

1. Introduction to 2 Peter

Introductory Comments:

- The letter of 2 Peter is one of the shortest books in the Bible. Yet, its sixty-one verses are truly inspired of God, and have brought great blessing to God's people.
- The letter was written by the disciple Peter, who was an eye-witness to the life, death and resurrection of Jesus. Peter even makes a reference to the time when he was on a mountain when Jesus was transfigured before him (2 Pet 1:16-18).
- Peter was a key apostle in Christ's church, but he was also a wonderful shepherd and pastor. With a pastor's heart, he wrote this letter to encourage and equip fellow Christians.
- Peter wrote this letter near the end of his earthly life (2 Pet 1:14). It is believed that he died under the reign of emperor Nero. According to tradition, he died by being crucified upside down at Rome. As a result, it is believed that 2 Peter was written somewhere between 65AD to 68AD.
- 2 Peter should be viewed as the last words of a great apostle before he went home to glory – may we listen to what he says, treasure his words, and use them to be encouraged and equipped in our faith.

Read the Letter:

- Read the whole letter of 2 Peter together: 2 Pet 1:1 – 3:18.

Observations of 2 Peter:

What were your overall impressions on 2 Peter? [Discuss]

What, do you believe, are some of the key reasons why Peter wrote this letter? [Discuss]

Three of the main reasons why Peter wrote his letter can be seen in each of the three chapters:

- 1) To encourage Christians to grow to maturity in Christ - chapter 1.
- 2) To help Christians to be aware of false teaching - chapter 2.
- 3) To urge Christians to anticipate the Lord's return and to live life purposefully - chapter 3.

Peter refers to this letter as his second letter (2 Pet 3:1). So, according to Peter's first letter, who was he writing to? (consider 1 Pet 1:1-2)

Peter wrote to Christians in general, who were scattered throughout the Roman Empire.

What does his description of Christians in 1 Pet 1:1 remind us of?

Christians are "scattered aliens", or "dispersed strangers (or pilgrims)" as we walk this earth that is fallen and hostile to God. This world is not our home; we are citizens of heaven (cf. Phil 3:20).

Read 2 Pet 1:12-13 and 3:1-2. What does Peter see himself doing as he wrote 2 Peter?

He was simply reminding his readers of Christian truths that they already knew. He was not giving them something new. NB: From Peter's time, and well into the 2nd century, false teachers would try to turn people away from Christ and His Word by declaring "new" knowledge (this was called Gnosticism).

Read 2 Peter 3:14-16. Peter makes mention of the apostle Paul. How does he speak of him?

Peter speaks well of him. He calls him a beloved brother, and one who was wise. Peter acknowledged that some of the things Paul wrote were hard to understand, but what he wrote was Scripture – God's truth.

NB: It's lovely to see Peter's admiration and support for Paul. They were not opposed to each other.

The Lord's second coming is mentioned several times in 2 Peter (1:10-11, 3:10-12). Why is this?

Peter used the second coming of Christ to encourage fellow believers to live their life well for Christ and His glory. Just as a finish line spurs on an athlete to run well to the end, we need to be conscious of our spiritual finish line so that we might run the Christian race well [Discuss].

Read the final verse of 2 Peter. This is a great verse to memorise. What's so special about it?

This verse captures what should characterise our Christian life. We shouldn't be stagnant but growing. In particular, we should be growing in the grace and knowledge of our Saviour. And as we do, we will bring glory to Christ's name, which also brings glory to God the Father. May we be "growing" Christians!

Summary: 2 Peter encourages Christians to grow in Christ, to be aware of false teachers, and to live in the light of Christ's second coming. May we do so, for God's glory.

2. The Knowledge of God: 2 Peter 1:1-4

Review: *Why did Peter write his second letter? (2 Pet 1:13-14)*

Peter knew that his time to leave this earth was near. He wanted to give a final word of encouragement.

What was the goal of Peter's message to fellow believers? (2 Pet 3:17-18)

He wanted to encourage fellow believers to stand firm against heresy and false teachers, and he wanted to urge them to grow in the grace and in the knowledge of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ.

Introduction: (2 Peter 1:1)

How does Peter describe himself in 2 Pet 1:1?

He describes himself, humbly, as a servant of the Lord Jesus, as well as an apostle.

How does Peter describe the believers that he was writing to? (2 Pet 1:1) What does this mean?

He describes them as "those who have received a faith of the same kind as ours". We have a common Christian faith that we receive the moment we trust in Christ. This makes us one with each other.

How did we receive, or come to be, in the Christian faith according to 2 Pet 1:1?

We came to be in the Christian faith by the righteousness of our Lord Jesus. By Christ's righteous life, and by His obedience to the Father in dying as our substitute on the cross (Phil 2:8), we have been made right with God, if we trust in Jesus. Jesus has enabled us to be in the faith in which we now stand.

How does Peter describe Jesus in 2 Pet 1:1?

Jesus is our God and Saviour. He's our God because He is divine, and because He has made us, together with the Father (cf. John 1:1-3; Col 1:15-17; Heb 1:1-3). He's our Saviour, because He is the One who has rescued us from our sins by bearing the punishment of our sins. Cf. John 20:28.

Blessings from the Knowledge of God: (2 Peter 1:2-3)

In many of the New Testament letters, the opening greeting contains a blessing for the reader.

What blessing does Peter give? (2 Pet 1:2) What do you make of such a blessing?

He wants his readers to have (God's) grace and peace multiplied to them. Surely, there is nothing more precious than having God's ongoing grace (undeserved favour), and having His peace, fill us daily.

What does Peter say is the way we receive God's grace and peace? (2 Pet 1:2)

It is received through the knowledge of our God and Father and the Lord Jesus. As we grow in our knowledge and "knowing" of the Father and the Son, God's grace and peace are multiplied to us.

Not only does the knowledge of God our Father and our Lord Jesus give us the blessings of grace and peace (2 Pet 1:2), but what else does God's knowledge give us? (2 Pet 1:3)

It gives us everything we need pertaining to life and godliness. We have everything for understanding the purpose of life, and how to live, and how to have fullness of life, as well as eternal life.

Where can we find this knowledge of God the Father and our Lord Jesus Christ that brings grace and peace, and that gives us everything we need pertaining to life and godliness?

It is found in the Bible. The Bible is the revelation and knowledge of God. It is the Holy Scriptures (2 Pet 1:20-21), or the sacred writings of God. It is the inspired word of God (2 Tim 3:16). The Bible alone has the true knowledge of God our Father and our Lord Jesus Christ.

What do we learn from 2 Pet 1:3 in regard to how we should view the knowledge of God (Bible)?

By God's divine power we have the knowledge of God. God used His awesome power to bring it about.

The coming of God's knowledge (God's Word) to us and our call into Christ's kingdom have something in common. What is that? (2 Pet 1:3).

They have come about through God's glory and excellence. God has been pleased to give us the true knowledge of Him, as well as to call us to be part of His eternal kingdom, where we will know God fully.

Promises from the Knowledge of God: (2 Peter 1:4)

In 2 Pet 1:4, what else comes through the knowledge of God? Why are they described like this?

We have God's precious and magnificent promises. They are precious and magnificent, for they are absolutely faithful and true, and because they are full of grace and goodness.

What do God's promises help us in, according to 2 Pet 1:4? What does this mean?

They help us to partake in the divine nature; that is, they encourage us to walk in the power of the Spirit and to be transformed into the image of Christ. Such promises make sure that we no longer remain corrupted and controlled by worldly and fleshly desires. Praise God for His magnificent promises!

Summary: The true knowledge of God blesses us and helps us to live by God's magnificent promises.

3. Fruitfulness and Assurance: 2 Peter 1:5-11

Review: *What does the knowledge of God, as revealed in the Bible, tell us about Jesus? (2 Pet 1:1)*
 Jesus Christ is both God and Saviour. The One who rescued us is "our Lord and our God" (John 20:28).

What does God's knowledge (as revealed in the Bible) give us? (2 Pet 1:2-4)

We are blessed with grace and peace (v.2), we have everything we need pertaining to life and godliness (v.3), and we have God's precious and magnificent promises (v.4).

Growing in Christ: (2 Peter 1:5-7)

In 2 Pet 1:2-4 there was an emphasis on the importance and blessing of God's knowledge. However, what must we be careful of? (cf. 1 Cor 8:1-3). What must we do with knowledge? (2 Pet 1:8)

We must be careful not just to grow in knowledge. This can lead to arrogance and pride. Instead, we are to apply God's knowledge, and allow it to affect our heart and will and life.

Once we have been saved and made right with God by repenting of our sins and trusting in our Lord Jesus Christ, what is a Christian to be diligent in? (2 Pet 1:5-7)

He is to be diligent in growing in Christlikeness; in particular, in the following seven Christian qualities: Goodness (moral excellence), knowledge, self-control, perseverance, godliness, brotherly kindness, love.

Why should we be diligent in growing in these seven Christian qualities? (cf. 2 Pet 1:1-5)

In the light of how Christ has enabled us to be in the Christian faith by His righteousness (v.1), and in the light of what God has done in blessing us (v.2) and calling us to Himself (v.3), and in enabling us to participate in the divine nature, we ought to be motivated to grow, and to no longer remain worldly.

The list of qualities in 2 Pet 1:5-7 is similar to what we read in Gal 5:22-23. Is that a surprise?

There's no surprise! It is God's Spirit that enables us to grow in the Christian qualities listed in 2 Pet 1:5-7, as well as in joy, peace, patience, gentleness and faithfulness, which Gal 5:22-23 includes.

Love is the last quality listed in 2 Pet 1:5-7. Why is this? What is being indicated?

In 2 Pet 1:5-7, it comes across that love is the pinnacle of all Christian qualities. And that's correct (cf. 1 Cor 13:1-8)! The love we are to give others, unconditional and sacrificial love, is a truly Christian quality that we can live out through the help and enabling of the Spirit; it is distinctly divine and Christian.

Fruitfulness: (2 Peter 1:8-9)

As we grow in the Christian qualities listed in 2 Pet 1:5-7, what will this result in? (2 Pet 1:8)

It will result in us being productive and fruitful for God's kingdom and glory. Conversely, to not grow in these Christian qualities will result in us being useless and unfruitful, and this will bring no glory to God.

"True knowledge" is mentioned in 2 Pet 1:8. Why?

The Christian qualities listed in 2 Pet 1:5-7 come from the "true knowledge" that has been given us. Not only do we learn of Jesus and our need for Him, but also how we ought to live as Christians. The "true knowledge" contains God's promises, as well as His commands in regard to how we are to live.

What conclusion should we draw from a professing Christian who is lacking in Christian qualities? (2 Pet 1:9)

We should conclude that they have not been impacted, as they ought to, in relation to what Christ has done for them, and the incredible grace God has offered us in Jesus Christ. If we truly comprehend our sinfulness, and God's great love and grace to us, and the greatness of our salvation, then we ought to be living wholeheartedly for God, in love and gratitude to Him (cf. Paul in Phil 1:21 & 1 Cor 15:9-10).

Assurance: (2 Peter 1:10-11)

We are to be diligent in growing in Christlikeness (2 Pet 1:5). As we do, what else are we being diligent in? (2 Pet 1:10)

We are being diligent in making sure that we are truly saved and are one of God's children – called and chosen by Him. Bearing Christian fruit assures us that we are saved (Matt 7:16-20).

What other benefit comes from being diligent (eager) in growing in Christ? (2 Pet 1:10b)

It will prevent us from stumbling or falling. Those who aren't growing are prone to falling away.

Instead of falling away, what will growing in Christian qualities result in? (2 Pet 1:11)

It will result in us having confidence to not only enter heaven (because we know we are truly saved), but that we will also receive a rich welcome into heaven (consider Jesus' words in Matt 25:20-23).

Summary: Grow in Christian qualities so that you may be fruitful and assured that you are saved.

4. Reminding and Reassuring: 2 Peter 1:12-21

Review: *As we grow in Christian qualities, what will this ensure? (2 Pet 1:8-11)*

It will ensure that we are useful and fruitful (v.8), it will ensure us that we are truly of the faith (v.10a), it will ensure that we won't fall away (v.10b), and it will ensure a rich welcome into glory (v.11).

If a Christian is not growing in Christian qualities, what does that indicate? (2 Pet 1:9)

It indicates that they have become complacent with God's grace and what Christ has done to save them.

Reminding: (2 Peter 1:12-15)

After the first eleven verses of 2 Peter, what does Peter say he was doing? (2 Pet 1:12)

Peter was simply reminding his readers of what they already knew. What Peter shared was not new.

Most of the time what we hear at church or study at home groups is not new, if we have been believers for some time. As we reflect on this, what must we be careful of?

We must be careful not to grow complacent with God's truth, even if we have heard it before. We must also be careful not to start desiring something new, as Satan can use this desire to lead us astray.

As Peter reminded his readers of God's truth, what was he seeking to do? (2 Pet 1:13) Why?

He was seeking to stir them up – to stir them to action. The danger for Christians is that we can know God's truth, but we don't live it out or act on it. We need to be stirred and challenged to action.

In 2 Pet 1:13-14 Peter refers to his imminent death. The Greek word he uses to describe his human body means "tent" or "tent-dwelling". What's significant about this?

Peter knew that our earthly body is like a temporary tent, rather than an enduring building. This body we have wears out, and we ought to live life in the light of this (cf. Psalm 90:10-12).

What should we bear in mind as we come near to our life's end? (2 Pet 1:15)

We should bear in mind the need to pass onto our loved ones and friends God's knowledge and Christ's Gospel, and how we are to live for Christ. We ought to do it in such a way that others will remember it, even after we have passed on. Peter wrote a letter. What could you do? [Discuss]

Reaffirming: (2 Peter 1:16-18)

What Peter passed on, by way of his letters, was the "true knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ" (2 Pet 1:8b). What did he not pass on? How do we know that? (2 Pet 1:16)

Peter did not pass on to his readers "cleverly devised myths (tales)". He was a faithful eyewitness, passing on what he saw and heard concerning the Lord Jesus and God's great plan of salvation through Him.

As an eyewitness, what event does Peter quote in 2 Pet 1:17-18? Why do you think this event made such an impression on Peter, that he mentions it here? (Mark 9:2-8)

Peter describes how he was an eyewitness to Jesus' transfiguration. This one event would have affirmed to Peter that Jesus was divine, for he saw His true glory, and heard the Father declare that this was His Son. One key truth in the knowledge of Jesus is His divinity. This truth wasn't made up. It was revealed.

We have not lived in Christ's time. Yet, we are eyewitnesses. How? What should we do with this?

We have experienced God's love (1 John 3:1), peace with God (Rom 5:1), freedom from condemnation (Rom 8:1), and the witness of the Spirit that we are God's children (Rom 8:15-16). We should share this with others, in order to counter the misconception that we are brainwashed and following "myths".

Reassuring: (2 Peter 1:19-21)

Read 2 Pet 1:19 & Rev 22:16. Why does Peter write about the "prophetic word" here?

Peter wants to assure us that the knowledge of Jesus (the "morning star") didn't just come about by eyewitnesses, but by how God revealed the truth about Jesus through the prophets in the Old Testament.

What is the prophetic word seeking to do? (2 Pet 1:19)

It is seeking to cause the truth of Jesus to arise and to dawn in our hearts so that we might be saved and be brought into right relationship with God. The Old Testament is pointing us to Jesus (cf. Luke 24:25-27).

How should we view the Old Testament Scriptures? (2 Pet 1:20-21; cf. 2 Tim 3:16-17 also)

Our Old Testament Scriptures are the Word of God. It is God, by His Spirit, that has brought about the Old Testament; indeed, the whole Bible. What we have is not man's ideas, or myths, but God's truth.

People today believe that there is no real truth; especially about God. How should we answer?

We do have truth in relation to God and His Son Jesus. God has spoken to us through the prophets, and through selected eyewitnesses. We can be fully confident that we are not following a myth. Praise God!

Summary: May we continue to be reminded of God's Word and be reassured of its authenticity.

5. Judging and Rescuing: 2 Peter 2:1-10a

Review: As Peter reminded his readers of what they already knew, what was he seeking to do? (2 Pet 1:13) He was seeking to stir them to action. We may know Christian truth, but many of us fail to live it out.

Peter's teaching was not "cleverly devised tales" (2 Pet 1:16). How do we know that what he taught was the "true knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ" (2 Pet 1:8)? (Consider 2 Pet 1:16-19)

Peter was an eyewitness of Christ, faithfully declaring what he saw and heard. Besides that, Jesus fulfilled the Old Testament prophecies, which God had spoken through the prophets of old by the Holy Spirit.

Judgment of False Prophets: (2 Peter 2:1-3)

In our present time what must we be aware of? (2 Pet 2:1) What should we do?

Just as there were false prophets/teachers in the Old Testament period (cf. Jer 14:14), they also exist in our present time. We must be alert to this, and make sure we are not led astray by them.

What, are we told, will false prophets/teachers specifically seek to do? (2 Pet 2:1-3)

They will introduce heresies (false teaching) that will be divisive and destructive, undermining the Lordship of Christ, encouraging sensuality, and maligning the way of truth.

How do false teachers/prophets con so many people to turn away from the truth?

They do things craftily; "secretly" introducing heresies, encouraging people to satisfy their "sensuality", and "exploiting" people with false words. They are just like how the devil tempted Eve (Gen 3:1-6).

What is driving a false prophet/teacher? (2 Pet 2:3, 10a)

They are full of themselves, not coming under any authority. In their selfishness, they seek to satisfy their fleshly desires; eg, encouraging people to financially support them so that they might become rich, and to give them sexual favours. They are really out to manipulate people to follow them and to be loyal to them.

God is not unaware of their evil practices. What will come upon them? (2 Pet 2:1-3)

Swift destruction will come upon them; in God's time. Denying Jesus' Lordship and leading God's people astray is very serious (cf. Jesus words in Luke 17:1-2). God will not allow it to continue.

Judging and Rescuing: (2 Peter 2:4-10a)

At times, we can feel that God doesn't take action against false teachers/prophets who deceive God's people, or evil people who hurt and harm us. What does Peter say about this in 2 Pet 2:4-10?

The Lord will punish the ungodly and unrighteous. History testifies to this. He will do it, for He is just.

Three examples are given in regard to how God, in the past, has judged the ungodly. What's the first example? What is this about? (2 Pet 2:4)

Some of the fallen angels (angels who sided with the devil – Rev 12:7-9) have already been dealt with, as a warning to the devil and the rest of his fallen angels, as well as to the ungodly, of what will happen to them. The Greek word translated as "hell" is confusing. It means "gloom or darkness"; ie, fallen angels are in darkness (Jude 6), in a prison, awaiting judgment before they are cast into hell – the lake of fire.

In the other two examples of how God has judged, what do we learn? (2 Pet 2:5-6)

God judged and destroyed the whole world with a flood because of man's wickedness (Gen 6:5-7), and He destroyed the cities of Sodom and Gomorrah for their wickedness (Jude 7). God knows how to judge.

Besides judging sin and wickedness, what else do we observe in 2 Pet 2:4-9?

God delights in rescuing the righteous (ie, those who believe in Him). He rescued Noah and his family from the flood, and Lot and his family from Sodom. He even rescues us from Satan and his fallen angels through Christ. God isn't just the God of judgment; He's the God who saves those who believe in Him.

God's judgment appears to be severe. Is it? Why or why not?

It is severe, for sin is serious, but God's judgment is just and fair. Also, during this period of time before the judgment day, God is sparing in bringing judgment. History is not dotted with an innumerable number of huge judgments from God. This is because He has no delight in punishing the wicked (Ezek 33:11).

What do we learn about Lot living in Sodom and how God dealt with him? (2 Pet 2:7-8)

Lot was distressed and tormented daily by Sodom's wickedness. However, God kept him from temptation and delivered him from judgment. God is able to do the same for us as we live in this fallen world.

How should God's past judgments and actions encourage us? (2 Pet 2:9-10a)

God will judge the wicked, and He will rescue us – we who have trusted in Him and His Son. Praise God!

Summary: God will judge unbelievers, but He will deliver and rescue believers who are in Christ.

6. False Prophets – Be Prepared: 2 Peter 2:10-22

Review: *Will God really judge the ungodly and wicked? How do we know? (2 Pet 2:8-9)*

God will judge the ungodly and wicked, just as He has shown us throughout history. God will act.

In the midst of past judgments, what else have we seen God doing? (2 Pet 2:4-10a)?

Besides judging, God also rescues. He rescues believers from temptation and from judgment; like He did for Lot. We, who are in Christ, are blessed to have God rescue and protect and save us. Praise His name!

Description of False Teachers/Prophets: (2 Peter 2:10-16)

Read 2 Pet 2:10-14. Who is Peter describing in this section?

Peter is describing the character of false teachers/prophets (cf. 2 Pet 2:1).

Why does Peter go into detail about the character of false teachers/prophets? (cf. 2 Cor 11:13-15)

False teachers/prophets can be charming and charismatic (like an angel of light), but they are dangerous and deceptive. Christians need to be aware of this, in order to be discerning, and to stand against them.

What are some of the key characteristics of a false teacher/prophet? (2 Pet 2:10-14)

They are sinful (v.10), don't come under authority (v.10), proud and daring (v.11), attacking and judging (v.10), seeking pleasure and glorying in it (v.13), seducing and scheming (v.14), and greedy (v.14).

God loves humility (1 Pet 5:5-6). What can we say about false teachers/prophets? (2 Pet 2:10-12)

They are full of themselves. They do not know humility. They make big claims and make grand judgments, where they have no place to. Like the devil himself, they want to lift themselves above others; even God.

What are false teachers/prophets likened to? What will happen to them? (2 Pet 2:12)

They are like unreasoning (dumb) animals, unaware that their behaviour will be met with judgment. They do not consider the path they are on and the end they will meet before the holy God.

How does the story of Balaam relate to false teachers/prophets? (2 Pet 2:14-16)

They follow the same path as Balaam. They are driven by greed. Like Balaam, they cannot see that what they are doing is wrong, and that it will be met by judgment. Fortunately, for Balaam, the rebuke from a donkey curtailed his wickedness, but often nothing curtails the wickedness of false teachers/prophets.

Danger of False Teachers/Prophets: (2 Peter 2:17-22)

In 2 Pet 2:17a, we again see what false teachers/prophets are like. What can this lead to?

They are full of themselves, but there is no substance to them. Like a cloud that brings no rain to a parched land, they turn out to be a great disappointment, and people who follow them end up being disillusioned.

Consider 2 Pet 2:18-20. What despicable thing do false teachers/prophets do?

They pick on people who are trying to know the truth about God, or who have just begun to learn about Jesus, and lead them astray by another gospel; a gospel that denies the Lordship of Christ (2 Pet 2:1), and encourages people to indulge in their desires; abusing God's grace (cf. Rom 6:1-2). NB: Other false teachers/prophets can go the other way and lead people away from Christ into law and legalism.

What happens to those who follow the false teachers/prophets in 2 Peter? (cf. 2 Pet 2:20-22)

People who listen to and follow such false teachers/prophets in 2 Peter end up in a worst state. They become more enslaved to sin, and more than that, they become inoculated and hardened to the true Gospel. They are truly in a worst state, and remain lost and unsaved – heading for hell.

What happens if we don't follow false teachers/prophets but the true knowledge of Jesus?

If we follow the true knowledge of Jesus, the true Gospel, then we will not be enslaved to sin, but know Christ and the power of His resurrection, and the transforming work of His Spirit. In such a case, we will not return and remain in what we have come from.

The seriousness of what false teachers/prophets do, in leading people astray and causing God's people to be disillusioned, will be met by what? (2 Pet 2:17b; cf. also 2 Pet 2:4)

They will experience the same punishment as the fallen angels – blackest darkness, then judgment, and then eternity in hell (Matt 25:41).

Why does Peter not tolerate false teachers/prophets? Why is God's judgment for them so severe?

False teachers/prophets lead people away from Christ to themselves, and they cause people not to be saved, but to remain lost and to be heading for hell. Surely, this is a most serious crime. It's the very crime Satan commits. May we never be guilty of being a stumbling block to anyone (cf. Matt 18:5-10).

Summary: We must be alert and aware of false teachers and remain true to the knowledge of Christ.

7. Christ's Return and Judgment: 2 Peter 3:1-7

Review: *Why does Peter, in 2 Peter 2:10-16, go into some detail describing false teachers/prophets?*

False teachers/prophets can be charming and charismatic (like an angel of light), but they are dangerous and deceptive. Christians need to be aware of this, in order to be discerning, and to stand against them.

What's some of the dangers of false teachers/prophets? (2 Pet 2:17-22)

They lead people away from the true knowledge of Christ, and away from the Lordship of Christ (2 Pet 2:1), to a place where they remain lost, and also where they still remain trapped in their sins.

Remembering: (2 Peter 3:1-2)

What do we learn at the start of 2 Pet 3:1?

This was Peter's second letter to fellow believers. He knew his time was short (2 Pet 1:14), and he wrote this second letter to encourage fellow believers to live fruitfully for Christ and for God's glory.

What does Peter repeat in 2 Pet 3:1, which we also see in 2 Pet 1:12?

Peter knew that what he was teaching was not new – he was simply reminding us of what we already know. But he was reminding us in order to stir us to action; ie, to put our Christian faith into action.

One of the great dangers we face as Christians is that we can be full of the true knowledge of Christ, but be very "light on" in regard to living for Christ. Why is that?

Often, we can become comfortable with Christian "formalism" and complacent with Christian truth, and this leads to a life that is useless and unfruitful (2 Pet 1:8). We constantly need to be challenged so that the truth of Christ transforms us and enables us to be fruitful for His kingdom.

In particular, what are we to remember about what Peter reminded believers of? (2 Pet 3:2)

The words that Peter shared, and indeed the words of the whole Bible, are not just ideas and opinions. They are words spoken by the holy prophets, who were moved by God (2 Pet 1:21), and the words of our Lord Jesus, faithfully passed on to us by His apostles, through the power and enabling of the Holy Spirit. We ought to sit up and pay attention to what has been made known to us (2 Pet 1:19).

Judgment: (2 Peter 3:3-7)

One of the things that Peter taught was Christ's second coming and His judgment of this world. The false teachers/prophets did not teach this or believe this. What does Peter declare? (2 Pet 3:3-7)

Christ will return, and when He returns, He will judge the world in righteousness. It is absolutely certain.

Jesus will do two main things when He returns. What are they? (Matt 24:29-31; Rev 6:12-17)

Jesus will receive true Christians to Himself and they will forever be with the Lord (1 Thess 4:16-17), but He will execute the wrath of God on those who did not believe or trust in Him. At His coming, non-Christians will realise their situation – that's why they will mourn and even try and hide.

Instead of believing God's promises and the words of Jesus and His apostles, what do false teachers/prophets and the majority of the people of the world do? (2 Pet 3:3-4)

They openly mock and scoff at the thought of Jesus' return and a coming judgment. They even argue that it's been a long time since His first coming, so He's not coming back.

Although people mock Christ's return, they really don't want to believe it. Why? (2 Pet 3:3-7)

They know that if Christ returns, He will judge the world, and people are not keen on this. They want to be free to continue in their lusts, and to do whatever they wish. They really mock and scoff at those who faithfully teach of Christ's return, hoping to silence their voice. They want to be oblivious to the truth.

What does Peter argue in regard to those who mock Christ's return to judge? (2 Pet 3:5-7)

Peter reminds us that people who deny or play down the coming judgment, forget how God has already powerfully shown us that He can judge. He judged the world in Noah's Day with a world-wide flood, and He has promised to do it again – this time not by water, but by fire.

What is significant about the phrase "the word of God" in v.5?

Just as God created the world by His Word, and just as He deluged the world with a flood by His Word, it will be by His Word that He will call for His Son to return and for judgment to come. Judgment is coming – it is imminent. All the sovereign God needs to do is speak. This should cause us to take it seriously.

In the light of Christ's return and the coming judgment, how should we respond?

Instead of mocking, we should be trembling, and making sure that we will be spared from the coming judgment by repenting of our sins and trusting in Jesus as our Lord and Saviour. Have you?

Summary: Christ is coming; judgment is coming. Are we ready? Have we turned to Jesus?

8. God's Patience and Promises: 2 Peter 3:8-13

Review: *What does the world make of the coming of Christ and God's coming judgment? (2 Pet 3:3-4)*
They mock it. They believe it will never happen.

How can we be sure that Christ will return and judge this world? (2 Pet 3:5-7)

God has judged this world in the past (eg, Noah's flood), and He has promised to do it again. All He needs to do is speak the Word, and Christ will return, and judgment shall fall. We ought to take God seriously.

God's Patience: (2 Peter 3:8-10)

People can mock Christ's return and the coming judgment because of how long it has been since Christ walked this earth. How should we view this "long" time that has gone by? (2 Pet 3:8-9)

It is a testimony to God's incredible patience. He has given time for people to repent and trust in Jesus. If only we had the eyes to see it – instead of mocking Christ's return, we should be thanking God.

What is meant by "one day is as a thousand years, and a thousand years as one day"?

What is meant by this phrase is that a long time to God is nothing. It is to us, but not to the One who is eternal. Nevertheless, we ought to take the last two thousand years as a testimony to God's patience.

The phrase "one day is as a thousand years" has often been used to explain that the "days" in Genesis 1 were long periods of time. Is it right to use this phrase to interpret Genesis 1 in that way?

No! In Genesis 1, a normal 24-hour day is being thought of. God created the world in six days, and rested on the seventh, to set a weekly pattern of work and rest for us (cf. God's Words in Exodus 20:11).

Consider Matt 24:36. What do we learn about Christ's return from Jesus' own words?

Jesus does not know when He'll return, but the Father does. Also, the day of Christ's return is known and has been set by the Father. God is not just delaying the inevitable. It will happen, just as He has decreed.

In 2 Pet 3:9, we have the heart of God disclosed to us. What is it?

God does not wish for anyone to perish; ie, to perish in hell. He is not keen to send Jesus, and to judge the world, and to cast people into hell. It's the opposite. He wishes people to be saved (cf. Ezek 18:23; 33:11).

What does God desire every single human being to do, either before they die, or before Christ's return? (2 Pet 3:9) Why is this so important?

He wishes for all to repent – to turn from their sin. Repentance is essential for salvation. Without it, we will not be saved (cf. Matt 4:17; Acts 17:30-31). We must repent, and we must believe in Jesus.

But despite God's patience, what will happen one day, and what will it be like?

Christ will come like a thief; ie, unexpectedly (1 Thess 5:2-3). After His return, judgment shall fall. Not only will humans be judged for their sins, but the heavens and the earth will be destroyed by intense fire.

Some believe that the earth will be burnt up, in the sense of being purged, and then life will begin again on this old earth. Do the Scriptures support this? (cf. 2 Pet 3:10; Matt 24:35; Rev 21:1)

No! God will completely destroy the present heavens and earth and bring forth a new Creation – wow!

God's Promises: (2 Peter 3:11-13)

Read 2 Pet 3:11. Remember that these words are addressed to God's children. How should we be living in the light of Christ's return and the coming judgment and destruction of this world?

We ought to be living holy and godly lives; lives that please God and shine Christ to the world.

Consider your life. Would people perceive that you believe in the coming judgment and the destruction of this world? [Discuss] How could you show people this reality? (2 Cor 4:17-18; Rom 8:18)

You could show them by your attitude toward the things of this earth. Like Paul, you could view the things of this life as temporary, but the things of God and His Kingdom as eternal.

Besides living holy and godly lives, what has God promised? (2 Pet 3:12-13)

God has promised us, who are in Christ, a new heavens and a new earth – the home of righteousness. The old will pass away, and we will live forever and enjoy God's eternal kingdom on a new earth.

Consider Rev 21:1-4. What is the most significant thing about God's promise?

We will, forever, be with God and we will be His people. There will no longer be any death or pain or sin, but only everlasting righteousness. But above all, we will see God and be with Him (cf. Rev 7:15-17).

How should we live in the light of God's promise, even if life is difficult? (2 Pet 3:12-13)

It should fill us with hope and spur us on to live holy lives that are useful and fruitful (2 Pet 1:8).

Summary: God is patient. Have we repented? God has made great promises. Are we filled with hope?

9. **Final Words of Exhortation: 2 Peter 3:14-18**

Review: *Christ hasn't come yet to judge the world. How should we view this? (2 Pet 3:8-9)*

We should see this as a gracious act of God. God is being patient with us, giving us more time to repent and believe in Jesus, so that we might be saved from judgment and enjoy God's eternal salvation.

The present heavens and earth will be destroyed in God's judgment, and God has promised to make a new heaven and a new earth. How should these truths affect our lives? (2 Pet 3:10-13)

If we have repented, we should live holy and godly lives, filled with hope as we await Christ's return.

Be Holy: (2 Peter 3:14)

Consider 2 Pet 3:14. Peter assumes something of his readers. What is this? Is this true of us?

He assumes that they are looking forward to our hope and all that God has promised, which will be fulfilled when Christ returns. Are we looking forward to our hope, and even rejoicing in it? (1 Pet 1:3-9)

What should we be doing as we wait for Christ's return, or our going home to Him? (2 Pet 3:14b)

We should be diligent to be at peace with God, and to be at peace with all others, and we should be diligent to living a holy life that reflects God's holiness (cf. 1 Pet 1:14-16).

Be Careful: (2 Peter 3:15-17)

As we continue to wait for Christ's return, what must we guard our minds from thinking, and how should we think instead? (2 Pet 3:15)

We should not get discouraged and allow those who mock Christ's return to upset us. Christ will return. The apparent "delay" in Christ's return is an expression of God's patience toward sinners, and His desire that they repent and believe and be saved. May we see things as God does, and be patient too.

In 2 Pet 3:15-16, Peter refers to Paul. How does he address him? What does this indicate?

Peter calls him "our beloved brother Paul". He loved and highly regarded the apostle Paul. This shows us that the apostles were not in competition with each other, or opposed to each other, but worked together.

Why does Peter mention Paul at the end of his letter? (2 Pet 3:15)

Peter was conscious that Paul wrote about what he had written in his letters. Paul, like Peter, had written to fellow believers, warning them of false teachers, and of Christ's return, and living in the light of this.

Was Peter having a go at Paul when he said concerning Paul's writings: "some things are hard to understand"? (2 Pet 3:16)

Of course not! Some of Paul's teaching is difficult to understand, in the sense that Paul was teaching deep things that the Spirit had revealed to him; for example, Rom 9-11, which is about God's sovereignty and God's plans for the Gentiles and Jews. But much of what Paul taught was understandable - to believers.

Why does Peter mention that some of Paul's teaching was hard to understand? (2 Pet 3:16)

Peter was conscious that some had distorted his words and taught error instead. Peter would be thinking of false teachers/prophets who had not only distorted Paul's words, but all the rest of the Scriptures.

In his final words, what does Peter want to affirm to fellow believers? (2 Pet 3:17)

We must be alert and on guard against false teaching. There will always be people who twist and distort God's truth, whether it be Paul's or Peter's inspired words, or other parts of the Bible. Their aim is to turn us away from Christ and from following Him (cf. 2 Pet 2:1). We must be on guard!

Be Growing: (2 Peter 3:18)

What's the best way to be on guard against false teaching? (2 Pet 3:18)

We must continue to grow in the grace and in the knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ.

What's required to make this a reality?

It requires us being disciplined to read our Bibles regularly, and it requires us being humble and teachable and to allow God's Spirit to teach us and grow us (cf. 1 John 2:26-27).

What does it mean to grow in the grace of our Lord Jesus? (2 Pet 3:18a)

It means to grasp more and more of Christ's grace to us, and that we are not saved by anything we do. It also means to live a life so appreciative of God's grace that we are gracious to others, and live a life worthy and pleasing to the Lord (cf. Paul's words in 1 Cor 15:9-10).

In the light of God's word, and His glorious promises, what should our response be? (2 Pet 3:18b)

We should be filled with worship and a desire to give God all the glory through our Lord Jesus Christ.

Summary: Be holy, be careful, be growing in Christ, and may our lives bring glory to His name.