord (3:1-7)
  - b. The Lord's patience determines the timing of his return (3:8-10)
  - c. Living effectively in view of the Lord's return (3:11-13)
- VI. Concluding Exhortations (3:14-18)
  - a. Concerning diligence (3:14)
  - b. Concerning the distortion of Paul's teaching (3:15-16)
  - c. Concerning the proper response to Paul's teaching (3:17-18)