

2 Peter

WHAT'S THIS BOOK ABOUT? In this follow-up to 1 Peter, the apostle prepares the church to stand against false teachers. He also answers some questions about the return of Christ.

WHO WROTE IT? The apostle Peter.

WHEN DID IT HAPPEN? Around A.D. 64.

WHERE DOES THIS BOOK FIT? Near the end of Peter's life.

THE BREAKDOWN

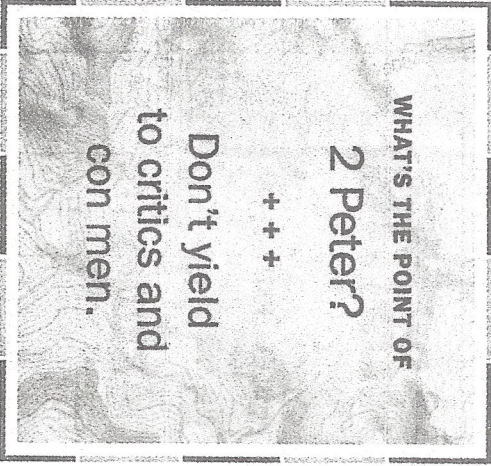
- Chapter 1: Defending the truth
- Chapter 2: Warning against false teachers
- Chapter 3: Correcting mistaken ideas about Christ's return

KEY CONCEPTS

- Faith
- Growth
- Scripture
- Christ's return

READING TIME

IN HOURS	:30	1:00	1:30	2:00	2:30
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WORTH MEMORIZING

- 1:5-7 Supplement your faith with a generous provision of moral excellence, and moral excellence with knowledge, and knowledge with self-control, and self-control with patient endurance, and patient endurance with godliness, and godliness with brotherly affection, and brotherly affection with love for everyone.
- 1:20-21 Above all, you must realize that no prophecy in Scripture ever came from the prophet's own understanding, or from human initiative. No, those prophets were moved by the Holy Spirit, and they spoke from God.
- 3:8-9 You must not forget this one thing, dear friends: A day is like a thousand years to the Lord, and a thousand years is like a day. The Lord isn't really being slow about his promise, as some people think. No, he is being patient for your sake. He does not want anyone to be destroyed, but wants everyone to repent.

THE MASCLINE PERSPECTIVE

- **FAITHFULNESS.** Peter mentions two Old Testament men—Noah and Lot—who were spared from the destruction around them because they were faithful to God (2:4-9). If these men were able to resist the pressure to conform, surely God can give us the strength to be faithful also.

INTRODUCTION TO
2 PETER



BACKGROUND

Peter wrote this letter in response to the false teachers prevalent in his time. Like 1 Peter, this epistle is not addressed to a single church. Its authorship has been questioned, one reason being the differences in the Greek vocabulary of 1 Peter compared to 2 Peter. But Peter dictated the first letter to a scribe (1 Pt. 5:12), while the second letter does not mention a scribe. There is also some dispute because 2 Peter and Jude (a later book) are so similar in content. However, in 1:16-18 the author claims to have been present at the transfiguration—witnessed only by the three disciples Peter, James, and John.

MESSAGE

Peter encourages his readers to add

OUTLINE

- I. Certainty of Faith
 - A. Greetings
 - B. Characteristics to add to faith
 - C. Eyewitnesses to his majesty
- II. Beware of False Teachers
- III. The Day of the Lord
 - A. Mockers in the last days
 - B. New heaven and earth

the following character traits to their faith: goodness, knowledge, self-control, patience, godliness, and brotherly kindness (1:5-7)—a list not unlike the fruit of the Spirit (Gal 5:22-23). Since the readers of Peter's epistle lived in a time of many heresies, Peter has harsh words for those who teach false doctrines and for those who fall prey to them. In a discussion of the last days, Peter avers that Christ will again appear. Believers must be prepared for his coming, making efforts to be "found of him in peace, without spot, and blameless" (3:14).

TIME

Second Peter was written after 1 Peter, just before his martyrdom, which occurred between A.D. 64 and 66.

1:1-2	3:1-10
1:3-11	3:11-18
1:12-21	
2:1-22	



If you were dying but had the opportunity of writing a final letter to friends, what would you say? That's a heavy question, but it helps us understand 2 Peter. Knowing his remaining time was short, Peter wrote this letter, probably from Rome, as he neared the time of his martyrdom.

Had you been Peter, what would you have written? Perhaps you'd want to give a reminder of your core beliefs, then you might leave instructions about a critical issue, finally you'd focus on the joy of Christ's return.

That's exactly what Peter did in the three chapters of his letter. In chapter 1, he affirmed that God has given us all things pertaining to life and godliness, and we must diligently grow in these virtues. He said, "I think it is right, as long as I am in this tent (of my body) to stir you up by reminding you" (2 Peter 1:14) of the truths of Scripture given by those "who spoke as they were moved by the Holy Spirit" (2 Peter 1:21).

In chapter 2, he warned us against false teachers who speak with great swelling words of emptiness.

He concluded with chapter 3 devoted to the Lord's return, when the heavens will pass away with a great noise and the elements will melt with fervent heat. In light of this what sort of people ought we to be? We should be people who are known, Peter said, by our holy conduct and godliness, as we look for and hasten the coming of our Lord.



KEY THOUGHT:

While awaiting our Lord's return, we must stand on His great and precious promises, which provide all we need for life and godliness.



KEY VERSE:

"Therefore, brethren, be even more diligent to make your call and election sure, for if you do these things you will never stumble."

2 Peter 1:10



KEY ACTION:

"Therefore, beloved, looking forward to these things, be diligent to be found by Him in peace, without spot and blameless."

2 Peter 3:14



KEY PRAYER:

Dear God, may I grow in the grace and knowledge of my Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ.

PETER

BASIC SURVEY

2 PETER

AUTHOR: The apostle Peter (1:1).

DATE: Probably the late AD 60s, shortly before Peter's execution.

IN TEN WORDS OR LESS

Beware of false teachers within the church.

DETAILS, PLEASE

The Christian qualities of faith, virtue, knowledge, self-control, patience, godliness, and love (1:5-8), coupled with a reliance on scripture (1:19-21), will help believers avoid the false teachings of those who "secretly bring in destructive heresies, even denying the Lord who bought them" (2:1 NKJV).

QUOTABLE

> We have not followed cunningly devised fables, when we made known unto you the power and coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, but were eyewitnesses of his majesty (1:16 KJV).

> The Lord is not slack concerning his promise, as some men count slackness; but is longsuffering to us-ward, not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance (3:9 KJV).

UNIQUE AND UNUSUAL

Peter wrote this letter knowing his death was near: "The laying aside of my earthly dwelling is imminent, as also our Lord Jesus Christ has made clear to me" (1:14 NASB).

SO WHAT?

"Beware lest you also fall from your own steadfastness, being led away with the error of the wicked" (3:17 NKJV).

READ 2 PETER 1 AND PSALM 109.

- One-Month Course: your next reading is on page 270. →
- Three-Month Course: your next reading is on page 270. →
- Six-Month Course: your next reading is on page 268. →

FIRST PETER DEALS WITH PROBLEMS from the outside; Second 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 Christian life demands diligence in pursuing moral excellence, knowledge, self-control, perseverance, godliness, brotherly kindness, and selfless love. By contrast, the false teachers are sensual, arrogantly kind, 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 longsuffering in sending judgment, ultimately it will come. In view of that fact, believers should live lives of godliness, blamelessness, and steadfastness.

The statement of authorship in 1:1 is very clear: "Simon Peter, a bondservant and apostle of Jesus Christ." To distinguish this epistle from the first by Peter it was given the Greek title *Petrou B*, the "Second of Peter."

WATCH WORDS

- **nature** (one's inherent characteristics by origin or birth)—1:4
- **add** (provide, furnish, or support)—1:5
- **interpretation** (explanation; meaning)—1:20
- **pure** (unsullied by foreign substances; free from falsehood; sincere)—3:1

PRESERVE SPIRITUAL GAINS

Developing Self-Control

2 Peter 1:2-9

Developing self-control will help us tremendously as we seek to preserve our spiritual gains. And according to Peter, who had learned some difficult lessons about self-control himself, such self-restraint is part of a larger progression of spiritual growth. He wrote, "Make every effort to add to your faith goodness; and to goodness, knowledge; and to knowledge, self-control; and to self-control, perseverance; and to perseverance, godliness; and to godliness, mutual affection; and to mutual affection, love" (2 Peter 1:5-7).

Self-control is a fruit of the Holy Spirit (see Galatians 5:22-23). Self-control grows in our lives when we cling closely to God, allowing his Spirit to flow through us. As we persevere day by day, God will develop his own character in us, including the character trait of self-control.

CLOSER LOOK

THE TEACHING OF BALAAM

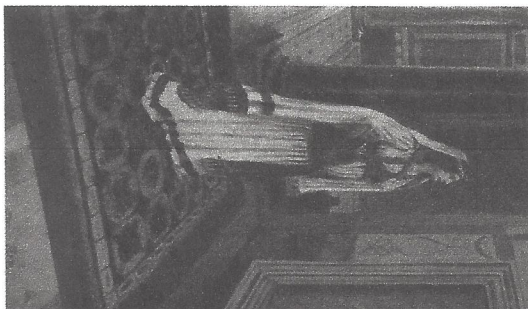
By AD 68, the message of salvation through Jesus had spread throughout most of the eastern Roman Empire, and there were churches in every major city. But in recent years teachers with destructive doctrines had also risen, and some of their teachings were a licentious distortion of the pure Gospel of Jesus Christ.

Peter warned that “there will also be false teachers among you, who will secretly introduce destructive heresies” (2 Peter 2:1 NASB). In fact, some taught that since Christians were under grace, not the Law, they were now free to commit sexual immorality. Peter said, “Many will follow their sensuality, and because of them the way of the truth will be maligne^d” (v. 2 NASB). Peter explained that these teachers had “eyes full of adultery that never cease from sin, enticing unstable souls. . . forsaking the right way, they have gone astray, having followed the way of Balaam” (vv. 14–15 NASB).

Indeed, less than thirty years later, Jesus rebuked the church of Pergamos, saying, “There are some among you who hold to the teaching of Balaam, who taught Balak to entice the Israelites to sin so that they. . . committed sexual immorality” (Revelation 2:14 NIV). And a so-called prophetess (whom Christ called “Jezebel”) was in nearby Thyatira. Jesus said, “By her teaching she misleads my servants into sexual immorality” (Revelation 2:20 NIV). So often—both then and in modern times—destructive doctrines arise because people desire a “Gospel” that allows them to indulge their flesh and live the way *they* choose to live.

READ 2 PETER 2 AND PROVERBS 5.

● Six-Month Course: your next reading is on page 270. →



Christ referred to a temptress as “Jezebel” and stated that she was leading His servants to sin.

HIDDEN TREASURE

THE GOSPEL ISN'T A FABLE

Most educated Greeks and Romans recognized that the stories about their gods and goddesses were simply clever fables invented by men. Jesus Christ, on the other hand, was a real historical figure who had lived, died, and resurrected in the days of the Roman governor Pontius Pilate. And there were many witnesses to this. The writers of the Gospels had either personally witnessed the events they described or carefully interviewed those who *had* seen them (John 19:32–35; 21:24; Luke 1:1–4). That’s why Peter wrote, “For we did not follow cunningly devised fables when we made known to you the power and coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, but were eyewitnesses of His majesty” (2 Peter 1:16 NKJV).

READ LUKE 3 AND ISAIAH 41.

HIDDEN TREASURE

THE NEW TESTAMENT IS SCRIPTURE

At what point did the Church recognize that the New Testament was scripture? About AD 64, Paul equated the written Gospels with the Law of Moses. He stated, “For the Scripture says, ‘You shall not muzzle an ox while it treads out the grain,’ and ‘The laborer is worthy of his wages’” (1 Timothy 5:18 NKJV). The first passage quoted was Deuteronomy 25:4. The second passage was Luke 10:7. Also, around AD 68, Peter wrote, “Those who are ignorant and unstable have twisted his [Paul’s] letters. . . just as they do with other parts of Scripture” (2 Peter 3:16 NLT). By saying “*other* parts of Scripture,” Peter was acknowledging that Paul’s epistles were *also* scripture. (See also 1 Corinthians 14:37.)

READ 2 PETER 3 AND ISAIAH 42.



Peter, who is represented in the painting *Saint Peter* by El Greco (1541–1614), stated that the gospels are just as important as the laws of Moses.

2 Peter

BOOK INTRODUCTION

After his devastating failure in the courtyard of Caiaphas, where he had denied Jesus at a moment of ultimate crisis, Peter faithfully and courageously followed his Lord for the rest of his life. That winding, sometimes rocky pathway eventually led to Rome, where Peter almost certainly wrote his first letter to the churches in Asia Minor (1 Pet. 1:1; 5:13) and probably his second letter as well—possibly under very different circumstances.

When fire broke out in Rome in AD 64 and destroyed much of the city, some alleged that Emperor Nero himself was responsible, purposely destroying part of the city to create a new capital. Nero blamed the Christians and ordered that they be hunted down and punished. Some were imprisoned; many were murdered.

Initially, Peter was thrown in prison during this wave of persecution, only to be executed in the end. Tradition says that he spent his last years in a Roman prison, writing his final letter with a cross—his own cross—looming on the horizon (John 21:18).

Just as 2 Timothy was Paul's last testament of his faith, so 2 Peter became the last message from the leader of the original 12 disciples.

WHAT IT SAYS | *End-Times Exhortations*

Peter's final message before his martyrdom quickly reveals what weighed most heavily on his heart: the issue of false teachers in the young church. These false teachers were promoting immoral, ungodly living by denying that Christ was really going to return to judge sin.

Peter's readers were the same as for his first letter—and so was his purpose for writing: "Beloved, I now write to you this second epistle (in both of which I stir up your pure minds by way of reminder)" (3:1). He was addressing members of churches in Asia Minor, and his goal was to remind, encourage, and teach them yet again about the salvation they had inherited through faith in Christ (1:2–9).

Unlike many of the other biblical writers, Peter knew this would be his final message. (He clearly refers to Jesus' prophecy on the shore of the Sea of Galilee: "knowing that shortly I must put off my tent, just as our Lord Jesus Christ showed me" [1:14]). As a result of this knowledge, his letter takes on the traits of a last will and testament. He writes to his spiritual family, conveying what any father would: he recognizes his mortality; he reviews his teachings; he exhorts them to continue in what they have received; he reminds them that

2 PETER

he personally witnessed the truth revealed in Christ; and he advises them about the future—how some scoffers would attempt to taint their inheritance and weaken their faith, especially regarding the second coming of Christ. Peter's second letter was his last chance to strengthen and prepare his spiritual heirs before he left this world.

In a time of turmoil, confusion, and danger, the apostle Peter declared again the resplendent certainties of the Christian faith. He highlighted the great promises of God (1:4), the majesty of the Lord Jesus Christ (1:16), the certainty of God's Word (1:19), the assurance of Christ's return (3:4–9), the inevitable judgment of the world (3:10), and the glorious hope of a new heaven and new earth (3:13).

WHAT IT MEANS | *"Let Me Remind You One More Time"*

The three chapters of this brief epistle articulate Peter's emphases: matters of a last testament (1), a warning against false teachers (2), and the truth about Christ's return (3).

- **Peter's Credentials:** In case the false teachers question his credibility, Peter reestablishes his credentials with his readers: he was an eyewitness to the ministry, Transfiguration (1:16–18), and resurrection of Jesus.
- **Knowledge:** Peter uses this word four times in his opening chapter alone (1:3, 5, 6, 8). He urges his readers to far more than mere intellectual understanding; they must pursue an intimate interaction with the truths of God. This yields the greatest transformation of all: a deeply intimate relationship with Jesus.
- **Spiritual Growth:** The most important matter to Peter was his readers' continued spiritual growth. He wants them to remember that everything they need for life and godliness is theirs through God's power and through a diligent reading and heeding of His Word (1:3–11).
- **False Teachers:** Peter devotes the middle portion of his letter to the false teachers who would come and seek to lure the churches into their carnal ways. Peter wants his readers to focus on the Scriptures given by God rather than listening to the "private interpretation" of self-appointed teachers who refuse to believe that God will judge wickedness (1:20; 2:1–22; 3:3, 4).
- **Christ's Second Coming:** Peter warned the church that scoffers would come asking, "Where is the promise of His coming?" (3:4). Peter assures his readers that any delay in Christ's return does not show a failure regarding His promises; instead, God is giving humanity time so that all who will "should come to repentance" (3:9).

WHAT IT MEANS FOR YOU | *Remember the Promises*

Concerned as he was about false teachers who had infiltrated the young church—causing discord, raising doubts, and creating havoc—Peter's strong advice was to *cling to the sure promises of God*. Instead of refuting the false teachings one by one, he restates his apostolic teaching of the great, transforming truths of the Christian faith and urges God's people to live them out. It is a good plan for us all.

Whatever your situation, whatever your current pressures or anxieties or doubts, whatever any skeptic is telling you, take time to consider the promises of God. Write them out. Memorize them. Ponder them in your heart. Claim them. Pray them back to the Lord. Remember what a magnificent God we serve. And then act on what you know, because time is fleeting. A new heaven and earth are just around the corner.

- A. A WORD OF BLESSING (1:3–2)
- B. GOD HAS EVERYTHING WE NEED (1:3–21)
- C. THE PERIL WITHIN: BEWARE! (2:1–22)
- D. HOPE FOR TOMORROW, PURPOSE FOR TODAY (3:1–18)

THE BIG PICTURE

Peter's audience had a problem. False teachers had moved into church fellowships and promoted wrong ideas about God. In many of these early churches a majority of the people were uneducated. They were easily swayed by the eloquence of traveling false teachers who intentionally deceived the people, using lies and half-truths to manipulate the believers for their own ends.

The apostle Peter sent a series of warnings to his readers: Watch out for false teachers; remember that God will hold them accountable for their errors; recognize false teachers by their deeds; remember the price they will pay for misleading people. Peter wanted his readers to experience the life-changing power of God in their lives. To do this, the believers needed to avoid manmade substitutes and the false teachings about Christ.

The challenge to Peter's audience went beyond a mere warning, however. Peter included a plan for the church's growth: "His divine power has given us everything we need for a godly life through our knowledge of him who called us by his own glory and goodness" (2 Peter 1:3).

Why do the pains, disappointments and sins of life bring us down? Why do we hurt those we love the most? Perhaps we will never learn the answers to those questions. But 2 Peter does tell us how to change: Get to know God. The God of the universe has made himself available to us on a personal level. As we get to know him, he will help us overcome our shortcomings and replace them with self-control, kindness, love, forgiveness, perseverance, patience and peace.

SPIRITUAL RENEWAL THEMES

SPIRITUAL RENEWAL REQUIRES SURRENDER TO GOD

Some people say that we have the power to heal ourselves. That false idea is fed by our own wishful thinking, believing we have the power within ourselves to overcome all of our problems and find fulfillment in our lives. Or maybe we would rather ignore reality and enhance our spiritual lives without ever really dealing with our problems and difficult relationships. But true spiritual renewal never divorces spiritual life from the rest of life. Spiritual renewal must involve the entire person—heart, mind, spirit and will—surrendering one's whole life and being to God's rule. It is not an easy or painless process. Surrender demands complete devotion of our lives to God. But if we are willing to repent and entrust our lives to God, we will discover the joy and peace that God intends for us.

GOD IS OUR HELP AND HOPE

Peter wrote to people who were facing severe opposition. The Roman emperor Nero had begun his persecution of Christians, and many would soon face death at his hands. At the same time, false ideas about God threatened the believers' new faith. Peter reminded these new believers to keep their eyes on God, the only reliable source of help and hope. As we also focus on God, we will find new hope no matter what circumstances we face. Then, as we persevere through tough times, our behavior will reflect that God is working powerfully in our lives.

THE IMPORTANCE OF PERSEVERANCE

Since we have been freed from our slavery to sin, we must persevere in our faith so that we do not become tangled up in sin once again. Falling back into sin makes our spiritual growth difficult, but the secret to making progress is perseverance. With God's help we can get up quickly and get back on track as soon as possible, no matter what the circumstances. When we accept God's free gift of forgiveness, we will grow closer to God, who loves us and promises to be with us. In this way, God will help us persevere through the tough times and experience his joy in the process.

Essential Facts

- PURPOSE:** To help his readers keep their focus on God's grace and truth.
- AUTHOR:** The apostle Peter.
- AUDIENCE:** All believers everywhere.
- DATE WRITTEN:** Around AD 66–67, a few years after 1 Peter was written.
- SETTING:** Peter was probably writing from Rome, sending words of encouragement and warning to people he did not expect to see again. He wanted them to watch out for false teachings and to be faithful to God and one another.
- KEY VERSE:** "His divine power has given us everything we need for a godly life through our knowledge of him who called us by his own glory and goodness" (1:3).
- KEY PEOPLE AND RELATIONSHIPS:** Peter with Paul and with the church at large.

FOR REFLECTION

The Return of Christ in Perspective • 3:3, 4

We smile when we think of first-century impatience for the return of Christ. The faithful had been waiting for three decades, whereas today's believers have been waiting for 200 decades—two millennia. If we were farmers, we would say that the clouds had closed up forever, and that the rain would never fall again. It has been a while.

So what is the evidence of His return? Perhaps we should view the issue from this angle. How long did people wait for the first coming of Christ? Genesis 3:15 offers the first mention of the coming Redeemer. In the second chapter of Luke, the prophecy comes to fruition. How long in between? No matter how one dates the first pages of Genesis, it was a very long time.

According to the Jewish calendar there are nearly 4,000 years between Adam and the birth of Christ. Two thousand years have passed since Christ promised His return. That is less than half the number of years between Genesis and Luke—and we are still awaiting His second coming.

What is the likelihood that so many prophecies in the OT would find fulfillment in one individual, Jesus of Nazareth? To the present day, not a single biblical prophecy concerning the Messiah or anything else in Scripture has been left unfulfilled if its time has come. Such predictive accuracy led the apostle Peter to write, "For prophecy never came by the will of man, but holy men of God spoke as they were moved by the Holy Spirit" (1:21).

Prophecy can have two purposes: to *foretell* the future and to *forthtell* the present. Foretelling is predictive; it describes something that will happen in the future. Forthtelling is prescriptive; it speaks forth the truth of God, not for the future but for today—for the purposes of "edification and exhortation and comfort" (1 Cor. 14:3). Note, however, that predictive "foretelling" can produce these results also. When Paul wrote to the Thessalonians about the future destiny of their deceased loved ones, he said, "Therefore comfort one another with these words" (1 Thess. 4:18). And about the coming Day of the Lord, he concluded, "Therefore . . . edify one another, just as you also are doing" (1 Thess. 5:11).

Prophecy is never given to simply satisfy our curiosity about what the future holds. It is meant to motivate us to holy living in the present by edifying God's people, by exhorting them to stay committed to Christ and the truth, and by comforting those who are suffering trials.

The following prophetic events, centered around the Second Coming of Christ and the end of the present age, are yet to be fulfilled. They are a powerful source of encouragement designed by God to motivate us to live holy lives in an unholy world.

The Rapture of the Church. The Rapture (when Christ comes to gather deceased and living Christians to Himself in the clouds; 1 Thess. 4:13-18) is imminent; it could happen at any moment. All prophecies leading up to the Rapture have been fulfilled, so prophetically speaking, nothing else has to happen before Christ appears in the clouds to remove His church from earth.

The Rise of the Antichrist. The removal of the church and the Holy Spirit from earth in the Rapture is the event that will signal the Antichrist's aggressive rise to international prominence. He will establish a protective treaty with the nation of Israel but break it during the Tribulation (Dan. 9:27; 2 Thess. 2:1-12).

The Great Tribulation. This will be an unprecedented time of trouble and distress upon the earth (Jer. 30:7; Dan. 12:1; Matt. 24:21) for those who are not removed in the Rapture (1 Thess. 5:9; Rev. 3:10). Daniel saw its duration as a "week" of seven years (Dan. 9:27).

The Second Coming of Christ. During the seven years of the Great Tribulation, the Antichrist will have unprecedented power to rule and wreak havoc on earth. At the end of seven years, Christ will return to earth with the "armies of heaven" (Rev. 19:14) to judge the Antichrist and wage war against him. Jesus, of course, will win, and the Antichrist will be thrown alive into a fiery lake of burning sulfur. The rest of his followers will also be judged. At this point, Christ will be recognized as the true King of kings, and He will set up his millennial reign (Rev. 20:4-6).

The Millennium. The OT prophets foresaw a time of universal peace and blessing presided over by the heir to David's throne (Isa. 9:6, 7; 11:1-12:6; 65:17-25). The apostle John saw this period of blessing as a thousand years during which Christ and His servants will reign over the earth (Rev. 20:1-6).

The Great White Throne Judgment. At the end of the Millennium, Christ will judge all humans who have failed to respond to God's offer of salvation (Rev. 20:11-15).

The New Heavens and New Earth. The last unfulfilled event on God's prophetic calendar is the appearing of the New Jerusalem and the beginning of the eternal state (Rev. 21:1-22:6). God's people will enjoy unending life in the very presence of God and the Lamb. The goal of God's intention for creation and His people will finally be fulfilled!

For Further Reading: Dan. 11:40; Zach. 12:1-3, 9, 10; Matt. 24:3, 22; Luke 21:20-24; Rev. 17:12-14

Is the New Testament Reliable?

Josh McDowell

When I was a young man, I thought the Bible was nothing more than fiction or fancy. Yet in college I met some students who actually believed the Bible was true. To prove them wrong, I set out to show that the Bible was unreliable. I'm pleased to report my failure. I discovered that the Bible is fully accurate and reliable and that we can know God personally through its pages. Here's what I found.

First, the biblical accounts were all written by eyewitnesses to the events or by people who knew the eyewitnesses personally (Lk 1:2; Ac 4:20; 1 Jn 1:3). Peter said, "For we did not follow cleverly contrived myths when we made known to you the power and coming of our Lord Jesus Christ; instead, we were eyewitnesses of His majesty" (2Pt 1:16, italics mine).

Second, the vast number of early handwritten manuscripts of the NT ensures we can reconstruct the original with tremendous confidence. Modern editions of ancient books are often based on just a few existing copies (sometimes less than 10). Still, scholars are confident that the present versions of those non-biblical books accurately reflect the originals. In terms of the number of manuscripts, the NT dwarfs all other ancient writings. There are over 5,000 partial or whole Greek NT manuscripts. If other languages are included, the number jumps beyond 25,000!

Third, existing copies of the NT are remarkably close to the date of original composition. Most ancient works have a gap of more than 700 years, with some works, such as those by Plato and Aristotle, being twice that. In contrast, fragments of the Gospel of John date within 40 years of its writing (John Rylands Papyr) and a near complete copy of the NT within 100-150 years of composition (Chester Beatty Papyr). From the standpoint of ancient history, the NT documents are reliable, accurate, and incomparable. Amazingly, even if all the manuscripts were destroyed, we could reconstruct the entire NT (except for 11 verses) through the Bible quotes made by the early church fathers.

Fourth, if the disciples had made up the stories about Jesus, they paid for that lie with their lives. History tells us that ten of His original twelve disciples suffered violent deaths as a result of boldly proclaiming that Jesus Christ was the risen Son of God. Would the disciples die for a lie? While it's true that thousands of people have died for a lie, they did so *only* if they thought it was the truth. If the resurrection was a lie and the disciples knew it, certainly many of them would have cracked under pressure to save their lives and confessed the conspiracy.

Fifth, early non-Christian writers such as Josephus, Tacitus, and Pliny the Younger verify important details of the biblical narrative. These include that Jesus was a Jewish teacher, His rejection by Jewish leaders, the belief that He performed healings and miracles, and His crucifixion under Pontius Pilate during the reign of Tiberius Caesar. You have every reason to trust the Bible, and more importantly, the God of whom it speaks.

1. They infiltrate the church (2:1).	12. They are ignorant (2:12).
2. They come in secret (2:1).	13. They love to deceive others (2:13).
3. They deny the work of Jesus (2:1).	14. They are full of adultery (2:14).
4. They blaspheme the truth (2:2).	15. They cannot cease from slinking (2:14).
5. They are greedy (2:3, 14).	16. They prey on unstable new believers (2:14).
6. They use words that sound remarkably close to the truth (2:3).	17. They intentionally speak lies (2:15).
7. They follow the flesh (2:10).	18. They are out for monetary gain (2:15).
8. They are presumptuous and self-willed (2:10).	19. They talk a lot but say nothing (2:16, 18).
9. They do not want to be under anyone's authority (2:10, 11).	20. They make grandiose promises but never deliver (2:17).
10. They exhibit peace on the outside but are like unarranged beasts on the inside (2:12).	21. They use alluring thoughts to provoke attention from their audience (2:18).
11. They speak more evil than good (2:12).	22. They make promises they cannot deliver (2:19).

2:1-12 Here we are reminded of the consequences to be faced by those who reject God's plan and lead others away from the truth. God has provided us with the help we need to renew our lives according to his will. The consequences of a self-centered pursuit of pleasure and power are terrible. It is good to be reminded every so often of what we have been delivered from: "sudden destruction."

2:13-22 Setting appropriate boundaries will help protect our spiritual health. People who do not have our best interests at heart are everywhere, even in the Christian community. Peter emphasized the need for discernment here. Apparently the church in Peter's day was plagued by those who once professed faith in Christ but then corrupted the truth of the gospel. They advocated "freedom" but that freedom was really only a license to become enslaved once again by sin. Setting healthy boundaries for our behavior involves knowing God's truth and allowing neither the false teachings of others nor our own sinful inclinations to lead us astray.

2:10, 11 *Deignities* may be another name for angels (Jude 8-10). False teachers despise even supernatural authorities, not just human ones. Believers should avoid rewilding accusations against others and treat all in authority—even their enemies—with respect (Ex. 22:28).

2:12-17 Peter spares no words in describing the depravity of these false teachers. They are natural brute beasts (Jude 10) that follow their instincts without regard for consequences and their passions are unrestrained. Although God seems silent in the face of their wickedness, they will receive the wages of their unrighteousness: eternal darkness (Phil. 3:19). This is a timely reminder today as well: God sees their deeds and He will judge.

2:13, 14 When believers don't train themselves in God's ways, they are vulnerable to those who have trained their hearts in covetous practices. It takes very little effort to develop a habit of sin (eyes . . . that cannot cease from sin) in which one starts to believe one's own deceptions. The eyes symbolized a person's

desires—people look intently upon what they just ate.

2:14 False teachers prey upon those who are weak and unstable in their faith. This is why diligence in the disciplines of the faith (1:4-8) is so vital. Training in godliness and truth is the Christian's best weapon. *Enticing* means "alluring"—to lure someone as a fisherman's bait lures a fish.

2:15, 16 False teachers disguise their real motives, but eventually their corruption shows. Like Balaam (Num. 22-24), they are characterized by blasphemous (irreverent) words, wandering eyes, and greedy hearts.

2:17 Water is a common biblical metaphor for life-sustaining truth. Peter employs two poetic images well known in the and Middle East of his day—wells without water, clouds without rain—to illustrate the emptiness of the false teachers' promises (Rom. 6:16; Gal. 5:13). What people promise does not matter; whether they deliver proves the truth of their teaching.

LIFE LESSONS: Every word of the Bible is inspired (1:21). Godly character increases with maturity (1:5-7).

In the Word

Peter stated the purpose of his two letters: (1) to stimulate wholesome thinking; (2) to recall the words of the prophets; and (3) to recall the Lord's command given through the apostles (3:1-2).

GIVING IT ALL

Historians record that Peter was crucified under order of Roman emperor Nero, who had announced himself as an enemy of God and slaughtered many Christians, including Paul. It is also traditionally believed that Peter was crucified upside down, because he stated that he was "unworthy to die in the same manner as [his] Lord."

2 PETER

Reaching Beyond
This letter from Peter is addressed to all believers, "those who through the righteousness of our God and Savior Jesus Christ have received a faith as precious as ours" (1:1).

DID YOU KNOW

▶ This book had at least three authors, including Solomon, Agur and Lemuel.

BY THE NUMBERS

3 CHAPTERS
61 VERSES
1,552 WORDS

KEY PASSAGE

"His divine power has given us everything we need for a godly life through our knowledge of him who called us by his own glory and goodness. Through these he has given us his very great and precious promises, so that through them you may participate in the divine nature, having escaped the corruption in the world caused by evil desires (1:3-4)."

LIFE LESSONS: Honor God every moment of every day—you don't know when Jesus will return (3:1-13).