

Introduction to 2 Peter

Where is it in the Bible?

Second Peter is the twenty-second book in the New Testament and is found between 1 Peter and 1 John. It is one of the catholic or general letters (James through Jude).

Who wrote it?

Although the letter claims to have been written by the disciple Simon Peter (1:1), most scholars believe it was written by an unknown author years after his death. "In fact, many scholars who are reluctant to grant that any other writing of the New Testament might be pseudepigraphical sometimes make an exception in this case."¹ In addition to the fact that church tradition does not support Peter's authorship of the letter, there are many reasons to believe that it is anonymous, including its genre, style, and doctrine. For example, 2 Peter seems to have borrowed heavily from Jude, which was written around the time of Peter's death.

When was it written?

Second Peter is widely regarded as the latest book in the New Testament. Some have suggested that it was written by a disciple of Peter between 80 and 100. Others think it dates to the first half of the second century.

What is it about?

Second Peter was written to warn believers against false teachers and to encourage them to be faithful to apostolic teaching, especially with regard to Christ's return and godly living. It was probably written for a general audience of churches, rather than for a specific community.

How is it structured?

- I. Salutation (1:1-2)
- II. Encourage to Growth in Christian Living (1:3-11)
- III. Purpose and Authority (1:12-21)
 - a. Goal of the Letter (1:12-15)
 - b. Authority of the Author (1:16-21)
- IV. Warning Against False Teachers (2:1-22)
- V. Christ's Return (3:1-13)
- VI. Final Exhortation and Doxology (3:14-18)

¹ Mark Allen Powell, *Introducing the New Testament* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2009), 482.

What are some things to look for?

- **Delay of Christ's Return:** The letter addresses the question of why Jesus has not yet returned. Apparently some scoffers were ridiculing Christians because this had not happened. The author says there is no reason to doubt that Christ will return because the teaching is founded on the eyewitness experiences of the original disciples (1:16-18). The additional time gives more people a chance to repent (3:9), and there only seems to be a delay to human beings because God does not reckon time in the same way (3:8).
- **Godliness:** Christians are called on to live in ways that are pleasing to God. This can be done with the help of God's power (1:2-3).
- **Warning Concerning Judgment:** It seems that false teachers were claiming that there would be no judgment of the wicked. The author reminds his readers that the Day of the Lord is coming and the earth will be destroyed. The ungodly be condemned and the righteous will be rescued (2:9; 3:16-17).