

STUDIES IN 2 PETER (1)

Introduction

2 Peter 1:1-4

Last month, we concluded our study of 1 Peter, a book in which Peter addressed Christians preparing to suffer. We now want to examine this 2nd letter attributed to Peter. This is a letter that is totally different in many ways from the 1st. If you were to do a critical literary study, you would see some of these differences. While in this lesson, we will notice a few of these, my primary focus will be to begin addressing the content of this letter as that is what our faith is dependent upon.

While I do not want to take the time to develop this here, 2 Peter is one of the most disputed books of the New Testament as to its authenticity. As its canonicity (inspiration and authority) was discussed and it was “slow” to be accepted, based on STRICT criteria that would eliminate any work that was NOT associated with “apostolic authority”, it was accepted as part of God’s inspired word. I MENTION this here as an acknowledgement that its background is debated, especially by liberal critics. I am not “sweeping it under the carpet”. I would be glad to discuss some of this at another time if that is desired (perhaps during a Friday home study). I am approaching our study of 2 Peter with the conviction that it IS as a part of God’s word and needs to be studied as would the rest of scripture (2 Timothy 3:16-17).

I. Background

- a. Written by Peter the apostle (1:1). More in awhile.
- b. To whom? We are not told specifically in this letter.
 - i. The “general epistles” (James – Jude) are so named because they were believed to have been written to wider audiences than Paul’s letters, and generally their audience is not specifically named.
 - ii. As a “second letter” (2 Peter 3:1), some believe this letter was written to the same audience as 1 Peter (1:1 – the pilgrims of the dispersion throughout Asia Minor region).
 - iii. However, because of the difference in content, it is also plausible this letter was written to a different audience. If so, the mention of a second epistle would mean that we do not have the first letter (as we know of other letters written that we do not have – e.g., Colossians 4:16 – the letter to the Laodiceans, 1 Cor. 5:9 – “I wrote to you in my epistle...”, etc.).
 - iv. Some have contended that Peter was writing to a Hebrew audience – possibly even Judea/Galilee as he makes references to events the Hebrews would have been familiar with.
 - v. Whomever the audience, the letter serves great relevance even to us today.
- c. When was it written? Again, this is debated, but I will treat this as Peter’s 2nd letter to the same audience (or at least including them). 2 Peter 1:13-14 finds Peter announcing that his time on earth is about to end. Like Paul’s 2nd letter to Timothy, Peter is preparing to face eternity and wants to address concerns and present a final admonition to brethren who are dear to him. If this is the case, the letter was likely written in the late 60s. Tradition holds that Peter was put to death around 68 AD.
- d. Purpose – As noted, Peter is concerned with false doctrine creeping into the church in various places.
 - i. We know that was a serious concern, as it was addressed by virtually every NT writer. Therefore, he warns his audience of false teachers.
 - ii. We do not know what false teaching Peter specifically had in mind. He deals with false teachers and prophets in more general terms, including their character and eventual destiny. Of note is the similarity between 2 Peter and Jude. Some contend that one copied from the other (who copied from whom is not known). And while whoever wrote second could have had a copy of the other, it is not necessary. IF both are inspired, then they BOTH had the

same author – the Holy Spirit – 2 Timothy 3:16-17. Peter himself addresses this in 2 Peter 1:20-21.

- iii. A false teaching Peter addressed had to do with the Lord's return, especially His delay. 2 Peter 3 deals with this error calling them "scoffers" (3:3). He goes on to explain WHY God is delaying and how we need to continually prepare for the day of the Lord (2 Peter 3:9-10ff).
- e. 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; but **grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. To Him be the glory both now and forever. Amen.***

This is described by some as the KEY PASSAGE. In this concluding text Peter mentions 2 things

- i. We need to **beware** – Peter has addressed false teachers as noted.
 - ii. Our need to be **growing in knowledge** – that is HOW we will be able to identify and avoid false teachers and their teachings.
- f. Brief Outline:
- i. 2 Peter 1:1-4 – Introduction
 - ii. 1:5-21 – Grow in your knowledge of Him
 - iii. 2:1-22 – Beware of false teachers – their doom, depraved nature and deceptive ways
 - iv. 3:1-18 – The 2nd coming of the Lord – even if it is delayed.

II. Greetings from Peter (1:1-4)

- a. 1:1 – Simon Peter.
- i. The author identifies himself as the apostle.
 - ii. *Simon Peter* – This was a designation for him – Matthew 4:18 – "Simon called Peter"; 10:2, "Simon who is called Peter" (as the 12 were chosen); 16:16, "*Simon Peter answered and said, 'You are the Christ, the Son of the living God.'*" Mark 3:16 describes the choosing of the 12, "*Simon, to whom He gave the name Peter.*" ~25x in the gospels, this is how he is identified. But it is DIFFERENT from how he identified himself in 1 Peter.
 - iii. 1:1 - *A bondservant and apostle of Jesus Christ* – Clearly he identifies himself as an apostle. He will make more clear which one in the text. Same as 1 Peter, but he adds bondservant. It is possible that as he is writing, he was a prisoner.
 - iv. 1:13-14 – he writes with concerns believing he is to "shortly" put off his tent. Cf. John 21:18-19 records the Lord prophesying a time would come when Peter would die being bound.
 - v. 1:16-18 – Peter makes reference to the transfiguration – Matthew 17:1 – Peter was there (with James and John).
 - vi. NOTE: Because of the difference in the styles of 1 & 2 Peter, some believe that 2nd Peter was written by someone else. BUT consider:
 - 1. The above makes it clear the intent of the author was to present himself as Peter. If someone else wrote this, the letter is a fraud!! I do not believe that.
 - 2. As to differences in style, Peter is dealing with different subject matter that would require different approaches.
 - 3. ALSO, consider that the 1st epistle is accepted universally as from Peter. Since he in this letter describes this as his 2nd epistle (3:1), it points to it being Peter.
 - 4. Furthermore, while slow and cautiously, it WAS accepted as canon and attributed to Peter.
 - 5. Think of everything you have to challenge to deny that Peter the apostle wrote this letter.
- b. To those who have obtained like precious faith with us...
- i. This is the only description of his audience. And as noted, it is very general. It is safe to assume that the audience (at least) included the audience of 1 Peter.
 - ii. They had obtained "*like precious faith*" - NASB, "a faith of the same kind"; CSB, "a faith equal to ours"; ESV, "a faith of equal standing".

1. The wording indicates their faith was the SAME faith that Peter had. While Peter was an apostle, he held no special standing as far as “the faith” is concerned.
 2. The apostles were clear to make it know that God shows no partiality – Acts 10:34-35 (see also vs. 26 – “stand up; I myself am also a man”); Galatians 3:27-28. Yes, they had a divinely appointed office with authority, but as far as salvation was concerned – we are all one in Christ Jesus (cf. 1 Corinthians 3:5-6 – Paul and Silas were only ministers)
 3. Some in the religious world make a distinction between “clergy” and “laity”. The Bible makes no such distinction, as least as far as standing goes. Yes, elders and preachers have authority (Titus 2:15), but they are NOT above those over whom they have been entrusted to serve. 1 Peter 5:1-4 was clear in addressing the serving nature of elders.
- iii. “Faith” here could be objective or subjective.
1. Objective – i.e., “the faith” (cf. Galatians 1:23 – “*the faith he once tried to destroy*”, Jude 3 “*contend earnestly for the faith which was once for all delivered to the saints*”). That would be the gospel. As Peter in this letter deals with how knowledge will build them up and protect them from false teachers (1 Peter 1:3, 5, etc.) there was certainly a need to be in agreement where His word is concerned (1 Corinthians 1:10, John 17:20-21, 1 Peter 3:8 – be of one mind, Philippians 2:1-2, etc.)
 2. Subjective – our belief and conviction. It is to this “faith” that we will build upon toward perfection (2 Peter 1:5). As Peter opened his first letter (1 Peter 1:3-7), he appeals to their faith noting:
 - a. Through it we are kept by the power of God (1:5)
 - b. When genuine, we will view it as “precious” (same root) (1:7)
 - c. In the end, this faith results in the salvation of your soul (1:9)
 Hebrews 11:1 describes this faith as “the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen. This faith is described throughout the chapter.
 3. God’s word produces within us “faith”. And there ought to be unity in our belief in Him. That is why we speak the same thing. Romans 1:16-17 – “*from faith to faith*” (objective to subjective).
 4. Certainly, if we are all striving together for the same goal, then our faith is going to be “like precious” or “of the same kind”.
- iv. *By the righteousness of our God and Savior Jesus Christ* –
1. God and Savior Jesus Christ here seems to identify Jesus. Jesus is certainly our Savior, but He is also God (Part of the Godhead). Scripture clearly declares this:
 - a. John 1:1-3 – “the Word was God...”
 - b. Colossians 2:9 notes that in Him dwells all the fullness of the Godhead bodily.
 - c. Romans 9:5 where He is described as “*over all, the eternally blessed God.*”
 - d. Titus 2:12-13, we live soberly, righteously and godly, *looking for the blessed hope and glorious appearing of our great God and Savior Jesus Christ,*
 - e. Hebrews 1:3 describes Him as “*the brightness of His glory and express image of His person...*”
 - f. Philippians 2:6, He did not “consider it robbery to be equal with God” (NASB, *He did not regard equality with God a thing to be grasped*”).
 - g. John 14:8-10 – Jesus told Philip, if you have *seen Me, you have seen the Father.*
 2. He is here described as righteous – a word meaning He does the right thing.

- a. We know that God always does that which is right.
- b. We also know that Jesus, while upon this earth lived a righteous life – He perfectly kept the law and never sinned. Hebrews 4:15 reminds us of this (also Hebrews 7:25-26ff, 2 Corinthians 5:21). Romans 5:18 describes Jesus “righteous act” salvation is available to all men. 1 Corinthians 1:30, *But of Him you are in Christ Jesus, who became for us wisdom from God—and righteousness and sanctification and redemption—*
- c. In context, we could appeal to God’s impartiality with us – Romans 2:11. Romans 5:8 reminds us that Christ died for us.
- v. It is because of the mercy, grace and love of God that we can have a “like precious faith” with hope.
- c. Grace and peace be multiplied (1:2)–
 - i. Here we have Peter’s greeting – similar to 1 Peter 1:2, but expanded.
 - ii. May His grace and peace be multiplied to us – Peter’s desire is a continued increase of God’s grace and peace. In this we find maturity and greater hope in Him. As we mature in the faith, we more greatly appreciate and understand the grace of God. And our peace also becomes more sure in every way (with Him, others and within ourselves).
 - iii. May it be “*in the knowledge of God and of Jesus our Lord.*” Why do we hope? Because He has revealed to us “*all things that pertain to life and godliness*” (vs. 3). The word “knowledge” (ἐπίγνωσις, epignōsis) is a more intense word than just knowing details. It implies a more thorough understanding. It is a depth of knowledge of Him that will protect us from false teachers and their doctrines. That is Peter’s greeting for them. Colossians 1:9-10.
 - iv. We will obviously see this developed as we continue our study of this book.

And thus we find Peter’s greeting to these brethren. As we begin a study of this book, let us resolve that we will continue to grow in grace and knowledge so that we will not be deceived by error. In our next lesson, we will examine in more detail Peter’s greeting.