

# New Testament Survey

## Class 29: 2 Peter

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**Author and Date:** Peter the apostle (2 Pet 1:1), near the end of his life (probably mid-60s AD)

### Canonicity:

- One of the most debated books of the NT; discussion continued into the 300s (see e.g., Eusebius, Church History, 3.3.1-4)
- Some scholars consider it to be pseudonymous and list the following reasons to doubt that Peter wrote this letter:
  - 2 Peter fits the literary genre we now call an “epistolary testament” in which a godly person’s reminiscences are woven together into a final account after their death (e.g., Deut 31-34; Testaments of the Twelve Patriarchs).
  - 2 Peter is probably a revision of Jude.
  - Instead of the imminent expectation of Christ’s return found in 1 Pet 4:7, this letter was written at a much later date when there were doubts about his return.
  - The first generation of Christians had already died (2 Pet 3:4).
  - The vocabulary, grammatical style, and theology are different from 1 Peter.
- However, the case for pseudonymity is overstated. The following points should be kept in mind:
  - Pseudonymity was not an accepted practice among early Christians. Christians were aware it happened, and worked to verify authenticity (e.g., 2 Thes 2:2; 3:17, and the removal of the elder who composed *The Acts of Paul and Thecla*).
  - Literary dependence between 2 Peter and Jude is uncertain. Furthermore, plagiarism was not an ancient concern.
  - Skepticism about Christ’s return began very early (1 & 2 Thes)

21-Apr-24	Letters of John
28-Apr-24	Jude
5-May-24	The Old Testament in the New Testament
12-May-24	Revelation
19-May-24	Our Future Hope

- 2 Peter 3:4 probably refers to the OT “fathers.”
- The use of an amanuensis could account for differences in vocabulary and grammar. The difference in theological focus merely reflects a new set of issues being addressed.
- Taken separately, none of the objections to Peter’s authorship are particularly persuasive. Additionally, it should be remembered that the early church was deeply interested in confirming the apostolic origins of their New Covenant writings.

### **Key Themes in 2 Peter**

1. Remember what you were already taught by the apostles
2. Beware false teachers
3. Don’t be duped by doubts about the second coming
4. Live lives of moral excellence

### **Outline of 2 Peter**

#### **Greeting (1:1-2)**

#### **Life and Godliness (1:3-11)**

*A gift of grace (1:3-4)*

*A call for diligence (1:5-11)*

#### **A Reminder: The Scriptures Are Prophecy Based on Eyewitness Testimony (1:12-21)**

#### **False Teachers Are Inevitable but Will Be Punished (2:1-22)**

*False teachers are inevitable (2:1-3)*

*False teachers will be punished (2:4-10)*

*False teachers are identifiable by their own sinful lifestyles, which they seek to enslave others to as well (2:11-22)*

#### **A Reminder: Jesus Will Return for Judgment (3:1-18)**

*Remember what has been handed down to you by the prophets and apostles: Jesus will return to set things right (3:1-7)*

*Jesus’s return follows God’s timescale because of His patience (3:8-10)*

*Therefore, live like Christians: remain pure, peaceful, and resist false teaching (3:11-17)*

#### **Final Blessing: Grow in Christ (3:18)**