

Book of 2 Peter

Title:

The clear claim to authorship in 1:1 by the Apostle Peter gives the epistle its title. To distinguish it from Peter's first epistle, it was given the Greek title "Petrrou B", or 2 Peter.

Author – Date:

The author of 2 Peter is the Apostle Peter (see introduction to 1 Peter).

In 1:1, he makes that claim; in 3:1, he refers to his first letter; in 1:14, he refers to the Lord's prediction of his death (John 21:18-19); and in 1:16-18, he claims to have been at the Transfiguration (Matt. 17:1-4).

However, critics have generated more controversy over 2 Peter's authorship and rightful place in the canon of Scripture than over any other New Testament book.

The church fathers were slow in giving it their acceptance.

No church father refers to 2 Peter by name until Origen near the beginning of the third century.

The ancient church historian, Eusebius, only included 2 Peter in his list of disputed books, along with James, Jude, 2 John, and 3 John.

Even the leading Reformers only hesitatingly accepted it.

The question about differences in the Greek style between the two letters has then been satisfactorily answered.

Peter wrote that he used an amanuensis, Silvanus, in 1 Peter (compare 1 Peter 5:12).

In 2 Peter, Peter either used a different amanuensis or wrote the letter by himself.

The differences in vocabulary between these two letters can be explained by the differences in their theme.

1 Peter was written to help suffering Christians, 2 Peter was written to expose false teachers.

On the other hand, there are remarkable similarities in the vocabulary of the two books.

The salutation, "grace and peace be multiplied to you", is essentially the same in each book.

The author uses such words as “precious”, “virtue”, “putting off”, and “eyewitness”, to name just a few examples, in both letters.

Certain rather unusual words found in 2 Peter are also found in Peter’s speeches in the Acts of the Apostles.

These include “received” (1:1; Acts 1:17); “godliness” or “piety” (1:3, 6-7; 3:11; Acts 3:12); and “price” or “wages” of wickedness or unrighteousness (2:13, 15; Acts 1:18).

Both letters also refer to the same Old Testament event (2:5; 1 Peter 3:18-20).

Some scholars have pointed out that there are as many similarities in vocabulary between 1 and 2 Peter as there are between 1 Timothy and Titus, two letters almost universally believed to have been written by Paul.

The differences in themes also explain certain emphases, such as why one letter teaches that the second coming is near, and one deals with its delay.

1 Peter, ministering especially to suffering Christians, focuses on the immanency of Christ as a means of encouraging the Christians.

2 Peter, dealing with scoffers, emphasizes the reasons why that imminent return of Christ has not yet occurred.

Other proposed differences invented by the critics, such as the contradiction between including the resurrection of Christ in one letter and the Transfiguration of Christ in the other, they seem to be contrived.

Moreover, it is seemingly irrational that a false teacher would spuriously write a letter against false teachers.

No unusual, new, or false doctrines appear in 2 Peter.

So, if 2 Peter were a forgery, it would be a forgery written by a fool for no reason at all.

This is too much to believe.

The conclusion to the question of authorship is that, when the writer introduced the letter and referred to himself as Peter, he was writing the truth.

Nero died in A.D. 68, and tradition says Peter died in Nero’s persecution.

The epistle may have been written just before his death (1:14; ca. A.D. 67-68).

Background – Setting:

Since the time of the writing and sending his first letter, Peter had become increasingly concerned about false teachers who were infiltrating the churches in Asia Minor.

Though these false teachers had already caused trouble, Peter expected that their heretical doctrines and immoral life-styles would result in more damage in the future.

Thus Peter, in an almost last will and testament (1:13-15), wrote to warn the beloved believers in Christ about the doctrinal dangers they were facing.

Peter does not explicitly say where he was when he wrote this letter, as he does in 1 Peter (1 Peter 5:13).

But the consensus seems to be that Peter wrote this letter from prison in Rome, where he was facing imminent death.

Shortly after this letter was written, Peter was martyred, according to reliable tradition, by being crucified upside down (see note on John 21:18-19).

Peter says nothing in the salutation about the recipients of this letter.

But according to 3:1, Peter was writing another epistle to the same people to whom he had written 1 Peter.

In his first letter, he spelled out that he was writing “to those who reside as aliens, scattered throughout Pontus, Galatia, Cappadocia, Asia, and Bithynia (1 Peter 1:1).

These provinces were located in an area of Asia Minor, which is modern Turkey.

The Christians to whom Peter wrote were mostly Gentiles (see note on 1:1).

Historical – Theological Themes:

2 Peter was written for the purpose of exposing, thwarting, and defeating the invasion of false teachers into the church.

Peter intended to instruct Christians in how to defend themselves against these false teachers and their deceptive lies.

This book is the most graphic and penetrating expose of false teachers in Scripture, comparable only to Jude.

The description of the false teachers is somewhat generic.

Peter does not identify some specific false religion, cult, or system of teaching.

In a general characterization of false teachers, he informs that they teach destructive heresies.

They deny Christ and twist the Scriptures.

They bring true faith into disrepute.

And they mock the second coming of Christ.

But Peter was just as concerned to show the immoral character of these teachers as he was to expose their teaching.

Thus, he describes them in more detail than he describes their doctrines.

Wickedness is not the product of sound doctrine, but of “destructive heresies” (2:1).

Other themes for this letter can be discerned in the midst of Peter’s polemic which was against the false teachers.

He wanted to motivate his readers to continue to develop their Christian character (1:5-11).

In so doing, he explains wonderfully how a believer can have assurance of his salvation.

Peter had also wanted to persuade his readers of the divine character of the apostolic writings (see 1:12-21).

Near the end of the letter, he presents reasons for the delay in Christ’ second coming (3:1-13).

Another recurring theme is the importance of knowledge.

The word, “knowledge”, appears in some form 16 times in these 3 short chapters.

It is not too much to say that Peter’s primary solution to false teaching is then, the knowledge of true doctrine.

Other distinctive features of 2 Peter include a precise statement on the divine origin of Scripture (1:20-21); the future destruction of the world by fire (3:8-13); and the recognition of Paul’s letters as inspired Scripture (3:15-16).