

Valley Bible Church - Bible Survey

Bible Survey Lesson 88: The Book of 2 Peter

Introduction:

Second Peter is a letter of warning, the last written communication from the Apostle Peter produced not long before he was martyred in AD. 67.

Previously, he had written to comfort and encourage believers in North Asia Minor who were in the middle of suffering and persecution. They were being attacked from outside, treated as heretics and traitors. Now, some time later, they were being attacked from inside the church by complacent Christians and false teachers with Gnostic tendencies.

In response, Peter uses forms of the word "knowledge" 16 times and tells his readers to hold fast to the truth, continue to mature, and reject all who would twist the message.

Author:

We reviewed the person and work of Peter in our introduction to 1 Peter so we need not repeat that information. The authorship of this letter has; however, been challenged more than any other book in the New Testament. I will give a very brief support to Peter's authorship and refer you, again, to the *MacArthur Study Bible*, introduction to 2 Peter for more detailed information.

Despite the obvious difference in the tone between this and the first letter, there are a number of excellent reasons to believe Peter wrote this letter:

1. The direct claim, by name and title in 1:1, has no logical explanation since a forgery would serve no reasonable purpose.
2. The writer claims to have been on the Mount of Transfiguration (1:16-18) which certainly limits the possibilities.
3. He says Jesus told him he would die (1:3-15; John 21:18-19).
4. He had a working knowledge of Paul's Epistles (3:15-16).
5. He mentioned having written to the readers before (3:1).
6. The difference in tone can be explained by the different emphasis and the style is similar.

Even though he doesn't name the recipients we have little doubt they are the same as those who received his first letter. Remember that group would be made up of some Jews, but a majority of Gentiles.

The consensus of opinion is that Peter wrote this letter while in prison in Rome where he was facing imminent death. This information dates the letter at AD. 66 or 67.

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OUTLINE OF THE BOOK OF 2 PETER

I. TRUE TEACHING (Chapter 1)

Before the new high-tech sensor strips were inserted into our paper money, banks had a system for teaching their workers how to spot counterfeit bills. For a number of days, while in training, they handled nothing but money, real money. After the training it was virtually impossible to pass a bogus bill to one of those employees.

Expert winetasters do the same. They are careful not to drink cheap wine, except in testing, staying only with proven excellent vintages. Then when they taste an inferior wine it tastes like bile to them.

The best way to recognize false doctrine is to handle the truth of God's Word incessantly. Then when the heresy comes, it just doesn't feel right, smell right, look right, or taste right.

Paul always exposes false teaching by comparing it to the truth. And now Peter will do the same, beginning with the truth, then exposing the error.

A. The Walk (1:1-11)

Where does the truth start?

1. Commencing (1-4)

Peter introduces himself as a *"bond-servant and apostle of Jesus Christ,"* writing to *"those who have received a faith of the same kind as ours, by the righteousness of our God and Savior, Jesus Christ. The truth begins with the personal knowledge of Jesus.*

Peter is assuming the calling and election of many of his readers. Their special position in God's plan has provided a union with Christ which allows them to overcome the moral corruption of the world. (vv. 3-4)

They have become *"partakers of the divine nature, having escaped the corruption that is in the world by lust."*

2. Continuing (5-9)

But, that is only the start. *"Now, for this reason . . ."* they have the incentive to develop and nurture eight qualities of Christian character in their lives. Now by *"applying all diligence"* they can build their faith, moral excellence, knowledge, self-control, perseverance, godliness, brotherly kindness, and love.

3. Completing (10-11)

These character traits are evidences of a true calling and choosing, works flowing from a true faith. If Peter's readers have developed these Christian graces, they could not fall into spiritual ruin, but would have a glorious entrance into God's presence.

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B. The Word (1:12-21)

The truth is also evident in Peter's own witness and the witness of the Scriptures.

1. Apostolic (12-18)

Peter used his own witness to add incentive to their desire for spiritual growth. He knew he was going to die very soon so he felt it imperative to pass on the message to them.

Peter was an eyewitness to the Transfiguration and passed on the truth of Christ's deity and majesty to his readers. The supernatural power and glory of Jesus was real.

2. Inspired (19-21)

A final source of truth and power for the believers is the prophetic message of Scripture. Accounts of the life of Jesus and letters from the Apostles made His life and teaching come alive.

Scripture is able to give guidance and support for righteous living until Jesus returns, and is reliable because it is of divine, rather than human, origin.

II. FALSE TEACHING (Chapter 2)

Now that the readers have a grounding in truth, Peter deals with the dangerous false teachers in very graphic terms.

A. Conduct (2:1-3)

The false teachers hadn't come riding in on fiery chariots teaching false doctrine. They were already among the believers and "*secretly introduced destructive heresies.*" He began by picturing their immorality and greed. The point was, wickedness is not a product of sound doctrine, but of heresy.

B. Condemnation (2:4-9)

Heresy is nothing new, so Peter used Old Testament examples of judgment on sin in order to show the certainty of punishment for false teachers and their followers.

1. He described God's condemnation of the angels who sinned (v 4),
2. the judgment of the world during Noah's time (v 5),
3. and the destruction of the cities of Sodom and Gomorrah (v 6).

In contrast, he promised deliverance for the godly by referring to the preservation of Noah and Lot (vv. 5, 7, 9).

C. Character (2:10-22)

He denounced the pride, lust, and greed of the heretics (vv. 10-16), including turning fellowship meals into drunken parties, and hiring themselves out for personal gain as Balaam did (Num. 22). Those who followed the empty teaching of the heretics were deluded by empty promises, "*promising them freedom while they [the teachers] themselves are slaves to corruption*" (vv. 17-19).

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Verses 20 through 22 summarize the case against false-teachers. Peter warned that those who had made a superficial commitment to Jesus, and had even turned their back on sin as part of their show, were more culpable than before they made their head commitment.

These false-teachers had experienced some of the knowledge of Christian truth. That gave them temporary victory over worldly corruption and proof of its reality but a true knowledge of Jesus would have affected them permanently.

They were in worse condition because they now turned from the truth about Christ which should have led them to accept him, and instead had willfully rejected and disobeyed Him.

The two proverbs in verse 22 show the stupidity of returning to a life-style of disobedience after an initial response toward Christ. "*A dog returns to its own vomit,*" and "*A sow, after washing, returns to wallowing in the mire.*" Peter surely would never have used the terms "dog" and "sow" referring to true believers, so it is clear the passing of time demonstrated that the false teachers had made a pretense of faith in Christ, but it was not a genuine faith.

III. PETER'S TEACHING (Chapter 3)

Peter hasn't changed a bit in his teaching. This is , "*the second letter. . . stirring up your sincere mind by way of reminder that you should remember the words spoken beforehand by the holy prophets and the commandment of the Lord and Savior spoken by the apostles.*"(vv 1-2)

A. Exposing the Scoffers (3:1-13)

1. Denial (3-4)

The main doctrinal error of the false teachers was their denial of the return of Jesus. Peter reminded his readers that this very promise was an incentive to obedience rather than a reason to rebel. False teachers were skeptical because the stability of the universe didn't seem to indicate that God was going to break into human history again.

2. Delay (3:5-10)

Peter's response to this denial was five-fold:

- 1) Present regularity was not a valid argument for a permanent continuance (vv. 5-6).
- 2) The God who holds the universe together by His word can alter it at any time, by His word (v 7).
- 3) God views time differently from men (v 8).
- 4) Christ's return was delayed to allow more sinners to respond by faith to Jesus (v 9).
- 5) Christ's return would be fulfilled with destructive power and come when sinners least expect it (v 10).

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3. Destruction (11-13)

Verse 11, *"Since all these things are to be destroyed in this way, what sort of people ought you to be in holy conduct and godliness."* Or better, *"How astoundingly excellent you ought to be."* Once again, the bottom line of prophecy, change of life-style.

B. Exhorting the Saints (3:14-18)

And again, Peter reminds his readers that an anticipation of Christ's future return carried with it the incentive to live a holy life (v 14).

He referred to Paul's writings as a support for his teaching that divine patience was a factor in the delay of the Lord's return. He argued that, though some of Paul's complex teaching is hard to understand they are to be accepted as Scripture and not dismissed or distorted (vv. 15-16).

Peter ends his letter by boldly stating that his readers could protect themselves spiritually by growing to Christian maturity. The knowledge they needed was a development of a personal relationship with Jesus (v 18).

Lessons:

The keys to Christian living are found in:

1. Spiritual growth by God's divine power (Chapter 1).
2. Avoiding false teaching by knowing the truth (Chapter 2).
3. Holy living in the light of Christ's return (Chapter 3).

Homework:

Read: The Books of 1, 2, and 3 John

Think: How does love prove true conversion?

Apply: Read and study the Word this week with the express purpose of knowing the truth.