

Chapter Summary: 2 Peter & Jude

In the time since Peter's first letter to the believers in Asia Minor, their persecution was likely on the rise. Emperor Nero had blamed the Christians for a destructive fire in Rome and had unleashed a new attack on them. By this time, Peter recognized that, like Paul, he would also soon be executed. As an eyewitness of Jesus' life and ministry, Peter decides to put parts of his testimony in writing for the sake of future generations.

Specifically, Peter wants believers to know that while Jesus was on earth He had already displayed the glory He will have when he returns: "We were not making up clever stories when we told you about the powerful coming of our Lord Jesus Christ." Peter insists that he himself saw the splendor of Christ openly revealed "on the holy mountain" and heard God's voice declaring Jesus to be His "dearly loved Son."

In addition to increasing persecution, the churches faced another threat: False teachers had infiltrated their communities. Peter tells the believers to watch out for those who "lure back into sin those who have barely escaped from a lifestyle of deception. They promise freedom, but they themselves are slaves of sin and corruption." These teachers were leading people into immorality by misrepresenting God's grace as a license for wrongdoing.

On top of that, the believers faced still another threat, which Peter addresses in the final part of this letter: "Scoffers" were saying that if Jesus really was going to come back, He would have done so already. This seems to have been an excuse for licentious living, since there would be no final judgment if Jesus was not coming back. Peter explains that God has a good reason for the delay: His patience allows time for more people to repent. So the believers should persevere in their longing for the new world that will come with Christ's appearance "the new heavens and new earth ... a world filled with God's righteousness."

Peter concludes by asking his friends to be faithful in living peaceful, pure, and blameless lives. He encourages them to "grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ."

Notice that Peter's warning about the false teachers echoes the language of a brief letter that Jude had written. Perhaps Peter was putting his authority as an apostle behind Jude's similar warning. We get an even clearer picture of what Peter is saying by reading Jude's letter.

Jude was one of Jesus' brothers, though he humbly calls himself "a slave of Jesus Christ and a brother of James" (whose name would have been widely recognized, as he was a leader of the church in Jerusalem). It's hard to be certain precisely whom Jude was writing to since he addresses his readers simply as "all who have been called by God the Father."

But like Peter, Jude feels an urgent need to address the presence of false teachers in the churches. These teachers were saying that God's grace permits immoral living, and Jude warns his readers to watch out for these teachers because they are destined only for judgment. Those who follow Christ faithfully will instead keep trusting in God, "who is able to keep you from falling away and will bring you with great joy into His glorious presence without a single fault."