

LETTERS FROM PETER

34. Is "She that is in Babylon" Peter's wife?
35. Does "Babylon" here mean "Rome" as in Revelation? Give a reason(s) for your answer.
36. What affectionate title does Peter give Mark?
37. Identify Mark in the Book of Acts. (Was he "washed up" when he returned to Jerusalem?)
38. With what were the recipients to greet one another?
39. Upon what group does Peter wish peace?

INTRODUCTION TO II PETER

I. THE RECIPIENTS.

This letter is addressed "to them that have obtained a like precious faith with us" (1:1). More specifically, it was intended for the same people as was I Peter; i.e., "the elect who are sojourners of the Dispersion in Pontus, Galatia, Cappadocia, Asia, and Bithynia" (I Pet. 1:1), for Peter himself states in 3:1, "This is now, beloved, the *second* epistle that I write unto you . . ."

II. PLACE OF WRITING.

It is not known. Among places conjectured have been Rome, Egypt, Palestine, and Asia. Perhaps he is still in Babylon (I Pet. 5:13).

III. TIME OF WRITING.

It is generally accepted that second Peter was written toward the end of the first century, and is one of the latest New Testament books. How do we arrive at such a conclusion?

- a. Peter speaks of his death as near, 1:14,15.
- b. Apparently, most or *all* of Paul's epistles had already been written, 3:15,16.
- c. Paul's Epistles had existed long enough to be perverted, 3:16. His letters cover the years between 62 A.D. (I Thes.) to 66 A.D. (II Tim.).
- d. Heresies dealt with in the epistle did not become a real problem until the latter part of the first Century. (Compare the book of Jude, where there are many parallels to this book in thought and language.)

Thus the date has been set at about 66 or 67 A.D., perhaps even later.

IV. THE HUMAN AUTHOR AND THE GENUINENESS OF THE BOOK.

No book in the entire New Testament has had its genuineness questioned more than the second epistle of Peter. It is placed

II PETER

among the seven books called *The Antilegomena*, or disputed books, about which certain questions arose which prevented them from being received into the canon until a later date. At the core of these disputes concerning the epistle's authenticity lies this question: Is the Apostle Peter its true author?

Some have rejected this book as the work of Peter because of statements made by early "Church Fathers." So Eusebius says, "One epistle of Peter, called the first, is acknowledged. This the presbyters of ancient times have quoted in their writings, as undoubtedly genuine. But that called his second, we have been informed by tradition, has not been received as a part of the New Testament. Nevertheless, appearing to many to be useful, it hath been carefully studied with the other Scriptures."*

Again, Eusebius states: "Among the contradicted [books] but yet well known to many [or approved by many], are that called the Epistle of James, and that of Jude, and the second of Peter, and the second and third of John . . ."**

Origen is the first writer to mention II Peter *by name*, about 240 A.D.*** Later, he quotes II Peter 1:4, "partakers of the divine nature," and labels it "Scripture." But he adds: "Peter has left one acknowledged Epistle, and perhaps a second, for this is contested."

Jerome, though including it in his Vulgate Version, knew of the scruples which many entertained concerning it. His own uncertainty, he said, stemmed from "a difference in style from I Peter."

The book is not mentioned in the writings of Tertullian, Cyprian. Clement of Alexandria, Muratori's Canon, or the older (Peshitta) Syriac Version (the *later* Syriac has it). This is *not* to say these sources did not *know* of the book—only that they did not mention it by the name as a part of Scripture.

Over against these statements, which may seem weighty *against* our acceptance of this book as the inspired work of Peter, we would submit both external and internal evidences *in favor of its acceptance* as the genuine work of the inspired apostle whose name it bears.

*Eusebius, *Ecclesiastical History*, lib. ii.c.3. (about 325 A.D.)

***Ibid*, lib. iii.c.25.

***In his *Homily* on Joshua; also in his 4th *Homily* on Leviticus and 13th on Numbers.

LETTERS FROM PETER

1. EXTERNAL EVIDENCE.

a. Traces of acquaintance with it appears at a very early date. Hermas, who flourished about 140, is best known for the book we call *The Shepherd of Hermas*. In *Vision* 3:7 we have "They have left their true way" (Cp. Pet. 2:15 where it is closely parallel in the Greek) and in *Vision* 4:3, "Thou hast escaped this world" (Cp. II Pet. 2:20). In *Similes* 6:4 we have "luxury in the day . . . luxuriating with their own deceivings"; (Cp. II Pet. 2:13 in the Greek). Clement of Rome, whose *Epistle to the Corinthians* (96 A.D.) is one of the most valuable works of the early church, may allude to it in 7:9 and 10. Concerning Noah's preaching and Lot's deliverance, he said, "the Lord making it known that he does not abandon those that trust in Him, but appoints those otherwise inclined to Judgment" (Cp. II Pet. 2:5-9). Irenaeus (died about 192) uses the phrase "the day of the Lord is as a thousand years" as does Justin Martyr (100-165)—a statement we immediately connect with II Pet. 3:8. Hippolytus (3rd Century), in *The Antichrist*, seems to refer to II Pet. 1:21 in these words: "The prophets spoke not of their own private [individual] ability and will, but what was [revealed] to them alone by God."

b. Though there were scholars of the early church who rejected it, other learned men, of equal ability, *accepted* it. Among these were Firmilian of Caesarea in Cappadocia (died, 264),* Athanasius (293-373), Epiphanius (315-403), Cyril of Jerusalem (315-386),** Rufinus (345-410), and Augustine (354-430).

c. It is included in the Sinaitic MS. (350), The Alexandrian (450)—and the Vatican (325-350), or in all the "big 3" manuscripts. Let us remember that the scholars and teachers of the fourth century, when the canon of the New Testament was fixed, had, in many ways, more evidence to go upon than we now possess. It was only as a result of careful examination that *any* writing was admitted as part of the canonical Scriptures.

*This evidence is found in his *Epistle ad Cyprian*, where he speaks of Peter's *Epistles* as warning us to avoid heretics—an admonition which occurs in the *second* letter. Note that Cappadocia is one of the countries addressed in both epistles (I Pet. 1:1, II Pet. 3:1), and it is certainly striking that from this country we have the earliest decisive testimony. "Internally, it claims to be written by Peter, and this claim is confirmed by the Christians of that very region in whose custody it *ought* to have been found."—Tregelles.

**who enumerates seven Catholic General Epistles, including II Peter.

II PETER

d. The *Antelegomena* (disputed) books are to be carefully distinguished from those regarded as *Spurious* and false. The former designation merely separated them from the *Homologoumena*—those books universally accepted as canonical. By the middle of the fourth century, *all* of the *Antelegomena* books were accepted as canonical.* Included among the *Spurious* were *The Gospel of Peter*, *The Apocolypse of Peter*, and *The Acts of Peter*, but not the second epistle of Peter! Now to say a book is pseudopigraphal or spurious is one thing, and to say it is *contested* is another. To know that a book was carefully examined by the most critical scholars shortly after it was written, and then *accepted as genuine*, is reassuring evidence in favor of its authenticity.

2. INTERNAL EVIDENCE.

a. The direct claim of Peter's authorship, 1:1.

b. He states he had already written to the same people he was now addressing—3:1.

c. The author mentions that he, along with the other apostles, was one of the eyewitnesses of Christ and with Him on the mount of transfiguration, 1:16-18.

d. The writer was apparently an older man, and expecting death soon—appropriate for *Peter*, 1:13-14.

e. Although there is considerable difference in style, yet there is also considerable *similarity* between this epistle and I Peter. There are a good number of words and phrases *common* to both epistles, but rarely or *never* found in other New Testament books.** Also, words and phrases employed in *both* epistles are also found to be similar to those used by Peter in the Book of Acts.

*These include: II Peter, James, II and III John, Jude, Hebrews and Revelation.

**See the *New Bible Commentary*, p. 1143, for a comprehensive list of these similarities. Also, the *International Standard Bible Encyclopedia*, Vol. IV, pp. 2355-2356.