

## 2 Peter

1. **Who was the author? When was the letter written?** God is the Author; the apostle Peter was the writer as spoken of in 2 Peter 1:1. There has been more debate over the canonization of 2 Peter than any other book of the New Testament. Part of the problem is that Peter's name was falsely used in many Gnostic writings. The apostle Paul had warned that this would occur -- see 2 Thessalonians 2:1-2. When objectively looking at the evidence, it seems clear that Peter wrote this letter. This letter was alluded to 22 times by the "early church fathers." There are a few internal evidences that point to Peter as the writer as well. First of all he calls himself "Simon Peter, a bond-servant and apostle of Jesus Christ." Secondly, he speaks of his imminent death which was made clear to him by our Lord Jesus Christ -- 2 Peter 1:14. He also speaks naturally as an eyewitness of the Transfiguration in chapter 1, verses 16-18. Peter also speaks of the writings of Paul as Scripture in 3:15-16 and, in that context, calls Paul his "beloved brother." One wouldn't expect someone pretending to be Peter to be that naturally close, yet casual in reference to Paul. The Greek style of 2 Peter is different from that of 1 Peter, but that would be expected because 1 Peter was penned by Silvanus, while 2 Peter makes no mention of a secretary. Upon examination of the word usage between 1 and 2 Peter, the striking similarity points to the same source of the books.

1 Timothy—537 words	Titus—399 words	161 common words
1 Peter—543 words	2 Peter—399 words	153 common words

There is no other book in the New Testament closer to 1 Peter than is 2 Peter. Our great God has gone to great lengths to protect His word, and to make sure that we have in our hands His inspired Scriptures. The fact that this book did make the New Testament canon is in accordance with God's will, and we can have confidence that it was written by the Apostle Peter. 2nd Peter was written after 1 Peter (see 2 Peter 3:1) at a time near his death (see 2 Peter 1:12-15), so that puts it around 65-68 AD.

2. **To whom was it written?** 2 Peter was written "to those who have received a faith of the same kind as ours" -- 2 Peter 1:1. The intended audience was for all Christians anywhere and everywhere. This letter is a general letter for the church, completely applicable throughout all generations.
3. **What is the overall theme?** The overall theme is to prepare Christians to make sure of their eternal salvation. Chapter 1, verses 10-11 challenge us to be diligent to make certain of God's calling and choosing us, and in so doing to guarantee our entrance into the eternal kingdom. Chapter 2 warns against false prophets who "secretly introduce destructive heresies." Because of these false teachers, "the way of the truth will be maligned." These same unrighteous men will "exploit you with false words." There is a warning at the end of chapter 2 against "returning to our own vomit" by "turning away from the holy commandment." Chapter 3 clearly pictures the final judgment and asks the

question, "what sort of people ought you to be in holy conduct and godliness?" Chapter 3 closes by telling us to be on guard lest we "fall from y[our] own steadfastness."

- 4. Why does Peter emphasize "remembrance" so much in this letter?** As time passes, it is easy to begin to take things for granted. The urgent can begin to crowd out the important. Daily renewal can be easily replaced with reaction to crises. The worries of this world can choke out our focus on the eternal. Knowing that a conscious effort is required to keep the spiritual things forefront in our minds, the Holy Spirit has Peter emphasize this for our benefit. 2 Peter 1:9 tells us that the reason a person would lack the qualities required to make us useful and fruitful for the Lord is because he has "*forgotten* his purification from his former sins." In 1:12, Peter says that he shall "always be ready to *remind* you of these things." In 1:13, he says that he chose "to stir you up by way of *reminder*." 3:1 makes the same point as Peter says he is "stirring up your sincere mind by way of *reminder*." He goes on to say in verse 2 "that you should *remember* the words spoken beforehand..." The importance of remembrance is a theme throughout the Scripture as evidenced by the Lord's Supper on the first day of every week, which we do "in *remembrance*" of Christ.
- 5. What scene is referenced in 1:17 – 18?** In this passage of Scripture, Peter recollects the transfiguration of Jesus on the "holy mountain." This event is recorded in the gospel accounts in Matthew 17, Mark 9, and Luke 9. Moses and Elijah, appearing in glory, met with Jesus to discuss "His departure." Peter uses this event to make the point that Christianity isn't based on cleverly devised tales, but has true eyewitness testimony. The rise of Christianity truly was a result of 1) clear Old Testament prophecy, 2) eyewitness testimony, and 3) the accompanying signs and miracles of the apostles and others who received those gifts of the Spirit. Peter goes on to make the point that "we have the prophetic word made more sure, to which you do well to pay attention." We can have absolute conviction that the Bible is the Word of God -- it is a sure thing.
- 6. What are we supposed to know "first of all"?** There are actually two separate times in this letter that Peter tells us that we should "know this first of all." The first is in 1:20-21, following up his remarks concerning the transfiguration of Christ. These verses say, "But know this first of all, that no prophecy of Scripture is a matter of one's own interpretation, for no prophecy was ever made by an act of human will, but men moved by the Holy Spirit spoke from God." As we know, one of the big arguments that excuse-makers use against the absolute authority of Scripture is that it "just depends on your interpretation." This passage is clear that those who recorded the Scriptures weren't just throwing down their interpretation. These men actually "spoke from God." God's word means something, and it is our responsibility to figure out what it means. It logically follows that if the writing of the Bible wasn't open to the interpretation of those recording it, neither is its meaning open to the interpretation of those reading it. We need to allow the Scriptures to interpret themselves, which they do! The second time Peter tells us that we should "know this first of all" is in 3:3. This verse says, "Know this first of all, that in the last days, mockers will come with their mocking, following after their own lusts." He goes on to mention those that ascribe to and promote the evolutionary concept of uniformitarianism. Those who maintain this position of "the present is the key to the

past" have willfully ignored the events of Creation week and of the Flood of Noah's day. God miraculously brought this world into existence and then refashioned it during the flood. By the way, there is an interesting parallel with our immersion into Christ -- not only was the old man destroyed, but there was a new creation. Brethren, don't fall for the agenda of men who wish to carry out their own fleshly desires. They will cleverly disguise their arguments as "science," all the while refusing to acknowledge the evidence that would expose their sins.

- 7. To which Old Testament scenes does the author allude?** This letter refers to the Great Flood on two separate occasions. The first time in 2:5 is used to communicate that God will preserve the righteous and destroy the ungodly. The second time in 3:5, the reference to the Flood is used as a preview of the final destruction of the world with fire. God "isn't slow about His promise, ... but is patient toward you." Judgment Day is on the way, so we need to be ready. The letter of 2nd Peter also mentions the destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah and the salvation of Lot in 2:6-9. The point made is that "the Lord knows how to rescue the godly from temptation, and to keep the unrighteous under punishment for the day of judgment." The final reference to an Old Testament event is in 2:15-16. This goes back to the time when Balak wanted Balaam to curse the Israelites. Although God didn't allow Balaam to do that, we know that Balaam "loved the wages of unrighteousness," and it took a talking donkey to "restrain the madness of the prophet." The warning is to watch out for these false teachers whose god is their appetite. Money and power drive unregenerate man to great depths of wickedness, including finding a way to get more money and power while leading others down a path to hell.
- 8. What can the modern Christian apply from this letter?** The modern Christian can apply all of this to our day. Here are a few of the big ones:
- Recognize that everything pertaining to life and godliness has been given to us. (1:3)
  - Ensure that the qualities listed in 1:5-7 are ours and are increasing. This will prove us to be useful and fruitful for the Lord. (1:5-8)
  - Know that the entire Bible is the Word of God and that it interprets itself. (1:20-21)
  - Beware of the false teachers. (all of chapter 2, 3:17)
  - Watch out for the dangers of falling away (2:20-22, 3:17)
  - Remember the things spoken beforehand in the Scriptures (3:2)
  - The Flood is a guarantee of a coming judgment by fire (3:5-13)
  - Be ready for Christ's return (3:14)
  - Regard God's patience as salvation (3:9,15)
  - Grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ (3:18)