

SECOND LETTER OF PETER

The Second Letter of Peter was evidently not written by Simon Peter, a principal reason for the lateness of its acceptance into the Scriptural canon. In the early Third Century, its canonicity was still being debated. Even as late as the Fifth Century, some local churches excluded it from the canon, but eventually it was universally adopted. Modern scholars widely agree that it is a later work, attributed to Peter. Some think it was the last New Testament writing, as late as 125-150 AD..

Among the reasons for this late dating is that the letter refers to the apostles and “our ancestors” as a previous generation. A collection of Paul’s letters seems to be well known. Parts of 2 Peter and Jude have strong parallels, and Jude is considered the older letter, with 2 Peter likely borrowing from it. The concern over those who deny the Second Coming because of its seeming delay would hardly have been an issue in apostolic times, indicating a later time of composition..

After an exhortation to live virtuously, the writer recalls the apostolic witness to the teachings of Jesus and the power of the Spirit in the spread of the Gospel. There follows a strong condemnation of false teachers, with a warning not to be misled by them. It parallels the central part of the Letter of Jude, with even stronger language. The final subject is the matter of Christ’s Second Coming, which some have begun to question because of the passage of time. The promise is true and believers should wait expectantly for it.

Outline (with selected verses)

1:1-2 – Greeting

1:3-11 – Encouragement to practice Christian virtues, through the power of God’s promises

*He has bestowed on us the precious and very great promises,
so that through them you may come to share in the divine nature. (1:4)*

1:12-21 – The Apostolic witness to the Gospel message

*No prophecy ever came through human will;
but rather human beings moved by the holy Spirit
spoke under the influence of God. (2:4)*

2:1-3 – Beware of false teachers who will spread destructive heresies

2:4-10a – Learn from the past that God will protect the devout while keeping the unrighteous under punishment until the day of judgment

2:10b-22 – Condemnation and vilification of false teachers

*These people,
like irrational animals born by nature for capture and destruction,
revile things that they do not understand,
and in their destruction they will also be destroyed. (3:12)*

3:1-10 – Rebuke to those who would deny the Second Coming because of a “delay”

*With the Lord one day is like a thousand years
and a thousand years like one day.
The Lord does not delay his promise,
as some regard “delay,”
but he is patient with you,
not wishing that any should perish
but that all should come to repentance. (3:8-9)*

3:11-16 – Stay prepared for the Day of the Lord

*According to his promise we await
new heavens and a new earth
in which righteousness dwells. (3:13)*

3:17-18 – Final exhortation and doxology

Grow in grace and the knowledge of our Lord and savior Jesus Christ. (3:18)