

Aquifer Open Study Notes (Book Intros)

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This resource has been adapted into multiple languages, including English, Tok Pisin, Arabic (عربي), French (Français), Hindi (हिंदी), Indonesian (Bahasa Indonesia), Portuguese (Português), Russian (Русский), Spanish (Español), Swahili (Kiswahili), and Simplified Chinese (简体中文).

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2 Peter

Many perspectives about the world, religious beliefs, and cultural values fight for attention. The second letter of Peter encourages spiritual growth in Christ's grace. It also warns against combining the Christian faith with non-Christian ideas.

Setting

Second Peter was probably written to the same group of Christians as 1 Peter ([1 Peter 1:1](#); see [2 Peter 3:1](#)). We do not know if the apostle Peter ever visited Asia Minor (the western part of modern-day Turkey). The New Testament tells us little about his movements after he left Jerusalem around AD 44 ([Acts 12:16–17](#)).

We know that Peter was in Rome in the early 60s AD. He probably wrote 2 Peter from Rome shortly after 1 Peter. Early Christian tradition suggests that Peter died under Emperor Nero in AD 64 or 65.

Summary

In the opening of the letter, Peter introduces himself and his audience ([1:1-15](#)). He shares his main concern. He desires for his audience to increase their understanding of God and Christ ([1:3-11](#)). He also is urgent in informing them that he will not live much longer ([1:12-15](#)).

[Chapter 2](#) is the main focus of this letter. In it, Peter describes and condemns false teachers. Peter prepares for this criticism by stressing the certainty of Christ's return in glory ([1:16-21](#)). The false teachers were obviously in doubt about Christ's return and the final judgment.

Peter criticizes false teachers in four steps:

1. He prophesies they will come ([2:1-3](#)).
2. He insists God will judge them. But God will save those people who are in a right relationship with himself ([2:4-10](#)).
3. He lists their sins ([2:10-16](#)).
4. He announces their destruction ([2:17-22](#)).

Peter emphasizes that Christ will return in glory to change the world ([3:1-13](#)). He ends the letter as he started, praying that his audience will "grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ" ([3:18](#); see [1:3-11](#)).

Author

The author says he is Simon Peter, one of Jesus's apostles ([1:1](#)). Peter states, "this is now my second letter to you" ([3:1](#)). The first letter was probably 1 Peter.

In many ways, 2 Peter is different from 1 Peter. But it has notable similarities to the letter of Jude. Because of this, some scholars believe someone else wrote 2 Peter. This conclusion is unnecessary because 2 Peter addresses a situation very different from 1 Peter.

Naturally, the language and concepts differ. Moreover, it is possible that the apostle Silas was responsible for some of the wording in 1 Peter. Silas was Peter's secretary, also called "Silvanus" in [1 Peter 5:12](#). Peter might have used a different secretary for 2 Peter.

Relationship to the Letter of Jude

It is clear that 2 Peter and Jude are closely connected in their writing. The two letters use many of the same unusual expressions. This makes it unlikely that the similarities are a coincidence or because of an oral tradition they shared (see [2 Peter 2:3](#) equivalent to [Jude 1:4](#); [2 Peter 2:4](#) equivalent to [Jude 1:6](#); [2 Peter 2:6](#) equivalent to [Jude 1:7](#); [2 Peter 2:10](#) equivalent to [Jude 1:8](#); [2 Peter 2:11](#) equivalent to [Jude 1:9](#); [2 Peter 2:13, 17](#) equivalent to [Jude 1:12](#); [2 Peter 3:3](#) equivalent to [Jude 1:8](#)).

This connection can be explained in three ways:

5. Jude borrowed from 2 Peter.
6. Second Peter borrowed from Jude.
7. Both borrowed from a common source that is now lost.

Option 2 is the most popular, although option 1 is equally possible. Option 3 is least likely because it is more complicated and unnecessary. Whichever author borrowed probably encountered a similar situation and found the other's writing useful. Such borrowing was common in the ancient world and regarded as a compliment, not stealing material.

False Teachers

It is difficult to identify the false teachers who Peter warns against with any known ancient church heresy. With their lack of moral behavior and negative attitude, these teachers believed God's grace allowed them to do anything they wanted ([2 Peter 2:19-20](#)). They rejected authority (see [2:10-11](#)). They engaged in sexual immorality, excessive drinking and eating, and self-centered gain ([2:13-20](#)). They might have been early versions of the later, second-century AD Gnostics (a group that claimed secret knowledge and denied key Christian beliefs).

Meaning and Message

Second Peter focuses on the issue of false teachers in the church. These individuals claimed to be Christians ([2:1](#), [21-22](#)). But Peter makes it evident they were actually reserved for punishment as rebels against the Lord ([2:3](#), [10](#)). Peter writes this letter to warn his audience to reject these false teachers and their teachings and to remain loyal to the gospel.

This letter acts as an important reminder of the dangers of rejecting the truth. The church must always be spiritually alert against those who alter the truth of the gospel and whose lives do not properly represent it.