

2 Peter

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2 Peter Introduction & 1:1

Introduction

- Second Peter is the red-haired stepchild of the New Testament. Rarely preached on, largely ignored by scholars, it was the last book to be added into the New Testament. Part of the problem is the books disconnect with First Peter. If Silvanus actually penned First Peter, then he surely did not pen Second Peter. It may have been Peter himself or maybe he again had a secretary/scribe who penned this second letter. Either way, the language and style of Second Peter is vastly inferior to the first letter. This may speak into how much of 1 Peter was actually Silvanus, himself a prophet and a member of the Leadership Council of the Jerusalem Church. None of the great themes of 1 Peter are mentioned at all in 2 Peter. Things like the Crucifixion, how the church is now the true Israel, the importance of the Holy Spirit, the call to follow Christ’s example in day to day life, all of which make 1 Peter so important, and none of this is present in 2 Peter.
- The differences are so great and the overall message of the letter so much less, that some even in the early church questioned that Peter may not be the author. It wasn’t grand enough surely, they argued, for the leader of Christ’s 12 disciples to have written it.
- But Peter wasn’t writing to impress anyone. He was writing because these churches were in serious trouble. Some of these churches turn up again as the 7 churches of Revelation. It wasn’t enough that Nero was persecuting these churches, threatening the lives of these Christians from the outside, but just as they needed to be strong, as Peter said in the first letter, now there’s trouble on the inside!
- Evidently new preachers had come to area who were mixing pagan Gnostic philosophy with Christian doctrine. Gnosticism taught that only a person’s spirit mattered. What you did with your body, how you lived day to day,

didn't matter at all, just as long as you had a good spirit. The end result was that the followers of this idea lived completely amoral lives. Greed, unrestricted lusts, drunkenness, and more were outcomes and now they were twisting scripture to tap into local churches for their own personal gain. What really set Peter off (and Paul and John) was that these people denied the Second Coming. Since God's grace covered all with the coming of Christ, the world was now "fixed" and no further work by God was needed. There was no need for Christ to return. He had already done all that was needed to ever be done, and life was good.

- If this all seems quaintly ancient, so very First Century, and therefore unimportant to you, think again. We deal with a modern version of Gnosticism every day. It's there in your neighborhood, at work, and in your own family. I've always called this "The Good Ol' Boy" mentality. "Oh don't worry about him preacher. I know he don't go to church and runs around and drinks some, but he's a good ol' boy. Do anything in the world for you. He's alright." It's the idea that as long as you're a relatively decent person you can live pretty much however you want to live, because God loves you, Jesus died for you, and it's all good. You hear this constantly from liberal theologians and pastors these days and from those who advocate universalism who say, "When Scripture says 'Jesus died for all' that means he died for everyone who has ever lived or will ever live, regardless of their sin, such is God's amazing grace." And have you noticed how every celebrity who dies is going to be in Heaven as well. Here there is no need for repentance or changing your life. Your life is fine just as it is. God loves and forgives you. Period.
- So we had better pay attention to what Peter has to say in this second letter, even if it's not as well written as his first letter!

Vs. 1

- Peter even introduces himself differently, as Simeon. His reason is that he is writing to a primarily Gentile/Greek audience. He addresses the letter to them, calling them, “those who have received a faith of the same kind as ours.” “Ours” meaning the Jews. This is reminiscent of how he explained to the Jerusalem Council about his baptizing the Roman Centurion Cornelius and his household. “Therefore, if God gave to them the same gift He gave to us also after believing in the Lord Jesus Christ, who was I that I could stand in God’s way?” (Acts 11:17). There is only one other time in the New Testament where he is called Simeon. It is found in Acts 15:14. Paul is before the Jerusalem Council this time explaining why HE is taking the Gospel to the Gentiles. James, in his ruling cites the earlier story of Peter with Cornelius saying, “Simeon has related how God first concerned Himself about taking from among the Gentiles a people for His name.” Indeed, here Peter says the faith of the Gentiles is “of the same kind”, that is, equal in honor and privilege with the Jewish Christians. This was a big step, a final step, for Peter to get beyond the idea that Gentiles must first become Jews and observe the Law of Moses to be fully admitted to the fellowship of Faith.
- And this Faith is one that the Gentiles “received...by the righteousness of our God and Savior, Jesus Christ”. It was a faith given to them by Christ. It was nothing they inherited as the Jews claimed, nor was it earned as the pagans claimed for their faith in the Gods. It was, and is, Christ’s free gift.
- Like Paul, Peter refers to himself as a “bond-servant” of Christ. The Greek word here for “servant” is *doulos*. It means more than just servant. It means **slave**. Like Paul, Peter is a bond-slave of Jesus Christ, a slave who has been bought with a price and now is 100% possessed by Him. A servant may change masters, but a slave absolutely cannot. The slave is fully at the master’s disposal. You go when and where the master says to go and you do not hesitate, you do not question. God sends His own when and where He chooses. God’s bond-slaves have no rights of their own, but wholly trust their Master for everything. This is what you see in Mary at the end of her

encounter with the angel: “Behold the bondservant of the Lord” (Luke 1: 38.)
Total obedience to God is the Christian’s only real law.

- Finally, note that Peter refers to Jesus as “our God and Savior”. Only in John 20:28 where Thomas, upon seeing the Risen Savior, proclaims “My Lord and my God!!” These are the only two places in the New Testament where Scripture just plainly says that Jesus is God. When you have seen what Peter and Thomas have seen, what else can you say?