

60. Jesus in 2 Peter

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I don't know about you, I think that whether it is a book or movie, the majority of sequels are rarely as good and exciting as their originals. I believe that it is because we expect more excitement, more stuff from the sequel than the first one.

That is not the case with the Bible. There is not one Book that is not important and beneficial to us. Otherwise, it would not be included in the Bible by our Lord.

Although this Book is not as long as the first epistle by Peter, it is equally important, especially handling false teaching, apostasy, as well as what is going to happen in the future.

I am sure that while you all read this Book ahead as I asked you to do, you've noticed that the writing style is very similar to the Book of Jude.

This Book is not something you read casually. It demands your full attention and determination to understand what the Lord bestowed to us. This is one Book that can rattle many cages, including yours and mine.

A. AUTHOR

I have to laugh at some of brilliant thinkers who call themselves biblical scholars. They argue that the Book of 2 Peter couldn't be written by the apostle Peter, because the writing style is different and the words he used were not the same kind of Koinonia Greek he used for the first epistle. I don't know a whole lot about Greek and obviously I am not as brilliant as they are. But in my humble opinion, it is rather simple to figure out who wrote this letter. It simply says in v1.

2 Peter 1:1 Simon Peter, a bondservant and apostle of Jesus Christ, To those who have obtained like precious faith with us by the righteousness of our God and Savior Jesus Christ:

Do these thinkers actually believe that God would allow somebody else to write this letter and pretended to be the apostle Peter? It would be a deception and God will not have it in His Bible. NO DUH, right??

B. ABOUT THE LETTER

Peter wrote this letter from Rome soon after he wrote 1 Peter in AD 64. So what would have prompted another letter to the same group so soon after the first? From the contents of the letter, it appears that Peter had received reports of false teachers in and among the churches in Asia Minor. The apostle warned them about the insidious presence of those who spread heresies among the people, marking such difficulties as a sign of the last days. Peter wanted to encourage his people to stand firm and to instruct them on how best to do that.

2 Peter 2:1 But there were also false prophets among the people, even as there will be false teachers among you, who will secretly bring in destructive heresies, even denying the Lord who bought them, and bring on themselves swift destruction.

2 Peter 3:3 knowing this first: that scoffers will come in the last days, walking according to their own lusts

2 Peter took a long time in being accepted by the church into the canon of Scripture. It was accepted at the council that met at Laodicea in A.D. 372 and then again at Carthage in A.D. 397. Jerome accepted 2 Peter for the Vulgate, Latin version of the Scriptures. Eusebius, one of the early church fathers, placed 2 Peter among the disputed books. The Epistle of Jude apparently draws from 2 Peter and demonstrates that Jude was well acquainted with it. Martin Luther accepted it as genuine. Calvin actually doubted it, but did not reject it.

In this letter, Peter didn't mention the traditional subjects – such as Christ's suffering, resurrection, ascension, the Holy Spirit, prayer, and baptism. That is the reason many scholars thought it should not be included in the canonization of Scripture.

1 Peter focuses on giving hope to the hurting Christians against external sources of hardship, such as unfair slave owners, a pagan society, and an increasingly unsympathetic emperor. 2 Peter, on the other hand, is concerned with internal sources of corruption, namely, false prophets who are deceitfully gaining footholds in local churches. 2 Peter and Jude share not only a similar intensity, but also a similar concern.

2 Peter was the swan song of Peter, just as 2 Timothy was for Paul. There are striking similarities between the two Books. Both epistles put up a warning sign along the way the church is traveling to identify the horrendous apostasy that was on the way at that time and now in our time. Peter warns of heresy among teachers; Paul warns of heresy among the laity. Both Peter and Paul speak in a joyful manner of their approaching deaths.

The churches of Asia Minor were not just struggling with the persecution and suffering addressed in Peter's first letter; they also had strife and dissension within their ranks. In an effort to stem the tide of heresy and false teaching among the Christians, Peter emphasized the importance of learning and clinging to the proper knowledge of God. In fact, this concept was so important to him that the word knowledge appears – in one form or another – some 15 times in the span of this short, 3 chapter letter.

Both apostles, Peter and Paul anchored the church in the Scriptures, the Word of God, as the only weapon against the coming storm of apostasy. It is no wonder that the enemy has attacked 2 Peter from being a part of the Bible, because this is one of the finest swords that has been given to us to fight back against the wicked ones' onslaught – from the fields of education, politics, media, economy, and entertainment today.

C. AUDIENCE

While the Book of 1 Peter was addressed to the Jewish Christians who were spread throughout Asia Minor, this 2 Peter was written to not only them, but also to all the Christians everywhere.

D. THE THEME OF THE BOOK

Peter's theme in his second letter is a simple one: pursue spiritual maturity through the Word of God as a remedy for false teaching and a right response to heretics in light of Christ's promised second coming. Peter encouraged his readers to apply themselves to acquiring the true knowledge of God and living out the life of faith with "all diligence," so that they may "be found by [Jesus] in peace, spotless and blameless".

E. A BRIEF OVERVIEW

2 Peter is a short Book with only 61 verses spread out over 3 chapters. But this letter is not easily navigated.

The first 3 verses of chapter 1 are an introduction. In the balance of chapter 1 Peter addresses the moral corruption of the last days.

Chapter 2 shifts from moral corruption to the second major issue of the last days, doctrinal compromise.

The false prophets and teachers of Peter's day and of our own all share 4 basic traits:

- 1) They're more interested in gaining popularity than in declaring the truth.**
- 2) They're more interested in receiving than in giving – whether it's money, fame, or power.**
- 3) Their personal lives model a seduction toward evil.**
- 4) They ultimately lead people from God, not to Him.**

Crossing over into chapter 3, Peter focuses his attention on prophetic concerns. The subject of future things will always bring those who want to indoctrinate us with their twisted brand of teaching, using the latest fads to make their delusions more exciting and appealing. But Peter's advice is to stick with the orthodox teachings passed on by the apostles of the Lord Jesus.

F. THE LESSONS WE CAN LEARN

As with the recipients of Peter's letter, we all go through difficult times. Those trials seem to hit us even harder when the source of the struggles come from somewhere or someone close to us. We know that this is true in our personal lives: marital problems, children's wayward defiance, or conflicts at work. But it holds true within the church as well.

Believers can create dissension in multiple ways, particularly in the areas of relationships and theology. To guard against that kind of discord – both in our families and our churches – God's people need to know who He is. Our knowledge of God through His Word is the first line of defense against the conflicts that threaten to tear us apart.

2 Peter 3:17-18 You therefore, beloved, since you know this beforehand, beware lest you also fall from your own steadfastness, being led away with the error of the wicked; 18 but grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. To Him be the glory both now and forever. Amen.

In 2 Peter we see that apostasy is approaching, the storm is coming. No, actually they already are here. How are we to prepare to engage them? There is only one way, Peter says, and that is through knowledge. Not only through faith in Christ, not only by believing in Him, but also knowing Christ intimately. As it has been said, "It is not how you mark your Bible, rather it is how your Bible marks your life."

Peter also reminded his readers that the Lord could return at any time. He is not behind when it come to the fulfilling timing of His promises, but is patient toward us. And since this world will all burn one day, this knowledge should cause us to live a holy living with eternity in view.

All of the cults have 2 common denominator heresies in their doctrines:

1) Jesus is not God.

2) Jesus is not coming back.

These are the same old lies from the first century and the devil is still using them effectively.

I'd like to give you 'H.O.P.E.' It is an acronym for the applications we can learn from this Book by the apostle Peter:

1) Heed what you already know.

Many of us already know enough truth to keep us strong no matter how tough times may get. So don't fall into the trap of simply storing up Bible knowledge. Practice it, too!

2) Open your eyes and ears.

Discernment can be a developed skill. Pay attention to what is not being said as much as what is. Just because people use all the right words and looks, it doesn't guarantee that they speak the truth. Don't confuse charisma with orthodoxy. Instead, get in the habit of comparing what you hear with the Scriptures, just like the Bereans did in Acts.

Acts 17:10-11 Then the brethren immediately sent Paul and Silas away by night to Berea. When they arrived, they went into the synagogue of the Jews. 11 These were more fair-minded than those in Thessalonica, in that they received the word with all readiness, and searched the Scriptures daily to find out whether these things were so.

Learn to notice people's lives as well as their words. And if the two don't match, be careful.

3) Pursue a godly lifestyle.

Almost without exception, whenever Christ's return, or the end times are mentioned in the NT, the emphasis is on living a pure life. Remember, I taught you guys the main reason for the study of eschatology – holy living.

4) Expect Christ's return.

Does the way you live reflect the hope of Christ's return? If not, try this experiment to see how expecting Christ at any time can radically change the way you live. First thing tomorrow morning, pray through your day with the thought that Christ could return at any moment tomorrow. Then periodically stop and remind yourself of this truth. You'll be surprised at how this can transform your perspective and encourage holy and righteous living and letting others know about Jesus.

Billy Sunday, who became one of the greatest evangelists of his generation, received this advice as a young man: Spend fifteen minutes a day talking to God in prayer. Spend fifteen minutes a day letting God talk to you through the Bible. And spend fifteen minutes a day talking to someone else about Jesus. If you do these things, you never will be called a backslider.