

2 Peter

While Peter's audience is the same in his second letter (3:1), his theme and purpose are different. Persecution from unbelievers can be hard for followers of Jesus to endure (1 Peter); but defection within the community of Jesus' followers can be even more devastating (2 Peter). To counteract the effects of this "poison," Peter reminds his readers of the timeless truths of the faith and challenges them to continue growing toward Christian maturity. Those who scoff at the thought of future judgment will find, like Sodom and Gomorrah, that ignoring God's word will ultimately lead to destruction every time! The warning for followers of Jesus is clear: "Do not forget... be diligent... beware!" (3:8,14,17).

INTRODUCTION

1 Peter deals with problems from the outside; 2 Peter deals with problems from the inside. Peter writes to warn the believers about the false teachers who are peddling damaging doctrine. He begins by urging them to keep close watch on their personal lives. The life of a follower of Jesus demands diligence in pursuing moral excellence, knowledge, self-control, perseverance, godliness, brotherly kindness, and selfless love. By contrast, the false teachers are sensual, arrogant, greedy, and covetous. They scoff at the thought of future judgment and live their lives as if the present would be the pattern for the future. Peter reminds them that although God may be long suffering in sending judgment, ultimately it will come. In view of that fact, believers should live lives of godliness, blamelessness and steadfastness.

AUTHOR

The statement of authorship (1:1) is very clear: "Simeon Peter, a servant and apostle of Jesus Christ." Unlike 1 Peter, this letter has weak external testimony and some internal difficulties. This has led some to question its authenticity. In spite of the external and internal problems, the traditional position of Peter's authorship is accepted.

DATE & SETTING

This is Peter's second letter to those in Asia Minor (3:1). Peter wrote this epistle in response to the spread of heretical teachings which were all the more insidious because they emerged from within the churches. These false teachers perverted the doctrine of justification and promoted a rebellious and immoral way of life.

This epistle was most likely written just before the apostle's death (1:14), probably from Rome. His martyrdom took place between A.D. 64 and 66 (if Peter were alive in 67 when Paul wrote 2 Timothy during his second Roman imprisonment, it is likely that Paul would have mentioned him).