

2nd Peter

2 Peter was probably written in about 66-67 AD, close in time to Paul's writing of 2 Timothy. Peter was thinking about his own mortality and preparing for his death, "putting off my body" (1:13-15). Part of his preparation for death was, like Paul, to make sure the apostolic message continued to be available for the churches.

Much of this epistle focuses on the reality of false teachers and scoffers, and God's past demonstrations of justice that affirm the promise of the Lord's return (chapters 2-3).

Peter the servant and apostle of Jesus stood on the same ground as the readers who have faith in Jesus, because the faith of each is enabled by God's righteous character, and the salvation accomplished by Jesus (1:1).

Note God's sovereign role in 1:3-4, our potential through his gifts, and our responsibility to apply what we have and grow in v5-11. The calling and election are divine, confirming the calling and election calls for our attention to the qualities and behaviors described.

Jesus had forewarned Peter of how his life would end in John 21 before his ascension. No doubt as the time drew near he had other assurances, v14.

The desire to equip future generations should be a Christian trait, as seen in both Peter and Paul.

Christians have eye witness testimony, like Peter's recollection of the transfiguration (Matthew 17) in 1:16-18, of the divinity and glory of Christ, and also another witness in the prophetic words of the Old Testament, 1:18-21. The words of the prophets are enabled by the Holy Spirit.

However, there were other prophets who spoke from other sources, false prophets, 2:1. The church is and will be similarly challenged by false teachers in every generation. Some of them may teach in churches, some may teach in school classrooms or through other media. Not all false teachers necessarily present themselves as religious leaders. False teachers may advocate materialism as well as supernaturalism. Unfortunately, when perverse religious teachers obviously err, they cause true religion to be viewed with suspicion as well.

The examples cited of God's judgment on angels and rebellious humans in v4-10a are intended to highlight God punishing the ungodly while delivering the godly. Note that Noah's deliverance was not an easy road, and neither was Lot's. Lot's rescue may not have looked like a rescue to him, but it was, not just saving his life but removing him from the awful

circumstances he'd gotten into.

The pit where angels that sinned are bound is called "Tartarus" in 2:4, a word only here in the Bible. In Greek thought that was the deepest dungeon of Hades, the realm of spirits of the dead.

Wrong doers who have no appreciation for hierarchy and power structures are condemned in 2:10b-13. Celestial powers, even rebellious angels and the devil himself, are not to be trifled with or mocked. Even the great arch(prince)-angel Michael doesn't mock the adversary. The devil and forces of evil are not to be taken lightly or spoken of foolishly.

The provender's of error deplored for their excesses in 2:13-22 are people who "go to church," not pagan outsiders. Balaam is an apropos example as he talked about obeying the Lord while he looked for ways to win a reward contrary to God's will.

The "worse" state of 2:20-22 is much like that in Hebrews 6:4-8. If one already knows the way of truth but willingly turns away from it, what remains to entice them to obey?

Chapter 3 shifts the topic from false teachers among believers to scoffers who mock the Christian message of creation, redemption and judgment. Such scoffers today literally say what Peter describes, that everything has been the same since the beginning, that long uniformitarian processes explain everything the is and why things are as they are. 3:4-5 aptly describe modern evolutionary philosophy. However, Peter reminds believers the not only did creation really happen, a worldwide flood really happened too (2:5, 3:5-6). If God could make the world by his word, and deluge the world by his word, he can also bring the fiery consummation of Christ's return and judgment. The world we know is not permanent, and so "what sort of people ought you to be..." since the day of God will come.

The emphasis on God's desire to save all who can be saved in 3:9 should motivate us to share our faith and work with God to that purpose. Peter's final words note that Paul wrote several letters which were widely circulated among the churches, and while some teachings are (necessarily) challenging, those letters of Paul are grouped with the words of the prophets as "scriptures" (3:16).