

Outline of 2 Peter

This outline of 2 Peter is intended to assist you as you endeavor to study God's holy Word — His letter to you.

When we come to 2 Peter, we come to the most challenged book of Scripture. If there is any book of disputed position in the holy Scriptures, this is it. I want to set out why I accept its authenticity.

First, those who argue against its inclusion note that the book is never mentioned before the third century and was not mentioned in the Western church until the fourth century. It was not included in the early Syriac versions of the Scriptures or in the Old Latin. It first appears in the church fathers with Origen (185-254 A.D.) who noted that there was some doubt concerning the letter. Eusebius, an early church historian (260-340 A.D.) placed 2 Peter as of disputed canonicity, saying, "But the so-called second Epistle we have not received as canonical, but nevertheless it has appeared useful to many, and has been studied with the other Scriptures." Even Calvin (1509-1564 A.D.) seemed to have some problem with 2 Peter. The main problem with 2 Peter is said to be its failure to be mentioned in the earliest church writings and the difference in style between it and 1 Peter.

Nevertheless, its failure to be mentioned early depends entirely upon one's conclusions. I happen to believe that Jude quotes 2 Peter extensively and references it at Jude 17. Origen, in the first part of the third century, firmly accepted the book as Scripture. There are allusions to 2 Peter from as early as the writings of Pseudo-Barnabas (70-130 A.D.) and Clement of Rome (95-97 A.D.) The Codex Bezae Cantabrigiae (206 A.D.) supports the inclusion of 2 Peter in the canon. The Bodmer manuscript (late third century) contains 2 Peter. Methodius, of Olympus (last part of the third century), quotes 2 Peter 3:8 authoritatively. And in the fourth century, the canonical status of 2 Peter was strongly stated by both Athanasius and Augustine. The Council of Laodicea (372 A.D.) included it in the canon, as did Jerome (404 A.D.).

Further, the style of 2 Peter is closer to 1 Peter than to any other New Testament book and the book is unlike any of the pseudo-Petrine literature. Adding in the providential hand of God, I have no doubt of the authenticity of 2 Peter.

We know virtually nothing about the recipients of the book, except that they were Christians. This letter is essentially a closing testament, with the author looking towards his own death and providing final warnings and instructions.

The book is one of power, power for godly living in chapter 1, power of deliverance from ungodly men in chapter 2, and power of destruction and new creation in chapter 3. A key word of the book is "remember" (1:12, 13, 15; 3:1, 2). Another key word is "to give diligence or speed" (1:5, 10, 15, 3:14). Of the 23 times the word is found in Scripture (noun or verb) four are in 2 Peter. The book contains 55 words that are found nowhere else in the New Testament and one word that is never found elsewhere in Greek literature outside of the Christian context. The word is "muopazein" (short-sighted). A key phrase in the book is the phrase "the knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ" or similar words. We find the phrase in 1:2, 3, 8; 2:20; 3:18. Peter's key title for Jesus is "Lord," with the word appearing 14 times in this book. There are 30 direct references to Christ in this book.

The book has some interesting parts. Chapter 1 gives us a very distinctive and encouraging encapsulation of the basis for Christian living. I consider it one of the three greatest sanctification chapters in Scripture, along with Romans 8 and Colossians 3. It is a treasure.

The end of chapter 1 lets us know that Scriptures are even more sure than voices we might hear. This is important in this age when religious truth seems to be established by subjective experiences. Proper theology both incorporates subjective experiences and judges them.

2 Peter 2:1 tells us in a very clear statement that even the false prophets have been bought by Christ. They are redeemed, though not saved. But verse 9 tells us that the Lord knows how to deliver the godly.

Chapter 3 references the writings of Paul as Scripture, an amazing statement, and one of only a few places where the New Testament references other New Testament books as Scripture. Apparently, by the time of the writing of 2 Peter, there was in circulation among the churches a body of Pauline writings that were considered to be equal to the Old Testament scriptures.

Finally, it is good to note that Scriptural faith does not require us to check our minds at the door. Peter's usage of a heightened form of the word "knowledge" ties Colossians in being the most used among New Testament books (4 out of 20 times in the New Testament). This is a book for the mind as well as for the soul.

Date: 64 A.D.

I. Introduction 1:1-2

II. The True 1:3-21

A. In Christian Living 1:3-11

1. Life and godliness are ours now 1:3-4
 - a. Found in His power 1:3
 - b. Based upon His promises 1:4
2. Life is to be lived with diligence 1:5-11
 - a. Building the right attributes 1:5-7
 - b. Differentiating between fruit and error 1:8-9
 - c. Leading to eternal hope 1:10-11

B. In Remembering 1:12-15

C. In the Assurance of the Witness 1:16-21

1. The witness of the apostles 1:16-18
2. The witness of Scriptures 1:19-21

III. The False 2

A. The Past Examples 2:1-11

1. The false prophets 2:1-3
2. The angels 2:4
3. The time of Noah 2:5
4. Sodom and Gommorah 2:6
5. The Deliverance of Lot 2:7-8
6. The Deliverance of the godly 2:9-11

B. The Present Evil 2:12-22

1. Creatures of desire, not knowledge 2:12-14

2. Covetous 2:15-16
3. Lacking substance 2:17
4. Slaves of desire 2:18-19
5. Their true nature shows 2:20-22

IV. The End 3

- A. The Words of the Messengers 3:1-4
 1. Of God 3:1-2
 2. Of men 3:3-4
 - B. The Word of the Maker 3:5-7
 1. Creates 3:5
 2. Destroys 3:6
 3. Reserves 3:7
 - C. The Will of the Master 3:8-9
 1. He is timeless but always timely 3:8
 2. He is longsuffering 3:9
 - D. The Waste of the Molecules 3:10-13
 1. The answer: "I am coming" 3:10
 2. The response: Be holy and hopeful 3:11-13
 - E. The Way of the Mindful 3:14-18
 1. Proper eschatology is a cry for holy living 3:14
 2. Longsuffering is for salvation 3:15-16
 3. Guard yourselves 3:17
 4. Get to know Jesus 3:18
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Key Idea: Be diligent in your Christian life.

Key Passage: 3:18

Key Lesson: Get to know Jesus Christ.