

2 Peter

AUTHOR: The Apostle Peter

DATE: Between 65 and 70 A.D.

INTRODUCTION: The book of 2 Peter was written shortly before Peter's death, about the time the Apostle Paul wrote 2 Timothy. These two Apostles were killed about the same time. In fact, in 2 Peter 3:15, 16, Peter refers to the writings of Paul.

THEME: "Warning Against False Teachers." Read 2 Peter 2:1-3, 15-19. Peter traces the origin of the apostasy to false teachers. These are teachers who deny the truth of the redemption, as we see in 2 Peter 2:1. Bear in mind that the epistle was written to the same people to whom the first epistle was written. The first epistle was written to comfort and encourage them while they were suffering and being persecuted. The second epistle was written to warn them of false teachers creeping in. The conditions that prevailed were tragic ones. Christians in the first century had worked their way up to places of responsibility and authority in government, business, etc.

Nero was the head of the Roman Empire. The city of Rome was burned. For six days it burned, and approximately half the city was destroyed. Nero, who hated Christians, laid the blame at their feet and led the people in persecuting them. There were several forms of persecution. Sometimes Christians were thrown to the lions in the coliseum. This they would do as an athletic contest. Thousands of people would gather around, and, just like Mexicans would have a bull fight, or like Americans would have a football game, they would make sport of the lions eating the Christians.

The second manner of persecution was even more horrible. They would take the skins from animals, place the skins over the bodies of Christians, declare them as animals, and hunt them as common game. In other words, Christians were required to wear the animal skins, and the people could hunt them just as they would hunt for bear, deer, etc.

The third type of persecution was even more horrible! They would take the Christians, bathe them incombustible material, burn them, and use them as lights, like candles, for athletic contests, amusements, recreations, etc.

Hence, 1 Peter was written to these people encouraging them while in their persecution. The book of 2 Peter was written to warn them of false doctrines and false teachers. It is bad enough to suffer, but to suffer for something false is infinitely worse. He was simply saying, "If you're going to suffer, suffer for something that is worthwhile, which is, of course, the truth."

FACTS ABOUT THE AUTHOR: It was Peter who took the initiative at different times while under the training of our Lord. He was aggressive, active, forceful. It was Peter who said, "Lord, to whom shall we go?" when Jesus asked, "Will ye also go away?" John 6:67-69. It was also Peter who declared he would never leave his Lord. It was Peter who preached the first Christian sermon. It was Peter who was the chief personality in the early days of the church. It was Peter who made the great confession in Matthew 16:16, "Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God." He it is who wrote encouragement to those who are suffering.

I. EXHORTATION TO SPIRITUAL GROWTH. 2 Peter 1.

1. Peter exhorts them to grow spiritually in view of his approaching death. He uses his death

as a reason why they should grow spiritually. They are his babes, and he wants them to grow.

2. He tells them that he has faithfully declared the Gospel.
3. He recalls a remarkable experience in being with Christ on the Mount of Transfiguration, and for their spiritual grounding, he reminds them of the Word of God and of the truth of prophecy. In other words, he tells them what Christ has done for him. He tells them that they should be grounded because that which is prophesied in God's Word will come true.

II. FALSE TEACHERS. 2 Peter 2.

1. Peter reminds them that false teachers will continue to appear. They can expect them. He reminds them to be on the lookout for them.
2. He describes their sinful practices.
3. He reminds his people that these false teachers will be destroyed, as were the unrighteous of an earlier day. He takes them back to the flood, to Sodom and Gomorrah, and to the angels that sinned. He reminds them that right will prevail. He encourages them to keep on standing for the truth, because in the end, right will conquer.

III. THE SECOND COMING OF CHRIST. 2 Peter 3.

1. Peter reminds them of the scoffers who deny the signs of His coming.
2. He describes the new heaven and the new earth.
3. He reminds them that because Christ is coming, they should live lives dedicated to Him. This could be applied to I John 3:1, 2.

CONCLUSION: The entire lesson could be compared to I John 2:18, 19; 2 John 9-11, and other passages that deal with false teachers and false prophets. It seems that the more sinful the times become and the more persecution Christians get, the more popular the false prophets and heathen religions become. The wise Christian will strengthen himself so that he can discern between that which is right and that which is wrong, between truth and error, between God's true work and Satan's counterfeits.