

# 2 Peter - Introduction & Background

## Authorship, Authenticity, Canonicity

The authenticity of 2 Peter is attacked perhaps more than any other book in the New Testament canon. The prevailing view among critical scholars is that 2 Peter was written by someone other than Peter claiming to be Peter in the second century when such Pseudepigraphical writings were common. However, the arguments raised against 2 Peter's authenticity are answerable.

The *first* argument used to dismiss 2 Peter's authenticity is that the second century church fathers did not comment upon this letter. However, it is possible to interpret their silence as a position of neutrality rather than a position of opposition to the letter. Moreover, their silence could be attributed to the letter's latter date, brevity, limited distribution, and stylistic differences with 1 Peter. The reticence of these fathers could also be attributed to 2 Peter's preoccupation with angels and apocryphal allusions,<sup>2</sup> and that Peter's name was often used to authenticate Gnostic writings. It is also worth observing that 2 Peter was often neglected by the fathers since it had to compete with several other latter works claiming to be Petrine, such as the *Apocalypse of Peter*. Perhaps the early church fathers failed to embrace 2 Peter because persecution prevented them from studying more fully the issues that troubled them about the work.

Despite the silence of the fathers, traces of 2 Peter have been found in various early works, such as Hermas (A.D. 120), 1 Clement (A.D. 95), 2 Clement (A.D. 150), *Didache*, *Apocalypse of Peter* (A.D. 200), Clement of Alexandria (A.D. 200), Aristides (A.D. 130), Valentinus (A.D. 130), and Hippolytus (A.D. 180). Second century apocryphal works such as the *Gospel of Truth* and the *Apocryphon of John* also quote the book. However, the most important early work citing 2 Peter is the Book of Jude:

| <b>2 Peter</b> | <b>Jude</b> |
|----------------|-------------|
| 1:5            | 3           |
| 2:1            | 4           |
| 2:4            | 6           |
| 2:6-7          | 7           |
| 2:10           | 8           |
| 2:11           | 9           |
| 2:12           | 10          |
| 2:13           | 12          |
| 2:15           | 11          |
| 2:15-17        | 12-13       |
| 2:18           | 16          |
| 3:2            | 17          |
| 3:3            | 18          |

Other later works accepted the canonicity of 2 Peter, such as the third century Bodmer Papyrus (P 72). Interestingly, the authenticity of 2 Peter was not denied by any known third century father. While they may have categorized the epistle as disputed, it was not categorized as spurious. Eusebius quoted Origen as saying that the work was disputed.<sup>4</sup> Methodius and Firmilian seem to have embraced the authenticity of 2 Peter. Fourth century writers embracing the canonicity of 2 Peter include Jerome, Athanasius, Augustine, and Ambrose. The book was also accepted at the councils of Laodicea (A.D. 372) and Carthage (A.D. 397). 2 Peter was generally recognized as authentic by the fourth century. Such universal recognition was accomplished with full recognition of the arguments against 2 Peter's authenticity.

The second argument used to dismiss 2 Peter's authenticity is the alleged contrasts between First and Second Peter. Differences supposedly exist in terms of style,<sup>5</sup> vocabulary,<sup>6</sup> level of informality, and use of the Old Testament. However, finding such differences often rests upon the subjectivity of the critic rather than objective fact. Furthermore, these differences might be attributable to different circumstances, purposes, and moods at the time of writing. One would expect Peter to communicate differently in his second letter since it represented his last will and testament. These differences might also be explained upon understanding that while Peter employed an amanuensis in his first letter (5:12), he either employed a different amanuensis or penned the second letter himself.

It should also be noted that any differences are outweighed by similarities between the two letters. For example, the salutations in both letters are nearly identical (1:2). Also, certain unique words are common to both letters. They include "precious" (1:1, 4; 1 Pet 1:7, 19; 2:6-7), "put off" or "putting away" (1:14; 1 Pet 3:21), "eyewitness" or "behold" (1:16; 1 Pet 2:12; 3:2), "supply" (1:5, 11; 1 Pet 4:11), "conversation" (2:7; 3:11; 1 Pet 1:15, 18; 2:12; 3:1-2, 16), "brotherly kindness" or "love of the brethren," (1:7; 1 Pet 1:22), "without spot and

blameless" or "without blemish and without spot" (3:14; 1 Pet 1:19; 2:13), "virtue" (1:3; 1 Pet 2:9), and "has ceased from sin" (2:14; 1 Pet 4:1). Interestingly, First and Second Peter have 153 words in common, which is almost as many as the 161 common words between First and Second Timothy. Moreover, common ideas are found in both letters such as the historicity of Noah and the Ark (2:5; 1 Pet 3:20), a high view of the Old Testament (1:19-21; 1 Pet 1:10-12), and an emphasis upon Christ's *Parousia* (2:9; 1 Pet 5:4).

Sometimes critics suggest that First and Second Peter were written by different writers since Christ's coming is described with the term *apokalupsis* in the first book and with the term *parousia* in the second book. However, this same difference can be found in between 1 Corinthians and 1 Thessalonians and yet no one suggests on this basis that different people wrote these books. Others note that the Christological themes prevalent in 1 Peter are absent in 2 Peter. Yet 2 Peter also exhibits a high Christology (1:17; 2:20; 3:18).

The *third* argument used to dismiss 2 Peter's authenticity is to note the common practice of pseudonymity in the Greco-Roman world. However, the church would never have accepted this practice as evidence by Paul's condemnation of it (2 Thess 2:2; 3:17) and the church's rejection of the Pseudepigraphical writings. The church believed in honesty. In fact, to argue that someone wrote 2 Peter other than Peter is to contradict the very virtues spoken of in the letter (1:5-7, 16; 2:9). Even to argue that the letter was written by a disciple of Peter still involves the writer in a misrepresentation. Furthermore, the content of the letter is quite different than what one would find in a second century Pseudepigraphical letter. It is not common for Pseudepigraphical writers to speak in the first person in epistolary literature, to demean their own reputation (3:15), to borrow from other writers,<sup>7</sup> and to promote morality and orthodoxy.

The *fourth* argument used to dismiss 2 Peter's authenticity is to note that 2 Peter borrowed from Jude. Because Peter died (A.D. 64) before Jude was written (A.D. 70), someone writing after Peter's death obviously did the borrowing and writing of 2 Peter. However, this argument collapses if Petrine priority is acknowledged.<sup>8</sup> The *fifth* argument used to dismiss 2 Peter's authenticity is to note that many of its phrases and concepts are from the second century. For example, some argue that the false teachers described in the letter represent second century Gnostics. However, the New Testament routinely warns of the imminent rise of false teachers (Acts 20:29-31; Rom 16:17-18; 1 Tim 4:1; 2 Tim 3:8; 1 John 2:18-19; 4:1) and Peter could have been dealing with an incipient form of Gnosticism.

Moreover, others contend that 2 Peter 3 must have been written at a time when the church had lost its hope in Christ's return. However, the situation described in this chapter has more to do with false teachers ridiculing Christ' return. Still others believe that the situation depicted in 2 Peter 3 has more in common with Stoic eschatology of the second century. However, while such eschatology depicted the end of the universe in terms of numerous

conflagrations, Peter describes it as a one-time event. Also 2 Peter 3 is devoid of second century eschatological concepts such as Chiliasm and Montanism.

In addition, it is argued that because 2 Peter 3:15-16 refers to all Paul's letters, it must have been written after they had all been collected in the second century. However, the phrase may refer to only those letters known to Peter at the time through his personal contact with Paul.<sup>9</sup> The reference to the inspiration of Paul's writings does not demand a later date since Paul considered all his writings inspired (2 Thess 3:14; 1 Cor 2:16; 7:17; 14:37-39).

Also, the reference to Paul as a beloved brother need not have been written after Paul's death since Peter had already demonstrated an affinity for Paul (Acts 15:7; Gal 2:9).

Finally, miscellaneous phrases commonly understood as originating in the second century need not be understood as such. While the concepts of divine nature (1:4), knowledge, and virtue are typically associated with second century Hellenism, they are also found in Josephus, Colossians, and Isaiah respectively. The phrase "apostles and prophets" (3:2) is found in Ephesians 2:20. Although Mount Transfiguration was only known as "holy" (1:18) in the second century, "holy" can also be used to specify anywhere God revealed Himself (Exod 15:13; Pss 2:6; 3:4). Also, the phrase "passing of the fathers" (3:4) need not refer to the death of church fathers as it could easily refer to the death of the patriarchs (Acts 3:13; Rom 9:5; Heb 1:1).<sup>10</sup> It is also unwarranted to presume that the writer is excluding himself from the band of apostles through the use of the phrase "your apostles" (3:2). He could merely have been referring to those apostles personally known to the readers.

Despite the previously discussed problems associated with the external evidence, *internal* evidence favoring Petrine authorship of the letter is quite strong. The writer identifies himself as Peter (1:1). Interestingly, he also uses the unusual name Symeon. Had the writer been a forger, he probably would have slavishly followed Peter's normal designation as Simon (Matt 16:16) so as not to draw attention to himself. The writer also refers to his reader's faith as "the same kind as ours." This may reflect Peter's experiences in Acts 10 where he learned that both Jews and Gentiles are saved the same way. He also calls his letter his second letter (3:1). This reference probably refers to 1 Peter. Given the commonalities between the two books, the writer of the first book is also the same author who wrote the second book. Also, his endorsement of Paul's writings (3:15) would seem a bit presumptuous if an apostle had not written the book.

Moreover, similarities can be seen in between the language of 2 Peter and Peter's sermons recorded in Acts. Both make use of "obtained" (1:1; Acts 1:17), "godliness" or "holiness" (1:3, 6, 7; 3:11; Acts 3:12), "unlawful" or "wicked" (2:8; Acts 2:23), "reward of unrighteousness" or "iniquity" (2:13, 15; Acts 1:18), "the Day of the Lord" (3:10; Acts 2:20), "punishment" (2:9; Acts 4:21), and "received" or "shared" (1:1; Acts 1:17). Finally, the letter makes several references to Peter's relationship with Christ during the latter's earthly ministry. Such references include Peter's imminent death (1:13-14; John 21:18-19) and his

presence on the Mount of Transfiguration (1:15-18; Matt 17:1-13). Such a practice is similar to the way that Peter recounted his experiences with Christ in his first letter (5:1).

### **Date**

The letter was written after Paul hadwritten some of his letters (3:15-16). It was also written after 1 Peter (3:1). However, the letter was written sometime prior to A.D. 70 since it makes no mention of the fall of Jerusalem, which was a topic that would have been extremely important to a Jewish audience. It was obviously written before A.D. 67 since this is the date of Peter's martyrdom (1:14). Another reason that the letter had to have been written prior to A.D. 67 is that Paul surely would have mentioned Peter while writing 2 Timothy fromRome if Peter had been alive at that time. Because the letter makes no reference to the persecution of believers by Nero, it must have been written just prior to the Neronic persecution. Thus, assigning a date of A.D. 64 for the composition of the letter would not be far from wrong.

### **Recipients and Place of Writing**

Because the recipients are not identified in the salutation (1:1) and because the letter is Peter's second (3:1), it is likely that the same group mentioned in 1 Peter 1:1 is the same group addressed in the second letter. Because this letter represents Peter's second letter, it is probable that he wrote it from the same place as his first epistle. Thus, a Babylonian place of writing is likely.<sup>11</sup> However, because tradition indicates that Peter diedin Rome in A.D. 67, it is also possible Peter penned this letter from that great city just before his death.

### **Occasion for Writing and Opponents**

Peter wrote to warn his audience of the advent of false teachers. Apparently, Peter already knew of them. His repetitious use of the present tense indicates that they were already at work in surrounding communities (2:12,17,18; 3:5,16). Peter seems to be combating an incipient form of Gnosticism in the letter. Gnostics held to dualism, which taught that the physical world was evil and the spiritual world was good. This worldview negatively impacted their Christology. If the physical world was bad, then Christ could not come in the flesh. Thus, Gnostics denied Christ's atonement (2:1) and Second Advent (3:4; 2 John 7). Dualism also led to license. Because it was believed that nothing could be done about the physical world being evil, then it was acceptable to indulge the fleshly appetites. If matter was hopelessly evil, then responsibility for lax morals could be passed off as "I am not doing evil. Rather, it is my body that is doing evil." If the physical world was evil, then a person could blame their sin on their body thus allowing them to deny moral responsibility. Thus, Peter's opponents were involved in gross immorality (2:4-18). Gnostics also believed that they possessed secret knowledge not accessible to the ordinary person (1:20). This higher knowledge gave them a feeling of superiority in comparison to others (2:10-11).

### **Purpose and Message**

The purpose of the letter is to build up its readers in the faith so that they will be insulated from the persuasiveness of the coming false teachers. Thus, 2 Peter was written for a different purpose than 1 Peter:

| 1 Peter                          | 2 Peter              |
|----------------------------------|----------------------|
| External opposition              | Internal opposition  |
| Persecution                      | False teaching       |
| Suffering                        | Error                |
| Hope                             | Knowledge            |
| Encourage                        | Expose               |
| Comfort                          | Caution              |
| Holiness                         | Maturity             |
| Pain with a purpose              | Poison in the pew    |
| Christ exemplified suffering     | Christ's return      |
| Similarities to Paul (Ephesians) | Similarities to Jude |

The message of the letter is that Christians should pursue "spiritual growth so they can combat *apostasy* as they look forward to the *Lord's return*."

### Sub Purposes

In addition to this overarching purpose, Peter wrote to accomplish several sub purposes. *First*, he wanted to promote morality among his audience (1:12-13). *Second*, he wanted to leave a written record of his teaching in view of his imminent death (1:14-15; 3:1). *Third*, he wanted to see his audience mature (1:1-11; 3:17-18). *Fourth*, he wanted to predict his rapidly approaching death (1:12-15). *Fifth*, he wanted to demonstrate that the transfiguration guarantees the coming of the kingdom (1:16-18).

*Sixth*, he wanted to defend the doctrine of the second coming as divinely inspired (1:19-21). *Seventh*, he wanted to give the characteristics of false teachers (2:1-22). *Eighth*, he wanted to explain the delay in Christ's Parousia (3:1-9). *Ninth*, he wanted to detail the Day of the Lord (3:10-14). *Tenth*, he wanted to explain the tactics of the false teachers (3:15-16). *Eleventh*, he wanted to remind his readers of the basics of Christianity (1:12-13; 3:1-2).

### Unique Characteristics

Peter's second letter boasts several outstanding characteristics. *First*, the book frequently mentions knowledge. Cognates of the verb "to know (oidaor ginwsksw) are found 16 times throughout the letter. Thus, knowledge is the best way to insulate believers from the influence of false teachers. *Second*, along with 2 Timothy 3:16, the letter contains one of the classic statements describing the inspiration of the Scripture (1:19-21). *Third*, the letter not only indicates that Old Testament Scripture is inspired but that the New Testament Scripture is inspired as well (3:2, 15-16). Thus, the letter offers one of the few passages confirming the inspiration of the New Testament (1 Tim 5:17-18; 2 Thess 3:14; John 14:26; 16:13). *Fourth*, the letter provides the only New Testament passage describing how the present universe will be destroyed. While other New Testament passages announce its soon destruction (Matt 24:35), only 2 Peter 3 describes the method of its destruction.

*Fifth*, the letter exemplifies a polemical style by taking Gnostic terminology, such as "knowledge," and refilling it with Christian content. Peter follows this practice in an attempt to demonstrate the supremacy of Christianity over incipient Gnosticism. *Sixth*, just as 2 Timothy represents Paul's last will and testament, 2 Peter similarly represents Peter's last will and testament. *Seventh*, the letter makes repeated use of the word "remembrance."

Note the following phrases:

"Has forgotten (literally, 'having received forgetfulness') that he has been cleansed" (1:9)

"I will always remind you of these things" (1:12)

"It is right to refresh your memory" (1:13)

"You will always be able to remember these things" (1:15)

"I have written both of them as reminders" (3:1)

"Do not forget" (3:8)

"Bear in mind (literally, consider)" (3:15)

*Eighth*, 2 Peter and Jude are so similar that both must be understood together. *Ninth*, while Paul warns of false teaching among the flock, Peter warns of it among the shepherds.

## Structure

The book contains three main sections. Each section is its own complete chapter. *First*, Peter exhorts his readers on the path of Christian maturity (1:1-21). *Second*, he functions as a kind of Paul Revere in warning about the advent of false teachers. Here, he describes their characteristics and condemns them (2:1-22). *Third*, he refutes the uniformitarian doctrine that the false teachers will introduce and expresses confidence in Christ's return (3:1-18).

## Outline

### I. Call to spiritual growth (2 Peter 1:1-21)

#### (1) Introduction (1:1-2)

(A) Writer: Peter (1:1a)

(B) Recipients: same as those in the first letter (1:1b)

(C) Salutation: grace and peace coming through knowledge (1:2)

#### (2) Exhortation to grow (1:3-11)

(A) Provision for growth (1:3-4)

(a) Divine power (1:3a)

(b) Knowledge (1:3b)

(c) Promises (1:4a)

(d) Divine nature (1:4b)

(B) Portrait of growth (1:5-7)

(a) Faith (1:5a)

(b) Excellence (1:5b)

(c) Knowledge (1:5c)

- (d) Self-control (1:6a)
- (e) Perseverance (1:6b)
- (f) Godliness (1:6c)
- (g) Kindness (1:7a)
- (h) Love (1:7b)
- (C) Product of growth (1:8-11)
  - (a) Productivity (1:8)
  - (b) Vision: living consistently with spiritual identity (1:9)
  - (c) Assurance (1:10)
  - (d) Stability: not stumbling (1:10b)
  - (e) Rewarded in the kingdom (1:11)
- (3) Peter's first purpose statement (1:12-15)
  - (A) Peter's desire to remind (1:12-13)
  - (B) Reason: Peter's imminent martyrdom (1:14)
  - (C) Peter's action: create a record of his teaching (1:15)
- (4) Proof of the coming kingdom (1:16-21)
  - (A) Kingdom guaranteed by the transfiguration (1:16-18)
  - (B) Kingdom prophesied in the OT (1:19-21)

## II. Description of false teachers (1 Peter 2:1-22)

- (1) Their predicted arrival (2:1a)
- (2) Their devices (2:1b-3)
  - (A) False teaching (2:1b)
  - (B) Pernicious ways (2:2a)
  - (C) Evil speaking of the truth (2:2b)
  - (D) Covetousness (2:3a)
  - (E) Feigned words (2:3b)
  - (F) Making merchandise of the flock (2:3c)
- (3) Their doom (2:4-9)
  - (A) God's pattern of judgment (2:4-6)
    - (a) Judgment of angel's in Noah's day (2:4)
    - (b) Judgment of Noah's world (2:5)
    - (c) Judgment of Sodom and Gomorrah (2:6)
  - (B) God spared Lot (2:7-8)
  - (C) Conclusion: God will protect Peter's audience against false teachers (2:9)
- (4) Their depravity (2:10-16)
  - (A) Lustful (2:10a)
  - (B) Lawless (2:10b-11)
  - (C) Ignorant (2:12)

- (D) Immoral (2:13-14)
- (E) Covetousness (2:15-16)
- (5) Their emptiness (2:17-19)
- (6) Their return to their former state (2:20-22)

III. Refutation of false teachers' doctrine (2 Peter 3:1-18)

- (1) Peter's second purpose statement (3:1-2)
- (2) Refutation of false teachers' denial of the Second Advent (3:3-14)
  - (A) False teachers' motives for denying second Advent (3:3-4)
    - (a) Lust (3:3)
    - (b) Uniformitarianism (3:4)
  - (B) Refutation of uniformitarianism (3:5-10)
    - (a) Argument from history (3:5-7)
      - (i) Creation (3:5)
      - (ii) Flood (3:6-7)
    - (b) Argument from Scripture (3:8)
    - (c) Argument from God's character (3:9)
    - (d) Argument from divine promise (3:10)
  - (C) Practical ramifications of refuting Uniformitarianism (3:11-14)
    - (a) Practical impact (3:11a)
    - (b) Holiness (3:11b)
    - (c) Evangelism (3:12)
    - (d) Hope (3:13)
    - (e) Holiness reiterated (3:14)
- (3) Concluding exhortations (3:15-18)
  - (A) Paul as an example of grace (3:15a)
  - (B) Be on guard against false teachers (3:15b-17)
  - (C) Press on to maturity (3:18)

---

## Introduction

Peter's second epistle was written shortly after his first letter (as also Paul to Corinth, Thessalonica, and Timothy). It was probably written after Paul's death, somewhere between 64-68 AD. Peter mentions "all his (Paul's) epistles" as being in circulation already. This epistle has had a rough passage through the centuries. It was considered second-class Scripture by Luther, rejected by Erasmus, and regarded with hesitancy by Calvin. Despite some scholastic controversies, by the 4th century it was well accepted throughout most of the world.

## Authorship

External evidence of authorship of 2 Peter is very weak. 2 Peter was not quoted by a church father until the 3rd century: the writings of the church fathers contain fewer references to Peter's authorship of 2 Peter than to the authorship of any other NT book. It is easy to see why critics who look for reasons to reject the authority of Scripture have targeted this book for attack. Ironically, in this letter, Peter warned his readers of heretics who would depart from the teachings of the apostles and the OT prophets, which became the very thing some of these modern critics have done.

There is strong internal testimony to the fact that Peter wrote the book (2 Peter 1:1). This includes stylistic similarities to 1 Peter, similar vocabulary compared with Peter's sermons in Acts, and the specific statements already mentioned (i.e., 1:1,14; 3:1). In addition, the writer claimed to have witnessed Jesus' transfiguration (1:16-18; Cf. Matt 17:1-8), and to have received information about his own death from Jesus (2 Peter 1:13-14 refers to an event in John 21:18-19).

## ARGUMENTS FOR & AGAINST PETER'S AUTHORSHIP

| CRITICISM  | ANSWER  |
|--|---|
| <b>Weak External Evidence<br/>(not cited by Church Fathers until<br/>3<sup>rd</sup> century)</b> | <b>Alternative reasons; Jude</b>                      |
| <b>Linguistic Differences<br/>between 1 &amp; 2 Peter</b>  | <b>Used a Secretary for 1 Peter<br/>(5:12)</b>        |
| <b>Different ideas between 1 &amp; 2<br/>Peter</b>   | <b>Different Purposes<br/>between 1 &amp; 2 Peter</b> |
| <b>Lived After Paul (2 Peter 3:15-16)</b>  | <b>"All" Means "Known" Pauline<br/>Documents</b>      |
| <b>Passing of the fathers (2 Peter<br/>3:4)</b>  | <b>Fathers = patriarchs (Rom 9:5)</b>                 |

Some "alternative reasons" why 2 Peter wasn't quoted by the church fathers until the 3rd century is that talks about a number of unique things...angels, etc. Also, Peter's name was used by many forgeries; it was common for false teachers to use Peter's name as their own. It also had a limited distribution among the churches, and it was written late.

However, it was cited by Jude (church father and Jesus' half-brother. He had no problem citing 2 Peter:

For example, in 2 Peter 2:1 Peter warns that false teachers are coming; in Jude 4, in reference to Peter, says that the false teachers had arrived.

| COMPARISON OF 2 PETER AND JUDE |       |
|--------------------------------|-------|
| 2 PETER                        | JUDE  |
| 1:5                            | 3     |
| 2:1                            | 4     |
| 2:4                            | 6     |
| 2:6-7                          | 7     |
| 2:10                           | 8     |
| 2:11                           | 9     |
| 2:12                           | 10    |
| 2:13                           | 12    |
| 2:15                           | 11    |
| 2:15-17                        | 12-13 |
| 2:18                           | 16    |
| 3:2                            | 17    |
| 3:3                            | 18    |

This chart was taken from Arnold G. Fruchtenbaum, *The Messianic Jewish Epistles*, Ariel's Bible Commentary (Tustin, CA: Ariel, 2005), 390.

Another external argument against Peter's authorship of 2 Peter is that the Greek of 1 Peter and 2 Peter are quite different. However, 1 Peter 5:12 says that Peter used a "secretary" to write 1 Peter, but obviously didn't do so for 2 Peter.

Another argument is that the ideas in 1 Peter are completely different than those in 2 Peter. This is true because both books have completely different purposes. 1 Peter is also about

suffering for the cause of Christ for the hope of future glory. 2 Peter is all about false teachers.

While there are a number of differences and a different purpose for each, there are also some similarities: both books talk about angels in prison, the flood and the eight survivors, the future destruction of the earth, and both emphasize holy living.

Another argument is that Peter uses "all" to describe Paul's letters in 2 Peter 3:16. So people take "all" and try to push authorship of 2 Peter way into the future, after Paul wrote 2 Timothy in 67 AD, to prove that Peter didn't write it (because he was dead). However, this is easy to answer when you interpret "all" as "known." Peter couldn't have been referring to letters that Paul hadn't written yet.

### **Order of Paul's Epistles**

- (1) Galatians (49 AD)
- (2) 1&2 Thessalonians (51 AD)
- (3) 1&2 Corinthians (56 AD)
- (4) Romans (57 AD)
- (5) Ephesians, Colossians, Philemon, Philippians (60-62 AD)
- (6) 1 Timothy, Titus (62-66 AD)
- (7) 2 Timothy (67 AD)

The last argument is "fathers" in 2 Peter 3:4 refers to the apostles, so if they were dead, 2 Peter would've been written much later, after Peter's death. However, "fathers" refers to the patriarchs, just as it does in Rom 9:5.

### **Biography**

- (1) Peter's name is mentioned first on all of the lists enumerating the apostles (Matt 10:2-4; Mark 3:13-15; Luke 6:12-13; Acts 1:13)
- (2) As one of the inner three, he (along with James and John) witnessed the raising of Jairus' daughter (Mark 5:37) and Christ's transfiguration (Matt 17:1-5).
- (3) Peter denied Christ three times (Matt 26:56-75) but later repented.
- (4) He was an eyewitness of Christ's crucifixion (1 Peter 5:1), post resurrection (Luke 24:34), and Ascension (Acts 1:9-10).
- (5) He was a leading figure in the early church. He presided over the choice of Matthias (Acts 1:15-26). He preached at Pentecost (Acts 2:14-41). He used the keys of the kingdom (Matt 16:19) to open its doors to Jews (Acts 2:14-41), Samaritans (Acts 8:14-25), and Gentiles (Acts 10:1-48).
- (6) He ministered in various places in Israel including Jerusalem, Lydda (Acts 9:32-35), Joppa (Acts 9:36-43), Caesarea (Acts 10:1-48), and Syrian Antioch (Gal 2:11).
- (7) He was present at the Jerusalem Council (Acts 15). However, after this point, he seems to disappear from Acts.

(8) He traveled extensively, often accompanied by his wife (1 Cor 9:5). Apparently, he paid a visit to Asia Minor (1:1) and Babylon (1 Peter 5:13).

(9) According to tradition, he finally went to Rome. In Rome, he was martyred by being crucified upside down in 67-68 AD, prior to Nero's death.

#### **Date of Writing: ~64 AD**

- After
  - He wrote 2 Peter after 1 Peter (Cf. 2 Peter 3:1)
  - Paul had already written at least some of his letters (2 Peter 3:15-16)
  - 1 Peter makes many references to Ephesians, which was written in 60 AD; if Peter is making reference to Ephesians, 1 Peter would have to be written sometime after 60 AD. 2 Peter would then be written well after 60 AD.

## **EPHESIANS IN 1 PETER (2 Peter 3:15-16)**

| <b>EPHESIANS</b> | <b>1 PETER</b>  |
|------------------|-----------------|
| <b>1:3</b>       | <b>1:3</b>      |
| <b>3:5, 10</b>   | <b>1:12</b>     |
| <b>3:6, 21</b>   | <b>4:11</b>     |
| <b>3:8</b>       | <b>1:8</b>      |
| <b>4:2</b>       | <b>3:9</b>      |
| <b>4:7, 11</b>   | <b>4:10</b>     |
| <b>4:13, 15</b>  | <b>2:2</b>      |
| <b>4:17</b>      | <b>1:14, 18</b> |

- Before
  - 70 AD (no mention of the destruction of Jerusalem)
  - 68 AD (Peter references Paul's letters, but not his death)
  - 67 AD (Peter was martyred)
  - 64 AD (Peter doesn't mention Nero's persecution)

#### **Recipients**

- Same audience as 1 Peter (Cf. 1 Peter 1:1)

- North-central Asia Minor
- Regenerated (1 Peter 1:3-4; 2 Peter 1:1)
  - These churches were planted and watered during Paul's three missionary journeys; they were likely evangelized by those in south-central Asia Minor
- Jewish
  - *Diaspora* (1 Peter 1:1; James 1:1; John 7:35)
  - Aliens/sojourners (1 Peter 1:1)
  - Pilgrims (1 Peter 2:11)
  - Distinguished from the Gentiles (1 Peter 2:12; 4:3)
    - In 1 Peter, he is careful to distinguish Jews from Gentiles
  - 1 Peter 2:9 (Ex 19:6; Rom 10:19)
    - Calls Jews a "holy nation" which cannot be applied to the church
  - To the church/churches of... (1 Peter 1:1; 2 Peter 1:1)
    - Paul typically started off his epistles addressing them to the "church/churches of"; Peter doesn't do that
  - Paul is apostle to Gentiles; Peter is the apostles to Jews (Gal 2:7-8)

There are six NT books written specifically to a Jewish audience: Matthew, Hebrews, James, 1&2 Peter, Jude



Place of Writing

1 Peter 5:13 indicates that Peter wrote 1 Peter from Babylon, however many scholars interpret "Babylon" as a code word for Rome. There are 4 reasons to take Babylon literally:

- 1 Peter 1:1 is literal, so why not 5:13?
- People state that cities or geographical locations are not always literal in the Bible (Gal 4:25; Rev 11:8); however in both instances the text specifically states that the city/location is supposed to be interpreted allegorically.
- Gal 2:7-8 - Peter is the apostle to the Jews; there were many Jews still in Babylon during the 1st century, so it's completely plausible and logical for Peter to be in Babylon, ministering to the Jews still living there
- We know that there were residents of Mesopotamia in Jerusalem and heard Peter preach on the Day of Pentecost (Acts 2:9) (see quote from Josephus below)
- Rome is mentioned elsewhere in Scripture, so why would it be used as a code word here?
  - While it's accurate that Babylon was used as a code word for Rome, it wasn't done so until the 2nd century, well after Peter wrote 1 Peter

### **Occasion for Writing**

- Incipient Gnosticism
  - Dualism - physical world bad, spiritual world good
    - God said "very good" after 6th day of creation
    - This is where amillennialism comes from...it arises out of gnostic thought
      - If you think the physical world is bad, then how could Jesus come back to reign over the entire earth
      - This means you allegorize all the prophecies related to the earthly kingdom
    - Dualism also damages our understanding of the Incarnation (2 Peter 2:1)
      - You begin to believe that Jesus body was not human but celestial, thus His sufferings were only apparent, not real
      - This is docetism
      - This is why John says in 1 John 4:2: By this you know the Spirit of God: every spirit that confesses that Jesus Christ has come in the flesh is from God; -- he is countering gnostic heresies, specifically dualism
    - Dualism affects the Second Advent (2 Peter 3:4)
      - If you don't believe Jesus came the first time in a body, you won't believe He'll come a second time in a body
      - This is why John says in 2 John 7: For many deceivers have gone out into the world, those who do not acknowledge Jesus Christ as coming in the flesh. This is the deceiver and the antichrist. -- he is countering gnostic heresies, specifically dualism

- If you think the physical world is bad, what can you blame your sin on? Your body. If you can blame your tongue for gossip or lying and not take personal responsibility, it leads to licentiousness (unbridled sin).
- So a lot of the things Peter says makes sense if you understand it against the background of incipient gnosticism
- Gnostic - knowledge; the gnostics said they had a "secret knowledge" that the poor average Christian does not have
  - Their hook was that if people would listen to their teaching, they would get this "secret knowledge"
  - This is why Peter talks aggressively in 2 Peter about Bibliology (doctrine of Scripture)
  - If you believe you have secret knowledge that other Christians do not have, what does that do to your pride? Radically inflates it.
    - Paul was caught up to the 3rd heaven and heard things unfit for human ears (2 Cor 12:2-3); his pride was obviously inflated his pride significantly and he wrestled with it the rest of his life
    - This is why God gave him a "thorn in the flesh" (2 Cor 12:7)
    - This is why Peter deals with the pride of false teachers (2 Peter 2:10-11)

### **Purpose**

To build up his readers in the faith so that they will be insulated from the coming false teachers.

He's not trying to get these people saved; he's trying to warn them of the Incipient Gnosticism that is coming their way, so they would be aware of it and could not fall victim to it.

## DIFFERENCES BETWEEN 1 AND 2 PETER

| 1 PETER                      | 2 PETER             |
|------------------------------|---------------------|
| External opposition          | Internal opposition |
| Persecution                  | False teaching      |
| Suffering                    | Error               |
| Hope                         | Knowledge           |
| Encourage                    | Expose              |
| Comfort                      | Caution             |
| Holiness                     | Maturity            |
| Pain with a purpose          | Poison in the pew   |
| Christ exemplified suffering | Christ's return     |

Wilkinson and Boa pg. 480 and Nelson's Complete Book of Charts pg. 466.

Both books were written by the same person, about the same time, from the same place, to the same group, but their purposes are completely different.

### Structure

2 Peter 1 - Call to maturity

- Peter emphasizes maturity at the outset because false teachers prey on the unstable (2 Peter 2:14)
- This is exactly what the Church is supposed to be doing for believers today (Eph 4:11-16)

2 Peter 2 - Characteristics of false teachers

2 Peter 3 - Doctrine of the false teachers

### Message

Protection from the negative influence of the coming false teachers is accomplished through exhortation toward maturity and exposing the characteristics and doctrines of these coming false teachers.

### Unique Characteristics

- Knowledge
- Bibliology (1:19-21; 3:2,15-16)
- Destruction of the present world (2 Peter 3:10ff)

- Polemical
  - Peter takes the gnostic's language (knowledge) and refills that language with a biblical meaning (God's perspective on knowledge)
- Peter's last will and testament (2 Peter 1:14-15)
  - Similar to 2 Timothy, Paul's last will and testament
- Similarities with Jude
- Remembrance

## Outline

### (I.) 2 Peter 1: Call to Maturity

- (1) Introduction (1:1-2)
  - (A) Writer (v1a)
  - (B) Recipients (v1b)
  - (C) Greeting (v2)
- (2) Call to Growth (1:3-11)
  - (A) Provisions for Growth (v3-4)
    - (a) Power (v3a)
    - (b) Knowledge (v3b)
    - (c) Promises (v4a)
    - (d) Participation in the divine nature (v4b)
  - (B) Portrait of Growth (v5-7)
  - (C) Benefits of Growth (v8-11)
    - (a) Productivity (v8)
    - (b) Harmony with identity (v9)
    - (c) Sureness of election (v10a)
    - (d) Stability (v10b)
    - (e) Eternal reward (v11)
- (3) Purpose Statement (1:12-15)
- (4) Coming Kingdom (1:16-21)
  - (A) Christ's Transfiguration (v16-18)
  - (B) OT Prediction (v19-21)

### II. Characteristics of False Teachers (2 Peter 2)

- (1) Predicted arrival (2:1a)
- (2) Devices (2:1b-3)
  - (A) False Teaching (v1b)
  - (B) License (v2)
  - (C) Greed (v3a)
  - (D) Exploit the flock (v3b)
  - (E) False words (v3c)

- (3) Doom (2:4-9)
  - (A) Fallen angels (v4)
  - (B) Flood (v5)
  - (C) Sodom & Gomorrah (v6-8)
  - (D) Conclusion (v9)
- (4) Depravity (2:10-16)
  - (A) Licentious (v10a)
  - (B) Lawless (v10b-11)
  - (C) Animalistic (v12)
  - (D) Shameless pleasure seekers (v13)
  - (E) Eyes full of adultery (v14a)
  - (F) Entice unstable souls (v14b)
  - (G) Greedy (v14c-16)
- (5) Emptiness (2:17-19)
- (6) Regression (2:20-22)
  - (A) Return (v20)
  - (B) Accountability to God is greater (v21)
  - (C) Two illustrations (v22)

### III. Doctrine of the False Teachers

- (1) Peter's 2nd Purpose Statement (3:1-2)
  - (A) Back to the basics (v1)
  - (B) True source of knowledge (v2a)
  - (C) Inspiration of both prophets and apostles (v2b)
- (2) The Relevance of the Future (3:3-15)
  - (A) Heresy of the false teachers (v3-4)
  - (B) Motive of the false teachers (v3-4)
  - (C) Peter's rebuttal (v5-10)
    - (a) Arguments from history (v5-7)
      - (i) Creation (v5)
      - (ii) Flood (v6-7)
    - (b) Arguments from Scripture (v8)
    - (c) Arguments from God's character (v9)
    - (d) Arguments from divine promise (v10)
  - (D) Application (v11-15)
    - (a) Holy living (v11b,14)
    - (b) Evangelism (v12)
    - (c) Hope (v13)
    - (d) Patience (v15)

(E) Concluding Exhortations (v15b-18)

- (a) Regard the grace of God (v15b)
- (b) Beware of false teachers (v16-17)
- (c) Grow in Christ (v18)