**Notes & Outlines**

# 2 PETER

J. Vernon McGee

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**WRITER:** Simon Peter (2 Peter 1:1)

The Petrine authorship of 2 Peter has been challenged more than the authorship of any other book in the New Testament. Dr. William Moorehead said, "The Second Epistle of Peter comes to us with less historical support of its genuineness than any other book of the New Testament." However, this has caused conservative scholars to give adequate attention to this epistle so that today it is well established that Peter wrote this letter. The autobiographical sections afford internal evidence of the Petrine authorship (see 2 Peter 1:13, 14, 16-18; 3:1).

**DATE:** About A.D. 66

This second epistle was written shortly after his first epistle (2 Peter 3:1) and a short while before his martyrdom (1:13, 14). (See 1 Peter.)

**THEME:**

This is the swan song of Peter, as 2 Timothy is the swan song of Paul. There is a striking similarity. Both epistles put up a warning sign, along the pilgrim pathway the church is traveling, to identify the awful apostasy that was on the way at that time and now in our time has arrived. What was then like a cloud the size of a man's hand today envelops the sky and produces a storm of hurricane proportions. Peter warns of heresy among teachers as Paul warns of heresy among the laity. Both Peter and Paul speak in a joyful manner of their approaching death (2 Peter 1:13, 14; 2 Timothy 4:6-8). Both apostles anchor the church on the Scriptures as the only defense against the coming storm.

The similarity of 2 Peter to Paul's last epistle of 2 Timothy explains the sharp contrast between Peter's first and second letters. The subject has changed, and the difference is as great as that which exists between Paul's letters to the Romans and to Timothy.

Nevertheless, the theme is explained on the basis of the words which Peter uses here as contrasted to his first epistle. The words are different, with the exception of the word *precious*, which occurs in this epistle twice in the first chapter. Likewise, the word *faith* occurs twice in the first chapter.

The characteristic word is *knowledge* (occurring sixteen times with cognate words). The epitome of the epistle is expressed in the injunction contained in the final verse:

***But grow in grace, and in the knowledge of our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ. To him be glory both now and forever. Amen.*** (2 Peter 3:18)

True gnosticism is not some esoteric information concerning a formula, a rite, or ritual; nor is it some secret order or password. It is to know Jesus Christ as He is revealed to man in the Word of God. This is the secret of life and of Christian living (see John 17:3).

**OUTLINE:**

**I. Addition of Christian graces gives assurance,** Chapter 1:1-14

*"The [full] knowledge of God, and of Jesus, our Lord" is the foundation on which Christian character is built (see v. 2).*

**II. Authority of the Scriptures attested by fulfilled prophecy,** Chapter 1:15-21

*Scriptures give light for obedience in dark days.*

**III. Apostasy brought in by false teachers,** Chapter 2

*Church should beware of false teachers and not false prophets.*

**IV. Attitude toward return of the Lord is a test of apostates,** Chapter 3:1-4

**V. Agenda of God for the world,** Chapter 3:5-13

**A.** Past world, vv. 5, 6
**B.** Present world, vv. 7-12
**C.** Future world, v. 13

**VI. Admonition to believers,** Chapter 3:14-18

*Knowledge of God's program is an incentive to grow in the knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.*

**COMMENT:**

**I. Addition of Christian graces gives assurance,** Chapter 1:1-14

**v. 1** — "Simon Peter" — the name *Simon* appears here, but it does not in 1 Peter 1:1. *Christ* never stands alone in this epistle; *Jesus* is added here, elsewhere *Savior* and *Lord* are also added.

**v. 2** — "Knowledge" occurs nine times (with cognates) in this chapter.

**v. 3** — His blessings come "through the knowledge of him."
"Virtue" is *excellence.*

**v. 4** — "Precious promises" come through the *knowledge of Him*
"Partakers of the divine nature" come through the *knowledge of Him* (John 17:3).

**vv. 5-7** — These graces are not given in the order of their priority. One does not depend upon the other, but they are placed in orderly sequence.
"And beside this" is *for this very cause.*
"Add" is s*upply* — have all the graces.
"Virtue" is *excellence with energy.*
"Brotherly kindness" is *love of the brethren.*
This is enthusiasm for the knowledge of Christ.

**v. 8** — "Barren" is *idle*. Paul's great desire was to know Christ (Philippians 3:10).

**v. 9** — Sterility and lack of enthusiasm may lead to the place where the believer will forget he has been saved.

**v. 10** — Make your calling and election *more* sure. It is possible to believe in the security of the believer but lack the assurance of salvation.

Security of the believer is objective;
Assurance of salvation is subjective.

**vv. 11-13** — Peter felt called to stir up these saints to grow in grace lest spiritual senility set in.

**v. 14** — Tradition tells us that Peter was crucified with his head down because he was not worthy to die as Christ did (John 21:18, 19).

**II. Authority of the Scriptures attested by fulfilled prophecy,** Chapter 1:15-21

**v. 15** — "Decease" is *exodus.* In light of his approaching death, Peter calls attention to that which should be remembered.

**v. 16** — "Coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, but were eyewitnesses" — when did this take place? The next verse explains.

**vv. 17, 18** — This is a reference to the Transfiguration and offers the explanation for Matthew's strange statement (see Matthew 16:28). Matthew follows this with an account of the Transfiguration.

**v. 19** — Something more reliable and trustworthy than being an eyewitness to the Transfiguration is "a more sure word of prophecy." Scripture is a light that is focused on the appearing of the "day star."

**v. 20** — No prophecy of the Scripture is to be interpreted apart from other references to the same subject.

**v. 21** — "Holy men" were men set apart for the task of writing Scripture. They were carried along by the Holy Spirit like a sailboat is carried by the wind.

**III. Apostasy brought in by false teachers,** Chapter 2

**v. 1** — "False prophets" brought in heresy to the nation Israel. "False teachers" are the bearers of heresy and apostasy into the church. One of the marks of identification is that they deny Christ's work of redemption for them.

**v. 2** — False followers will go after false teachers. God's elect cannot be permanently deceived. 1 Corinthians 11:19 explains the reasons why God permits cults.

**v. 3** — "Covetousness" is another mark of a false teacher. The apostle gives a list of three types of apostates in the past who will appear in the future.

**v. 4** — (1) "Angels that sinned" — even some angels rebelled against God. Rebellion against God will appear in the last days (see Psalm 2:1-3).

**v. 5** — (2) The ungodly of Noah's day left God out of their lives, even in eating and drinking and in marriage (Matthew 24:37-39).

**v. 6** — (3) Gross immorality characterized Sodom and Gomorrah (see Romans 1:24-32).

**vv. 7, 8** — This is enlightening. The record in Genesis does not make it clear that Lot was a righteous man; in fact, it implies the opposite.

**v. 9** — God can and will do two things, of which Lot's expe-

rience is an illustration:

(1) "Deliver the godly out of temptations"
(2) Keep the unjust for judgment

**v. 10** — These are total apostates, hopeless.

**v. 11** — Angels would not presume to do such things.

**v. 12** — These apostates are like animals.

**vv. 14-22** — This is a striking, frightful, and bold description of apostates.

**v. 15** — "Following the way of Balaam" is being covetous, willing to sell his gift for money.

**v. 20** — These apostates have a head knowledge. They know the truth but have not received a love of the truth.

**v. 22** — This is a frightful and awful description of an apostate. This is Peter's parable of the prodigal pig — "the sow that was washed." The pig professed to like the father's house, but he returned to the pigpen of his old man. (See Jude for a more complete description of apostates.)

**IV. Attitude toward return of the Lord is a test of apostates,** Chapter 3:1-4

**v. 1** — This indicates that Peter wrote this second letter. "Pure minds" are *sincere minds.*

**v. 2** — "Holy prophets" refer to the Old Testament prophets. "Apostles" are New Testament apostles.

**v. 3** — Both prophets and apostles have warned that scoffers will come in mockery.

**v. 4** — They ridicule the coming of Christ on the false premise that there has been no great cataclysm since the creation.

**V. Agenda of God for the world,** Chapter 3:5-13

**A. Past world,** vv. 5, 6

"The world that then was" — from creation to Noah. The preflood world was destroyed by water.

**B. Present world,** vv. 7-12

**v. 7** — The world that is — from Noah to the new heaven and new earth. The present world will be destroyed by fire.

**vv. 8, 9** — The seeming delay does not mean that the Lord is not coming or that He has had to change or postpone His coming.

**v. 10** — "Noise" (Greek *rhoizedon)* is the word used for the swish of an arrow, the rush of wings, the splash of water, the hiss of a serpent.

"Elements" refer to basic material, atoms, the building blocks of the universe.

"Melt" is *dissolve.*

"Fervent heat" is energy. These descriptive words make us think of an atomic explosion (see author's booklet, "Three Worlds in One").

**v. 11** — In view of these inevitable facts of the future, the lives of believers now should become serious and important.

**v. 12** — This is another description of the destruction of the present world that sounds like an atomic explosion.

**C. Future world,** v. 13

The world that shall be — the new heaven and the new earth, which will never be destroyed.

**VI. Admonition to believers,** Chapter 3:14-18

**v. 14** — This leads to holy living.

**v. 15** — Patient waiting is mental adjustment to the present world situation. Paul also wrote of these things.

**v. 16** — Peter admits that Paul wrote of truth in depth — but so did Peter.

**v. 17**— The coming of Christ should make for a stable and steadfast life.

**v. 18** — This is the all-important program for the child of God now. Paul said, "Study." Peter said, "Grow." Both refer believers to the Bible and the study of it.

**RECOMMENDED BOOKS:**


Barbieri, Louis A. *First and Second Peter*. Chicago, Illinois: Moody Press, 1977. (Fine, inexpensive survey.)

English, E. Schuyler. *The Life and Letters of St. Peter.* New York, New York: Our Hope, 1941. (Excellent.)

Ironside, H. A. *Notes on James and Peter.* Neptune, New Jersey: Loizeaux Brothers, n.d.

Kelly, William. *The Epistles of Peter.* London, England: C. A. Hammond, n.d.

Leighton, Robert. *A Practical Commentary on First Peter*. Grand Rapids, Michigan: Kregel Publications, 1845.

Lumby, J. Rawson. *The Epistle of Peter.* (Expositor's Bible.) Grand Rapids, Michigan: W. B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1943.

McGee, J. Vernon. *2 Peter.* Nashville, Tennessee: Thomas Nelson Publishers, 1991.

Robertson, A. T. *Epochs in the Life of Simon Peter.* Grand Rapids, Michigan: Baker Book House, n. d.

Thomas, W. H. Griffith. *The Apostle Peter.* Grand Rapids, Michigan: W. B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1956. (Excellent.)

Wolston, W. T. P. *Simon Peter — His Life and Letters.* London, England: James Nisbet and Company, 1896. (Excellent.)

Wuest, Kenneth S. *First Peter in the Greek New Testament.* Grand Rapids, Michigan: W. B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1942.



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