

II Peter 3: An Exegetical Overview

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The goal of this paper is to set before the conference membership (in a semi-exegetical manner) a chapter of the Holy Scriptures which has special meaning in this year of our Lord 1977.

Outline

- I. An Isagogical Introduction
- II. Two Modern Translations
 - A. A consideration of the NIV (New International Version)
 - B. A consideration of the AAT (An American Translation more commonly called the Beck translation now in its third edition and greatly revised from the first edition.)
 - C. A comparison of the two translations of II Peter 3
- III. A consideration of areas of exegetical controversy
- IV. Exegetical points for stress in 1977

A Brief Isagogical Overview of II Peter

The so-called "The Second Epistle General of Peter" has been the most controverted book accepted into the New Testament canon. Despite the limitation of this study to my personal library I found an amazing variation of opinion regarding the basic areas of introductory study (e.g. authorship, date, place, audience, etc.). The serious student will want to consult some of the major works available in a seminary library. Extensive material can be found in the ICC (Biggs), Zahn, Elicott's (Plummer), Mayor (*The Epistle of St. Jude and the Second Epistle of St. Peter* - London, 1907) and George Salmon (*An Historical Introduction to the Study of the Books of the New Testament*).

The major reason why II Peter became the most questioned candidate for canonicity (in recent times) is the lack of attestation in the writings of the first three centuries. In Appendix I we have prepared a list of the available references from the first three centuries and some important ones from the fourth century when the church developed the canon. The list of references (or inferences) to II Peter is impressive. However, it must be admitted that they are not as strong as those for the other books of the New Testament. Few refer to the Apostolic authorship. Many are short quotes or paraphrases. The authors who use it as authoritative are also known to quote non-canonical works in the same fashion. But the record remains impressive and the final line is of course that the early church, after much concentration and research did (under the guiding influence of the Holy Spirit) include II Peter in the canon.

Before continuing into the traditional areas of introductory study, I feel that I should set before you my personal bias. Before putting this material down on paper I came to some conclusions which certainly have influenced the actual writing of the paper. Inasmuch as these are different from the traditional lines of thought I feel it is only fair to present them at this point for the sake of the reader.

II Peter was written by the Apostle Peter to a single congregation or a group of congregations in a very limited geographical area. The readers knew Paul and had received a letter from him. The earliest Pauline letter preserved for us is I Thessalonians (c. 50). Peter died c. 64-67. II Peter was written in that span.

The letter was occasioned by the beginnings of an antinomian heresy more fully described later. I would understand 1:12,13 to indicate that Peter knew the readers personally. On the basis of the Pauline letters preserved for us in Scripture, I would assume that Paul had either worked in the founding of the church or had worked with the founders (cf. Romans 16).

The different openings of I & II Peter indicate a different audience (note the details of audience in I Peter and the different designations for the Apostle.) The purpose of the letters (I Peter for those physically persecuted; II Peter for those facing attacks in doctrine and practice) lead me to the conclusion (based on external historical evidence) that II Peter was written before I Peter.

Canonicity - Antilegomena - based on questions of authorship (please see Appendix I)

In the western church, the canon of both Testaments was closed at the end of the Fourth Century through the authority of Jerome (who wavered however, between critical doubts and the principle of tradition), and more especially of Augustine, who firmly followed the Alexandrian canon of the Septuagint, and the preponderant tradition in reference to the disputed Catholic Epistles...The Council of Hippo in 393 and the third...Council of Carthage in 397 under the influence of Augustine, who attended both, fixed the canon of the Holy Scriptures...and prohibited the reading of other books in the churches, excepting the Acts of the Martyrs on their memorial days. (Schaff, Book III, Page 250)

It is interesting to note that many books previously accepted and used were not placed in the canon, but II Peter was kept. (The Council of Carthage rejected *Barnabas* and *Clement of Rome*. The *Acts of Paul* and the *Gospel of Peter* were also rejected because they were forgeries.) Franzmann points out that in view of such actions and the doubts of authorship: "The fact that this letter did nevertheless impose its authority upon the church under just these circumstances must be given due weight" (p. 232). And Thiessen adds that despite early references "Zahn thinks that we have an early attestation of it in the Epistle of Jude and that we really need no more" (p. 287). For a look at the relationship of II Peter and Jude, please see Appendix II for a discussion of Jude.

Authorship - External Evidence

The authorship of II Peter has been often questioned in the history of the church. Questions had already arisen in the days of Origen. Eusebius (*E.H.* VI 25 8) quotes Origen as saying: "But Peter, upon whom the church of Christ is built, against which the gates of hell shall not prevail, has left one epistle undisputed. Supposes also, the second was left by him, for on this there is some doubt" (p. 246). When Origen quoted II Peter, he did not express personal doubts, so many scholars assume he accepted II Peter and was simply noting the doubts of some contemporaries. Eusebius himself had greater doubts (*E.H.* III 3 1): "But that which is called the second, we have not indeed understood to be imbedded with the sacred books, yet as it appeared useful to many, it was studiously read with other Scriptures" (p. 83). But as noted above, he included II Peter when he directed the preparation of 50 copies of the New Testament for Constantine. It is interesting to further note that in referring to the *Hypotyposes of Clement* that Eusebius writes (*E.H.* VI 14 1): "...he has given us abridged accounts of all the canonical Scriptures, not even omitting those that are disputed, (The Antilegomena) I mean the book of Jude, and the other general epistles" (p. 232). Later, Jerome would comment in an oft-quoted statement that Peter wrote two epistles, the second being denied by many as Peter's.

There are a number of possible reasons why the epistle was not received by many in the early church. Reasons such as limited distribution, faulty isagogics and translations probably played a role. The Old Syriac (Peshito) did not contain II Peter and this has been one of the major arguments against Petrine authorship. Peter was known in Syria and the Peshito was put together at the end of the First Century or the beginning of the Second. Of course, poor distribution of the letter could have been an important factor. We also note that Ephren, a fourth century Syrian writer quotes 3:12 and ascribes it to Peter. Also, selections of II Peter are found in ancient Syrian lectionaries.

A poor distribution of the letter could have led to the doubts of many. However, my personal conviction that Peter wrote the letter to a local situation fits with limited distribution. A limited audience, limited subject matter bringing no new doctrines and brevity, all work against wider distribution. If ancient scholars made the assumption of modern authors that the readers were the same as those of the first epistle, then a search for a

record of II Peter in those areas would prove fruitless. We might also note that the rising strength of Gnosticism would militate against a book which condemns antinomianism.

Jerome notes what he calls differences in style between the widely accepted I Peter and II Peter. These “differences” have also led many to deny the Petrine authorship. We will consider the relationship of the two epistles in a separate section.

Although the external evidence for the authorship of II Peter is not as strong as the case for the authorship of most of the other New Testament books, conservative scholars agree it is sufficient. (See Appendix I)

Authorship - Internal Evidence

The internal evidence is strong. The author calls himself by name, Simon Peter (1:1) and indicates that he is an eyewitness of the events of the life of Jesus. In 1:16-18, we find him an eyewitness to the transfiguration (Mk 9:2-8; Mt 17:1-8; Lk 9:28-36) and in 1:14 to the words of Jesus regarding the death of Peter (Jn 21:18,19). It is interesting to note that the word Peter uses of his own death is the same word used by Jesus in discussing his work with Moses and Elijah (1:15 and Lk 9:31) and that he refers to his body as a tent—see Luke 9:33. What more natural than the Apostle remembering the transfiguration and then (perhaps even unconsciously) using words that were significant at that memorable event? Some date II Peter late (after the death of Peter) saying that John 21 had to be written first. Conservative authors reject the idea that Peter had to depend on John to remember the words of Christ about his own death. The reference in 3:15 to Paul as a respected and equal contemporary speak for Petrine authorship. Other points to note are comparisons of 2:20 and Mt 12:45, Lk 11:26 and of 3:10 with Mt 24:43.

The words of the Epistle speak against a forger. The book presents none of the common motives (heresy, new doctrine, extra information about an Apostle) and the thoughts of the book would speak against the very forger. Frommuller is quoted in Hiebert (page 154) as observing:

Is it possible that a man animated through and through with the spirit of Christianity, who expressly renounces all cunning fabrications, should have set up for the Apostle Peter, and have written this Epistle in his name? Intentional fraud and such illumination—who is able to reconcile them?

Authorship - Comparing I Peter and II Peter

The theme of I Peter is hope in the time of difficulties while the theme of II Peter is the use of Christian knowledge to combat false doctrines. I Peter has been written to people facing persecution from outside of the church while II Peter has been written to those facing difficulties from within the church. I Peter quotes more of the Old Testament while II Peter testifies to its reliability through divine authorship.

Linguistically, we note that there are 361 words in I Peter not found in II Peter of which 62 are found nowhere else in the New Testament. II Peter contains 231 words not found in I Peter of which 56 are not found in the rest of the New Testament. (One word is common to both.)

Most authors have pointed out the differences in the quality or style of the Greek. Many scholars have suggested that Peter told a friend or scribe what he wanted written and then the *amanuenses* composed the letters subject to Peter’s approval. Silvanus, mentioned in I Peter, is said to have helped with I Peter. Lenski says the reference to Silvanus (Silas) is only an indication that Silvanus was bringing the letter to the readers. (Personally, I am uncomfortable with the concept of an *amanuenses* of the type many suggest.)

Although there are differences between the two books, it has been said that they are more like each other than like any of the other books of the New Testament. It has even been claimed that they are more alike than I Timothy and Titus, both accepted as Pauline. (New Bible Dictionary)

The following table shows that there are not only differences in vocabulary, but also remarkable similarities. (Expositors, p. 107)

Word	II Peter	I Peter	Rest of the NT
ἀνατροφή	2	5	5
ἀπόθεσις	1	1	0
ἀρετή	3	1 (pl)	1
ἀσεβής	1	1	6 (3 in Jude)
ἀσέλγεια	3	1	6 (1 in Jude)
ἄσπιλος	1	1	2
προγινώσκω	1	1	3

Various authors (principally Robertson, pp. 125-127) have noted similarities of presentation:

- Both seem to know the Apocrypha
- Both seem to know Paul's Epistles
- Both refer to the life of Christ
- Both draw attention to the flood and its warnings
- Both note the solidarity of the Old and New Israel
- Both emphasize the primitive eschatological tension derived from the Christian's dual membership of this age and the age to come with its consequences in holy living (in sharp contrast to 2nd century neglect of this doctrine.)
- Both make idiomatic use of the article
- Both make scant use of particles
- Both make scant use of Hebraisms
- Both make use of picture words
- Both show a fondness for repeating a word just used
- Both like to use plural abstract nouns
- Both use some classical words and some words known only through the vernacular koine
- In both books, the main theme is not boldly stated in the beginning, but is approached gradually.

With so many similarities, I believe it is fair to say that the difference of subject matter is the cause of the differences so many find. A man's style changes with his mood, his subject, his purpose and his sources (Hiebert, pp. 153-154). The books are written for different occasions, but Peter wrote both.

Readers

Almost all authors agree that the readers were the same as those of I Peter. A few suggest an encyclical letter. The difficulty with this view, from the perspective of history, is the ready acceptance of I Peter and not II Peter. How can this be explained if the readers were the same? Secondly, we must point out that while I Peter designates its audience, II Peter does not. It must be an open question with 3:15 suggesting that Paul knew the church and that the area Peter wrote to was quite limited.

The sources available to me agreed that the readers were Gentiles on the basis of the first several verses of the book.

Date

Making the letter the second letter to the readers of I Peter (3:1) causes most of the authors to place the book in the middle of the seventh decade of the first century. Depending on the death of Peter in 64-68, the book is dated from 63-67. The mention of Pauline letters causes most authors to agree the date had to be in the 60's. Less conservative scholars place the book in the second century because there was no collection of Pauline letters according to them before approximately 100. 3:15-16 does not speak of a collection of Pauline letters, however, but just letters. We have several letters of Paul in the New Testament written by the early 50's.

Those who believe that II Peter went to different readers or preceded I Peter's postulate a lost letter, similar to Paul's lost letter to the Corinthians, to meet the requirements of 3:1.

For those who take a late date, Hiebert remarks (page 152):

The critics who do not believe in the inspiration of these epistles feel that such an evaluation of them can only be post-apostolic. Cartledge remarks, "Radical criticism needs to account for the evolution of a belief in inspiration for books that it does not consider inspired." Conservative criticism has no such gap to bridge.

Place

Most of those dating the book after I Peter have Peter writing from Rome. Barnes places Peter in Babylon to write I and II Peter. I feel there is no way to know where Peter was when he wrote II Peter.

Occasion

False teachers were starting to infiltrate the church with an antinomian heresy. Peter is warning of its spread. To those facing apostasy from within the church, he appeals to loyalty through a full knowledge.

The false teachers are characterized as being:

- a. denying the Lord who bought them (2:1)
- b. causing the way of truth to be spoken evil of (2:2)
- c. indulging carnal appetites (2:10b, 12)
- d. insubordinate to established authority (2:10-12)
- e. able to beguile the weak (2:14, 18)
- f. being pompous and speaking in a pompous manner (2:17-19)
- g. proclaiming liberty while making themselves slaves of sin (2:19)
- h. having possessed and lost Christianity (2:20-22)
- i. denying the Second Coming (3:4)

Theme - Combating False Doctrine with True Christian Knowledge

Christian knowledge (a) springs out of a living faith in Christ and the promises of God, (b) comes from continued growth and development, (c) is anchored in certainty of the apostolic testimony and the divine inspiration of the prophetic revelation.

The word knowledge and its cognates are used 16 times (of which 6 are the intensified form—additional knowledge or full of knowledge.) Peter seeks to stimulate his readers to growth in Christian character including patience in expectation of the Lord's return and diligence lest one be carried away with heresy.

Outline

Introduction - (greeting) 1:1, 2

- I. True Christian Knowledge (How the entrance into the Kingdom of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ is richly supplied) 1:3-21
 - A. Christian belief is to be undergirded with correct conduct (3-11)
 - 1. Diligently use what God has granted (3-7)
 - 2. The promise of the entrance into the eternal kingdom (8-11)
 - B. An eyewitness and prophecy testify to the reliability of the Holy Scriptures (12-21)
 - 1. Peter's personal concern for his readers (12-15)
 - 2. Divine revelation—not myths (16-21)

- II. Distinguishing the False Prophets 2:1-22
 - A. Their coming and their numerous followers (1-3)
 - B. The terrors of the judgments of the Old Testament are a warning about the end of false teachers (4-10a)
 - C. Denunciation of heretical leaders and their immoral ways (10b-22)

- III. The Denial of the Return of Christ 3:1-18a
 - A. The heretics ask, "Where is the promised Parousia?" (1-7)
 - 1. The purpose of the Apostle in writing (1, 2)
 - 2. The denial of Christ's return-by the mockers (3, 4)
 - 3. The fallacy of the mockers (5-7)
 - a. The past judgment by water (5-6)
 - b. The future judgment by fire (7)
 - B. The day of the Lord will come as a thief (8-13)
 - 1. The true explanation of the delay (8, 9)
 - 2. The coming of the day of the Lord (10)
 - 3. The Christian life in view of the future (11, 12a)
 - 4. The results in the coming day (12b, 13)
 - C. Look for these things and be ready (14-18a)
 - 1. The exhortation to maintain personal purity (14)
 - 2. The exhortation to a reverent attitude to Scripture (15, 16)
 - 3. The exhortation to beware of falling (17)
 - 4. The exhortation to continued growth (18a)

Conclusion - (Doxology) 3:18b

A Look at Two Modern Translations

A. *The New International Version*

The NIV translation is clear, smooth and easy to read. As has been pointed out a number of times in sessions of the Chicago Conference, the translation is at times rather free and interpretive. It is definitely not a substitute for the study of the Greek, nor even a translation for serious study.

There were several translations which I felt were weak.

Verse 1 - Despite the arguments presented for translating ἀγαπητοί as “Dear Friends”, that translation fails to bring out the many implications of the original. The word is a constant reminder that we are the beloved of God in Christ, that it is only in the selfless act of love by Christ (which resulted in the cross) we have eternal hope. Peter could have chosen another form of greeting, but he chose “Beloved!”

Verse 2 - The NIV often has a translation which may be technically possible, but fails to bring the full impact of the original. The translation of προειρημένον (either προλεγω or προειπον) depending on the authority as “in the past” is a good example. Although technically possible, the translation fails to bring out the full meaning of the verse and so robs the serious Bible student who is unacquainted with the original languages of the full Word of God. Both the translation of the NASB (beforehand) and the AAT (predicted) bring out the meaning of the word (to foretell, predict or tell in advance of the fact.) A survey of other verses where this Greek word appears, shows that the NIV, in contradistinction to the AAT and NASB, fails to provide the proper translation in Acts 1:16, Romans 9:29, II Cor. 13:2, Gal. 5:21 and I Thess. 3:4 while translating properly only Matthew 24:25 (Mark 13:23) and Jude 17. Given the strong parallels between Jude and II Peter 2:1-3:4, it is surprising to find the correct translation in Jude and not in II Peter.

Verse 5 - There are two popular translations of λαθάνει γὰρ αὐτὸς τοῦτο θέλοντας. The NIV translates “they deliberately forget” which implies that the knowledge was there, but it is deliberately put aside. Also possible is the translation “In making this claim it escapes them.” This alternate translation implies that people claim a position and on the basis of their stand, are unable to recognize the truth brought by the evidence. Applying the two translations to today we can ask, “Which more clearly predicts the position of modern scoffers?” The answer is the latter. The scoffers of today are unable to see the evidence of the creation and the flood because of their commitment to the uniformitarian principles.

Verse 14 - The NIV translates ἄσπιλοι καὶ ἀμώμητοι αὐτῷ εὐρεθῆναι ἐν εἰρήνῃ “To be found spotless, blameless and at peace with him.” Spotless, blameless, and at peace are made equal. The translation interprets αὐτῷ as at peace with him. More literal translations follow the Greek in saying “be found by Him in peace, spotless and blameless.” In the context of the Second Coming of Christ and His judgment of the world, the more literal translation seems to be far superior. The NIV translation takes from the concept of Christ coming as the judge which is strongly implied by the literal.

The more I study the NIV, the more disappointed I am with that much heralded translation. My prejudice grows each time I compare it with the original. I was greatly saddened by the convention action which recommended the NIV to our laity as a faithful translation.

B. *An American Translation* (3rd Edition)

Problems encountered:

Verse 1 - see discussion above on “Dear Friends”.

Verse 5 - Like the NIV, the AAT opts for the concept of forgetting the facts, but does not make it a deliberate act. If the translation was ignore, then deliberately ignore would be acceptable. If the translator opts for forget the AAT is preferable to the NIV.

Verse 16 - The AAT uses “misinterpret” for στρεβλοῦσιν. The word means to wrench, distort, torture, make crooked. I think that misinterpret is too passive a concept for the thought.

Verse 17 - While “sweep you off your feet” goes well with the concept in the original of not being caused to lose one’s sound footing, it is a bit idiomatic for our personal preference.

C. Comparison

The AAT seems to follow more faithfully the thoughts of the Greek original. It is also easier for the average man on the street to understand. (e.g. verse 10: NIV - “everything in it will be laid bare”; AAT - “what was done on it will be shown.”)

The goal of the translators of the NIV and the AAT were different. The NIV apparently was to be in a “high” language that would hold its meaning for many years without revision. As a result, it is a language which will appeal to the educated. The AAT was translated to be read by the average person in the language of his daily living. As such, the need for continual revision with the change of language was evident. That process is being carried out. I feel that the approach of the AAT is closer to that of the Apostles. In II Peter 3, the AAT is also a more faithful translation.

Exegetical Difficulties of II Peter 3

There are a number of points in II Peter 3 which have been the subject of much debate. In this section, we will attempt to explain the difficulty and then suggest a sound exegetical position.

A. “This is now my second letter to you.” (verse 1) This verse has been the center of isagogical questions for a long time. The question: Does verse one refer to I Peter or to another letter?

Point one: The letters in the New Testament are not placed in chronological order. The letters of Paul are placed in the order of length from the longest to the shortest. Thus Colossians and Philemon, written at the same time and delivered together, are separated and the letters to the Thessalonians (early) are preceded by many of Paul’s later letters. The order of the books in the New Testament and their designation I and II says nothing about their chronological order.

Point two: The NIV and AAT correctly catch the import of verse one which says that in both the first and second letters, the Apostle has the same goal - that is stirring up their pure minds in an act of remembering (and the context is of remembering what the Apostles and prophets delivered at a time the church was facing false teachers and scoffers.) A casual reading of I and II Peter will show that they vary a lot in their purposes.

Point three: The named audience and the name by which the Apostle makes himself known are different in our recorded letters.

Conclusion: I Peter is not the other letter. The other letter has been lost.

B. “Your Apostles” (verse 2) There are three distinct possibilities.

Possibility 1 - the 12, or the twelve and Paul. Certainly, Paul would have to be included because of the later reference to him in verses 15 and 16. We reject this position because we feel that the addition of the word “your” is too limiting, and Peter fails to specify more.

Possibility 2 - the word is used in the sense of the individual leaders of the local church inasmuch as Acts 14:149 Romans 16:7 and Galatians 1:19 call men other than the selected 12 (and Paul) Apostles. We reject this position, for in each of the exceptions mentioned, there is an obvious way to know by the naming of the individuals whether or not the original apostles are meant.

Possibility 3 - Peter is referring to the Apostles (either the original or the more general usage which includes men like Barnabas) who had worked with the members of the church, perhaps were even responsible for the founding of the church. In this respect, we would say that Peter and Paul must be included, but we cannot limit it to them.

C. ἐξ ὕδατος καὶ δι' ὕδατος συνεστῶσα from (out of) water and through (between) water have existed. (verse 5)
The exegetical problem in this verse revolves around the meaning of the above phrase. The difficulty comes in trying to understand what the Apostle means in terms of our cosmology. Our solution to the problem is to merely repeat the words of the text. Long ago, men got wrapped up in trying to explain the Bible in the terms of the “truths” of their age. The problem is that the Bible gives the perfect view of God and we work with our imperfect systems. When we try and explain the Bible in the terms of the “science” of our day, we create problems when “science” changes. A look at the many people who today reject the Scriptures because they feel that evolution is “scientific fact” and thus Scripture errs, should be a warning to us. In facing such questions, it is often best to remember the conversation of God with Job (38ff.). In effect, God tells us that since we were not there when He created the world, we had better be careful about claiming wisdom in that area.

D. Verses 10 and 12 discuss the end of the earth. Much time and effort have gone into trying to vividly describe the end. Peter simply states it as a fact, mentioning the presence of fire (certainly different from any fire any of us have ever experienced). We should merely quote the verse here without trying to explain it in terms of the scientific knowledge of today. Nuclear physics and astrophysics (e.g. the black hole theory) certainly make it tempting to try and figure out how the elements will be destroyed, but from an exegetical point of view we must desist.

E. σπεύδοντας τὴν παρουσίαν (hasten the parousia) - (verse 12) NIV - “look forward to the day of God and *speed its coming*.” AAT - “waiting for and *speeding the coming* of God’s Day.” The problem revolves around the question, “How can any Christian have an effect upon the chosen time of the Parousia?”

Possibility 1 - Translate: expecting and *eager for* the Parousia. This proposed solution sidesteps the issue. Although technically a possibility, it certainly does not appear to be the best translation and stretches the meaning of the Greek word.

Possibility 2 - to hasten is a state of mind in which the person desires something so eagerly that he wishes he could hurry its arrival. Although it allows for the preferred translation, it in reality simply reinterprets the concept to the previous weaker position.

Possibility 3 - the Church may be said to hasten the day when it prays, “Thy Kingdom come.” This is just a rehash of 1 and 2.

Possibility 4 - Proper conduct hastens the arrival of the Christ within us. Doctrinally unacceptable because Christ is in us, with us, has been put on us, from the time of baptism.

Possibility 5 - The Christian hastens the day with holy living (cf. Matthew 6:10 and Acts 3:19-21)

Just how any creature of God can hasten that day is not so obvious. “Earnestly desiring” makes easier sense, but is not a good translation. “Seeking eagerly” would be possible. Since it is not possible to alter God’s time-table, since nothing can be made to happen before its fullness of time has come, one must ask how we can hasten the day of God. The best explanation is found in Acts 3:19-21. In these verses, it is clear that the time is fixed. Christ must remain in heaven until the time of restoration as the holy prophets have said, but men must repent so that times of refreshing may come and that he may send Christ who has been appointed for you. In this sense, by our repentance, our pious life, and holy conduct, we bring or hasten God’s day of judgment. (Clark, p. 74)

F. καινὸς δὲ οὐρανὸς καὶ γῆν καινὴν (a new heaven and a new earth) (verse 13)

Possibility 1 - Heaven and earth are renewed. This is the position of many cultists, but ignores that fact that the Scriptures say heaven and earth will pass away.

Possibility 2 - God will create a new heaven and a new earth, like the present, only perfect. Such an understanding does not seem to fit the analogy of Scripture principle of interpretation.

Possibility 3 - Heaven and earth are used in a figurative sense so that we of the earth might have something to relate to in our minds. A new heaven and a new earth then would be like the great city of Revelation or the streets of gold and gates of pearl.

G. "Paul writes the same way in all his letters." (verse 16)

Liberals have tried to place the writing of II Peter into the second century when the letters of Paul had been collected. That overlooks the simple explanation that Peter either was talking about all of the letters of Paul with which he was familiar or all of the letters of Paul which had been written at the time of his letter.

H. "Grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord..." (verse 18)

The question has been asked, "How can a person grow in grace?" We would simply refer to II Peter 1:5-7 which shows the Christian growing in Christian virtues.

Exegetical Points for Stress in 1977

A. **Verses 1 and 2:** We need to search the Word and know it well.

The Apostle Peter knows that the people will face many difficulties from those who will make attacks upon their faith, usually from within the church. He therefore writes to them to remind them to be thinking about the Word of God as it has been brought to them by the prophets and apostles. He especially desires that the predictions of coming conditions be on their minds.

In 1977, we need to be very much aware of the Word. In our hurry-up, busy world, it is too easy to not spend enough time in the study of the Word. When we do not study, we are ill equipped to face the onslaughts of Satan. Peter is telling us to "be sober and vigilant for our adversary as a roaring lion..." He wants to stir us into watchfulness, wakefulness, preparation. We would also note that he wants to excite our pure (Spirit-guided) minds to action. He does not ask for unthinking drones. He wants us to use our minds under the guidance of the Spirit (1:20-21). "Understand this first, that no one can explain any written Word of God as he likes because it never was the will of a human being that brought us God's Word, but the Holy Spirit moved holy men to say what God told them." Today, as the churches such as the church of Rome loosen up and let men think, the cults (notably the Moonies, Jehovah Witnesses and Mormons) try to block the individual mind.

In verse two, we do not see the word commandment as the broad use of Matthew 28:20 "all things whatsoever I have commanded", but in the narrow use of the word about a particular subject, here the Second Coming.

B. **Verses 3 to 7:** Beware of Uniformitarian Mockers Who Deny the Truth.

These verses are one of the reasons that this chapter is so pertinent to 1977. Today, humanism and its uniformitarian principles have nearly taken complete control of thinking in the United States. Men who look at a world and think of its age in billions of years, who think of change as being a sure but gradual process, have a hard time seeing a Messiah who will come suddenly and destroy the earth we know. They rock the Christian position by pointing to supposed uniformity. As Peter prophesied, they are ignorant that God made the world and that He also sent a flood which changed the world immensely.

Forewarned is forearmed. Peter has pointed out the danger, warning of the approach of the mockers. He has also given the answer—sound knowledge built in the Word.

C. **Verses 8 and 9:** Man, not God, is bound by time.

The reaction of man to uniformitarian attacks has been to misuse verse eight. Verses eight and nine make the point that God is not bound by time in the way that man is bound. What seems to be a short time to us can be for God a long time. However, many, and particularly cultists, take the position that verse eight says that the creation days were actually long time periods, epochs or 1,000 years each. How strange no one suggests the reverse: what appears to man to be 3.66 billion years is actually 10,000 years.

The point of the verse, however, is not to make statistical comparisons of God's time and man's concept of time. Rather, Peter desires to point out that when we are impatient for God to act in judgment, He still has a lot of patience and will yet provide time for many people to be saved. On the other hand, just as man becomes convinced that God will never act, and therefore time is plentiful, the ax will fall.

D. Verses 10 to 15: Christians should live for the end.

The temptation, of course, is to expend exegetical effort to determine the details of the end. That, however, would miss the main point, i.e. the Lord's Day will come and unexpectedly. The Christian should not be so concerned with God's method of destroying the earth with fire (a refiner's fire which shows what is pure and what is dross?), but should be concerned with being prepared. "Since all these things will happen, think about what kind of lives you should live!"

Peter's description of the ready Christian is a valuable one and certainly the basis of a fine sermon. The Christian should be found by His Savior in a state of readiness. He is at peace with God through the provision of Christ and is looking forward to the fulfillment of God's promise (to provide a new, eternal home.) Considering God's love and patience, the Christian is "waiting for and speeding the coming of that day." As one freed from the power of sin and Satan, the Christian is also demonstrating in his life attitudes and actions which are holy and godly. Through the blood of Christ, he has been presented to God as spotless and faultless. Now he wants to live up to it. Peter certainly would approve of what John wrote: "My children, I'm writing this to you to keep you from sinning. If anyone sins, we have One to plead for us with the Father, Jesus Christ, who is righteous. He has paid for our sins, and not for ours only, but for the whole world" (I John 2:1,2)

E. Verse 16: Careless translation and exegesis is dangerous.

In referring to the letters of Paul, Peter makes reference to those who are ignorant and not well grounded. This is demonstrated in the way they handle the Scriptures. They study them and then misinterpret (AAT) and distort them. It would seem that at a time when we are considering Bible translations, that both translations and exegesis come in for consideration. The word can be distorted by a poor translation (the New World translation being an extreme example) or by twisting the words to make Scripture say what one wants, instead of what God intended. Either way, the result is the destruction of those who do it (and of course of those who follow them.)

F. Verses 17 and 18: Forewarned is Forearmed.

In verse 17, Peter tells us the necessity of being on our guard, lest we lose our firm stance through the guile of men who are unprincipled (that is, don't conform to God's principles.) The defense for those who take the warning is to grow in grace (a conscious effort in sanctification) and to develop in Christian knowledge in order both to recognize and combat that which stands opposed to God.

Appendix I

The Use of II Peter in the Early Christian Church

Source key: B=Barnes C=Clark E=Expositors F=Franzmann G=Gundry H=Hiebert N=New Bible Dictionary
R=Robertson S=Schaff T=Thiessen

First Century

- Before 80 Jude uses II Peter as his major source.
c. 95 Clement of Rome makes an allusion to II Peter in using phraseology found Scripturally only in II Peter (E, N, R)

Second Century

- d. 116 Ignatius (R-undoubted allusion) (H ?)
c. 120 Didache shows a coincidence of words and thoughts (E, H, T)
c. 120 Apocalypse of Peter (E, H, N, E, T)
c. 129 *Apology of Aristidies* (R-undoubted allusion) (N ?) (E 1:11, 2:2)
c. 130 Epistle of Barnabas (E-3:8) (H ?)
c. 140 Justin Martyr (R-undoubted allusion) (H ?)
c. 140 Shepherd of Hermas contains phraseology peculiar to II Peter (E, T) (H ?)
mid century Apocryphon of John contains an allusion to II Peter (G)
d. 155 Polycarp (H ?)
d. 160 Valentius' *Gospel of Truth* (G, N)
d. 170 Tatian of Assyria in his work *To the Greeks* has a statement similar to 1:13 (E)
130-170 II Clement has a statement based on II Peter (E, T)
c. 178 Epistle of the Churches of Lyons and Vienne quote 1:8 (E)
d. 181 Theophilus of Antioch has apparent reference to 1:19,20
c. 185 Clement of Alexander
(C-He wrote a commentary according to Eusebius & Photius)
(R-He wrote a commentary)
(N-He had it in his Bible)
(Eusebius, E.H. VI, 14, 1: In the work called *Hypotyposes*...he has given us abridged accounts of all the canonical Scriptures, not even omitting those that are disputed, (the Antilegomenoi), I mean the book of Jude, and the other general epistles.)
(E-an apparent reference to 2:19 is found in *Recognitions* v. 12 and in the Latin translations by Rufinius a reference to 3:9 in Homilies XVI 20.)
d. 203 Ireaneus (R-undoubted allusion) (E-possible reference in V 23 2 & 28 3 to II Peter 3:8)

NOTE: A seventh century Latin document quotes a lost second century document which referred to passages in II Peter. The Latin document is known as *Actus Petri Cum Simone*.

Third Century

- Early Sahidic translation of Egypt contains II Peter
Early Bodmer P72
198-236 Hippolytus of Rome has passages suggesting an acquaintance with II Peter (E)

- 225-240 Origen quotes II Peter without expressing personal doubts but mentions that some people, were critical. There are six quotes from II Peter in the Latin translation of his works by Rufinius. (C, E, F, H)
- Mid century Bohairic translation of Egypt contains II Peter
- Late Methodius, Bishop of Lycia, quotes 3:8 in *De Resurrectione* and paraphrases 3:10-13. (E, H)

Fourth Century

- 324 Eusebius - *E.H.* includes II Peter in the canon (as Antilegomena) and included II Peter in the 50 copies of the Scriptures he prepared at the direction of Constantine.
- c. 330 Dialogue of Adamantius quotes II Peter (E)
- Mid century Included in the Canon of Mommsonianus
- 363 **Council of Laodicea calls it canonical** (H, S)
- d. 367 Hilliary of Poitiers accepted it in his canon (H)
- d. 373 Athanasius included it in his canon (C, E, H, R, S)
Included in the Festal Letter of 367 (N)
- d. 379 Ephrem the Syrian ascribes the letter to Peter in the second volume of his Greek works. (B) II Peter does not appear in the Old Syriac c. 100. Ephrem is the first Syrian scholar to acknowledge it as apostolic.
- d. 379 Basil the Great considered it canonical (H)
- d. 386 Cyril of Jerusalem considered it canonical (C, E, H, S)
- d. 391 Gregory of Nazianzen considered it canonical (E, S)
- 393 **Council of Hippo calls it canonical**
- d. 395 Didymus of Alexander considered it canonical. (E, S)
- d. 397 Ambrose of Milan considered it canonical (E, H)
- 397 **Council of Carthage Calls it Canonical**
- d. 403 Epiphanius of Salamis considered it canonical (S)
- d. 407 Chrysostom considered it canonical (S)
- Late Ambrosiaster (Pseudo Ambrosius) uses it as canonical (E)
written by the Roman Deacon Hilary under Pope Damasus?

Appendix II

The Relationship of II Peter and Jude

There is an obvious similarity between Jude 4-18 and II Peter 2:1-3:4. In both there is a discussion of false teachers, of an antinomian type, whose character and influence threaten the Church. Compare: 7 & 2:6; 8 & 2:10; 9 & 2:11; 10 & 2:12; 16 & 2:18; 17,18 & 3:2,3.

There are also differences: Jude mentions the cause of the angelic fall—Peter simply states that they fell. Jude describes the sin of the inhabitants of Sodom and Gomorrah, while Peter simply mentions their fate. Just Peter mentions the deliverance of Lot. Peter speaks of the flood, while Jude uses the destruction of Israel in the wilderness. See also 11 & 2:15,16 and 14,15 & 2:20-22.

Answers:

1. The Holy Spirit inspired them to independently write the same things.
2. They used a common source.
3. One quoted from the other.

We leave consideration of the first two to you, having personally rejected them. For the idea of one copying the other we offer:

In favor of II Peter following Jude:

1. II Peter is longer and more likely to use the shorter.
2. If Jude used Peter, why only a portion of the book? It would be more likely for Peter to use all of Jude.
3. It is more probable that II Peter should omit from Jude what seems hard to understand and likely to offend than for Jude to insert them.
4. The reference to the angels in II Peter 2:11 needs Jude.
5. Jude is stronger, more vehement. Most likely Peter softened it.

In favor of Jude following II Peter:

1. Jude says he wrote under an emergency situation and would be more likely to use another source.
2. Peter quotes little, Jude prolifically.
3. It would be natural for Jude to expand on Peter, rather than for Peter to abbreviate.
4. The growing evil in Jude suggests a later date.
5. More likely for Jude to quote an Apostle than an Apostle quote him.
6. The arrangements in triplets in Jude would be more likely a man reorganizing material.
7. Peter yawns against evil—Jude gives specific directions in what the church should do.
8. Peter is predictive, while Jude speak in the midst of crisis. 2:1, 2:2, 3:3 and 4
9. Jude seems to quote II Peter 3:3,4 in 17 & 18
 - ἐμπαΐκται appears in the New Testament only here
 - also refers to Acts 20:29, 30; I Tim. 4:1-3; II Tim 3:1-5?
10. παλαι denotes past time and is used by Pilate of Jesus, Mark 15:44, see also II Corinthians 12:19.

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