

2 Peter: Standing Firm in the Last Days

Introduction

I. The Author— Among all the Books of the New Testament, none has been more disputed as to canonicity and authorship than 2 Peter. When 2 Peter was recognized and accepted as canonical by the church councils of the fourth century, this was done with their eyes open to the objections raised against it. We may conclude, therefore, that the evidence of authenticity was sufficient to overcome the doubts that had been expressed.

II. The Audience—The only designation of the audience in this epistle is in 1:1: “to those who have received a faith of the same kind as ours.” However, 2 Peter was probably Peter’s second letter to the same people he addressed in his first epistle (see, 1 Pet 1:1 and 2 Pet 3:1). The audience for both letters was in Asia Minor, the majority of whom had a Jewish background. It is clear that the letter was directed to an audience where the writings, leadership, and authority of Paul were taken for granted (3:15-16). While Peter no doubt had the recipients of his first letter in mind, the general designation in 2 Peter 1:1 may indicate a broader audience. Both letters were circulars.

The immediate occasion for this epistle was the information received concerning the outbreak and intrusion of false teaching among the churches addressed. Personal considerations probably also prompted Peter to write this second epistle. Advancing age and surging persecution made him conscious that his death was rapidly approaching (1:14-15). Inspired by the Holy Spirit, he used this occasion to share the deepest, abiding concerns of his heart.

III. The Aim—To call Christians to spiritual growth so that they can combat false teaching as they look forward to the coming of Christ.

IV. The Arrangement—

I. Introduction (1:1)

II. Chapter 1 - The Call to Spiritual Growth Know Your Salvation
Be Growing

III. Chapter 2 - The Caution against Seducers Know Your Adversary
Beware

IV. Chapter 3 - The Coming of the Savior Know Your Future
Be Ready

V. Conclusion (1:17-18)

V. The Analysis

The theme of this letter can be expressed in several different ways:

- faithful living in difficult times
- the believer's conflict in the last days
- growth in grace today for gloom and glory tomorrow

Key Words The key word in this epistle is “knowledge.” The words “know” and “knowledge” are used in various forms 16 times. Our ability to grow in the Christian life (chapter 1), combat apostasy (chapter 2), and live in view of Christ's coming (chapter 3) are all dependent on our knowledge of God and His Word. Another key word is “remember” (1:12, 13; 3:1, 2). Peter's main ministry to these believers is to stir them up by reminding them of truths they already know.

Comparison of 2 Peter with 1 Peter

1 Peter	2 Peter
1. Faced potential persecution (opposition from outside)	1. Faced false teaching (opposition from inside)
2. Key: Hope	2. Key: True Knowledge
3. Dwells on life and death of Christ to comfort believers	3. Dwells on return of Christ to warn false teachers
4. Comfort for afflicted	4. Affliction for comfortable

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V. Conclusion (1:17-18)

VI. The Application