

### NAME

The title of the epistle, “Petrou B” (ΠΕΤΡΟΥ Β) , is taken from the name of the attributive author, “Simon Peter” (1:1). The letter is called “Second Peter” to distinguish it from Peter’s first canonical epistle.

### AUTHOR

Modern critical scholarship almost unanimously rejects this book as a product of the Apostle Peter.

Laney:

Because of the differences in style between First and Second Peter and the lack of external evidence in support of Petrine authorship, the authenticity of this epistle has been questioned. There can be no doubt, however, that the author intended for his readers to understand that he is the apostle Peter. He calls himself “Simon Peter, a bond-servant and apostle of Jesus Christ” (1:1). He refers to his approaching death (1:14) which was predicted by Christ Himself (John 21:18,19). He claims to have been a witness of the transfiguration of Jesus (1:16,17) as Peter indeed was (Matthew 17:1-4). A previous epistle (1 Peter 1:1) sent to the same readers is mentioned in 3:1. The author shows acquaintance with Paul and his writings (3:16,17) as Peter clearly was (Galatians 1:18; 2:9,11,14; Acts 15:1-29). There is nothing in the epistle which would have motivated a forgery - no heresy or new historical data about the life of Peter.

As to stylistic differences, a forger would have likely followed the style of 1 Peter.

Adapted from Laney:

The style and vocabulary of the epistle is different from that of 1 Peter. It is said that 2 Peter lacks the simplicity and ease of expression seen in 1 Peter. The Greek in 2 Peter is more labored and written in awkward Greek. The style of 2 Peter shows a great scarcity of connecting particles and a greater penchant for “cumbrous” sentences. However, Peter may have used a different amanuensis or written the manuscript himself (i.e. Peter used Silvanus [Silas] to pen 1 Peter). He may have simply varied his style, as did Luke (cf. Luke 1-3).

The epistle of Jude may well be the earliest attestation to the authenticity of 2 Peter which Jude apparently alludes to. Compare 2 Peter 2:4 with Jude 6; 2 Peter 2:11 with Jude 9; and 2 Peter 3:3,4 with Jude 17,18. It is possible that Peter wrote before the heresy, and Jude wrote afterward.

The epistle of 2 Peter was not cited by name until Origen (c. 220 A.D.) who quotes it as Scripture six times. There are possible traces of 2 Peter in 1 Clement (95 A.D.), 2 Clement (150 A.D.), Aristides (130 A.D.), Valentinus (130 A.D.), and Hippolytus (1580 A.D.). Eusebius placed the epistle in his contested list with James, Jude, and Second and Third John explaining that it did not have a long tradition of authenticity and was not quoted by the elders (Historia Ecclesiastica 3:3 and 3:25). Jerome refers to the doubt concerning the work and suggests that it may have been transcribed by a different amanuensis.

Additionally, an early manuscript (the Bodmer Papyrus - The Bodmer Papyri are a group of twenty-two papyri discovered in Egypt in 1952. They are named after Martin Bodmer who purchased them. The papyri contain segments from the Old and New Testaments, early Christian literature, Homer and Menander. The oldest, P<sup>66</sup> dates to c. 200. The papyri are kept at the Bibliotheca Bodmeriana, in Cologne, Switzerland outside Geneva. In 2007 the Vatican Library acquired two of the papyri, P<sup>74</sup> and P<sup>75</sup>, which are kept at the Vatican Library.) lists 2 Peter along with 1 Peter and Jude as fully part of Scripture.

Because of the stylistic differences between First and Second Peter the early church seems to have hesitated to accept the epistle as canonical. Additionally the brevity of the epistle may have hindered its widespread distribution and thus early Christians may have been largely unacquainted with it.

Laney:

Although the authenticity of 2 Peter was questioned it is important to realize that the early church did eventually accept it as fully inspired written by Peter and it was received as canonical at the Councils of Laodicea (363 A.D.), Hippo 393 A.D.), and Carthage (397 A.D.). When all the evidence is considered, 2 Peter is found to be a genuine work of the apostle Peter.

### DATE

Laney:

The epistle was written after First Peter (3:1) which was probably written in 63 A.D. or early 64 A.D. Second Peter must have been written shortly before the apostle's death which he believed to be imminent (1:14,15). Since Peter died in Rome during the Neronian persecution which began after Rome's burning on July 18, 64 A.D., the epistle may have been written from Rome shortly before his death in the summer of 64 A.D.

Others place Peter's martyrdom later in Nero's reign (67 or 68 A.D.) and so the epistle should be dated between 64 and 67 A.D. Further, there are some who place the date of 2 Peter before 1 Peter and so place the date of it's (2 Peter) writing in the early 60's.

### THEME

Halley (page 44): *"Prediction of Apostasy"*

Mitchell: *"We Must Grow To Know"*

Heretics were beginning to make inroads in the church. This little letter is a defense against them. These false teachers particularly assailed the doctrine of Christ's return. Peter in this epistle re-emphasizes certain basic matters. The word of God was the basis for their beliefs including the second coming. Two key words in this letter are "know" and "remember." We must know to grow and thus resist heresy.

Laney: *"Growing in the Knowledge of Christ"*

The purpose of the epistle is to warn the believers against the false teachers within the church (2:1,2; 3:17). Peter intends for the letter to stir the readers to remembrance of the orthodox teachings of their prophets and Savior (3:1,2), thus encouraging growth in true knowledge (3:18).

Key Word (Nelson's): Guard Against False Teachers - The basic theme that runs through 2 Peter is the contrast between the knowledge and practice of truth verses falsehood.

Key Verses (Nelson's):

*"Knowing this first of all, that no prophecy of Scripture comes from someone's own interpretation. For no prophecy was ever produced by the will of man, but men spoke from God as they were carried along by the Holy Spirit." (2 Peter 1:20,21)*

*“The Lord is not slow to fulfill His promise as some count slowness, but is patient toward you, not wishing that any should perish, but that all should reach repentance. But the day of the Lord will come like a thief, and then the heavens will pass away with a roar, and the heavenly bodies will be burned up and dissolved, and the earth and the works that are done on it will be exposed. Since all these things are thus to be dissolved, what sort of people ought you to be in lives of holiness and godliness.” (2 Peter 3:9-11)*

Key Chapter (Nelson’s): 1 - The Scripture which is the clearest in defining the relationship between God and man on the issue of inspiration is contained in 1:19-21. Three distinct principles surface:

1. That the interpretation of Scripture is not limited to a favored elect but is open for all who *“rightly [divide] the word of truth”* (2 Timothy 2:15).
2. That the divinely inspired prophet did not initiate the Scripture himself.
3. That the Holy Spirit (not the emotion or circumstances of the moment) moved holy men.

A COMPARISON OF 1 PETER AND 2 PETER (Nelson’s)

1 Peter

Theme: Hope in the midst of suffering

Christology: The sufferings of Christ for our salvation and example at His incarnation

The day of salvation when Christ suffered, died and rose from the dead

Redemptive title: Christ

Be encouraged in your present trials

We need hope to face our trials

Numerous similarities to Paul (especially Ephesians and Colossians)

2 Peter

Theme: The danger of false teaching and practices

Christology: The glory of Christ and the consummation of history at His return

The day of the Lord when Christ returns in judgment

Title of dominion: Lord

Be warned of eschatological judgment

We need full knowledge to face error

Almost identical similarities to Jude (compare 2 Peter 2 with Jude 4-18)

Outline (from Laney):

- I. The Nature of True Knowledge 1:1-21
  - A. The Introduction 1:1,2
  - B. The Process of Growth 1:3-11
  - C. The Basis of Knowledge 1:12-21
- II. The Peril of False Teaching 2:1-22
  - A. The Coming of False Teachers 2:1-3
  - B. The Judgment on False Teachers 2:4-10a
  - C. The Description of False Teachers 2:10b-19
  - D. The Plight of False Teachers 2:20-22

- III. The Coming of the Lord 3:1-18
  - A. The Purpose of the Letter 3:1,2
  - B. The Presence of Scoffers 3:3-7
  - C. The Patience of the Lord 3:8-109
  - D. The Practice of Godliness 3:11-17
  - E. The Conclusion 3:17,18

### **RECIPIENTS**

The problem facing the readers in 1 Peter was persecution. The problem facing the readers of 2 Peter was false teaching (see above comparison of 1 Peter and 2 Peter).

Laney:

The readers of the epistle are believers, “*to those who have received a faith of the same kind as ours*” (1:1). They are apparently the same group of believers addressed in First Peter (2 Peter 3:1) who were mostly of Gentile background, though some may have been Hebrew Christians. The more general address is used in the second epistle because of the general applicability of the message to Christians in all areas. The readers were personally acquainted with Peter from his past ministry among them (1:16).

### **CONTRIBUTION TO CANON**

2 Peter is full of hope and practical counsel on how to endure through all of the adverse circumstances of our lives. In this epistle is counsel on how to balance holy living with correct doctrine, to nurture spiritual growth, to work within existing authority structures, and to take care of each other.

Insight into the authorship of Scripture - development of the Doctrine of Scripture.

Insight into the timing and return of Jesus Christ.

**RESOURCES**

Gromacki, Robert C. *New Testament Survey*, Grand Rapids, Michigan, Baker Book House, 1978

Robert H. Gundry, Ph.D., *A Survey Of The New Testament*, Grand Rapids, Michigan, Zondervan Publishing House, 1970

Halley, Henry H. *Halley's Bible Handbook*, Grand Rapids, Michigan; Zondervan Publishing House

Horton, David, General Editor. *The Portable Seminary*, Grand Rapids, Michigan, Bethany House Publishers, 2006

*Nelson's Quick Reference - Bible Maps And Charts*, Nashville, Tennessee; Thomas Nelson, Inc., 1994

As general resources I've relied on my class notes from various professors at Biola University (especially those of Dr. Curtis Mitchell), Western Conservative Baptist Seminary (WCBS - [especially those of Dr. J. Carl Laney]), and Talbot Seminary as well as notes shared with me by Annie Kartoizian.

Additional reference material has come from the study Bibles of the English Standard Version, New American Standard Version, and The New Living Translation.

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