

The Second Epistle of Peter

What is 2 Peter about?

The second epistle of Peter is a brief letter of reminders for first-century Christians. Peter urges his readers to make every effort to grow in their faith, to remember that the promises of God (spoken by the prophets and apostles) are trustworthy, and to beware those who teach otherwise.

About 2 Peter

After Jesus rose from the grave, He had a special conversation with Peter about how the apostle would die:

“Truly, truly, I say to you, when you were younger, you used to gird yourself and walk wherever you wished; but when you grow old, you will stretch out your hands and someone else will gird you, and bring you where you do not wish to go.” Now this He said, signifying by what kind of death he would glorify God (Jn 21:18–19).

Peter knows that he will die for the Lord, and that his time was drawing near.

But there is so much the church needs to know and remember! False teachers are everywhere, causing divisions in the body of Christ (2 Pe 2:1–3). People will mock the promise of Christ’s return (2 Pe 3:4). There are those who twist the Old Testament, and even the letters of Paul (2 Pe 3:16).

The church needs to remember the Scriptures: the words of the Old Testament prophets and the words of Jesus that the apostles had passed on. Peter is an undisputed authority in the church, and so before he gives up his life, he writes a letter.

One last letter.

2 Peter’s reminders for Christians

Second Peter is a last attempt to help the global church by reminding them of the truth. Peter explains several things that Christians will need to remember after he’s gone:

1. Godly living is the evidence of salvation (2 Pe 1:10). If the Christians really believe what they say they believe, they will display moral excellence, knowledge, self-control, perseverance, godliness, kindness, and love.
2. Scriptural truth and prophecy are from God, not man. Peter and the rest of the apostles would die, but the word would remain forever (1 Pe 1:25). Furthermore, the teaching that Peter and the apostles had passed on wasn’t just something they’d dreamed up; they were eyewitnesses (2 Pe 1:16–18). And all those Old Testament prophets? They were under the influence of the Holy Spirit (2 Pe 1:21).
3. False teachers will try to deceive the church. They’ll introduce divisive teachings that encourage people to indulge in the sins of the world: a twisted, disgusting take on Jesus’ grace (2 Pe 2).
4. Mockers will discount the idea of Jesus’ return. Peter doesn’t know when Jesus was coming back; he just knew better than to doubt Him. Peter assures the church that Jesus is indeed returning, and His church should behave accordingly (2 Pe 3:14).

Peter had urged the church to stand firm in his first letter, but there will be no more letters from Peter. There will be no more sermons and no more miracles from the disciple who lead the church for over 30 years.

Second Peter urges the church to stand firm—because even when Peter is gone, the church must

Second Peter is the Apostle Peter's last reminder to the church. Tradition holds that he was crucified around 64–65 A.D., which means he would have written this letter about this time.

Second Peter is the third of the General Epistles (or Catholic Letters), the writings of apostles to the church at large. While Paul wrote to specific congregations and individuals, Peter, James, John, and Jude wrote to broader audiences across the Roman Empire.

There's one more "goodbye" letter in the New Testament: Paul's second letter to Timothy. Both apostles, when they knew they were going to die soon, wrote letters to remind others of what was important.

This letter's second and third chapters bear remarkable resemblance to the epistle of Jude. We don't know if Peter borrowed from Jude's letter, if Jude borrowed from Peter's letter, or if both men were drawing from a prior discussion. Both letters, however, warn the church of two dangerous influences:

1. False teachers who lead the people to indulge in sin.
2. Mockers who dismiss the idea of Jesus' return.

2 Peter emphasizes other Scriptures

Perhaps the most interesting aspect of Second Peter is its emphasis on the Scriptures, both Old and New Testament. Peter firmly believes that many of the books in our Bibles today are true:

- Peter was an eyewitness of Jesus' majesty when He was transfigured (you can read about that in Mark 9), and so he is not just following a made-up story of Jesus. He was there. He heard the voice of God affirming Jesus as His Son (2 Pe 1:17). Therefore, Jesus' ministry validates the prophets' writings (the Old Testament).
- And even those prophets weren't just making things up. They were "moved by the Holy Spirit" when they spoke for God (2 Pe 1:21).
- Peter holds the teachings of the apostles in high regard—on the level of the Old Testament prophets (2 Pe 3:2). The apostles included James, Matthew, and John, who went on to write some of the books in our New Testament.
- Peter especially esteems Paul's letters—even regarding them as Scripture themselves (2 Pe 3:15–16).

Peter had said in a previous letter that "the word of the Lord endures forever" (1 Pe 1:25). Peter would die, but he believed the Scriptures would live on—and his last recorded words urge us to remember them.

Theme verse of 2 Peter

Remember the words spoken beforehand by the holy prophets and the commandment of the Lord and Savior spoken by your apostles. (2 Pe 3:2)

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