

INVITATION TO 2 PETER

Around AD 65 the apostle Peter was imprisoned by the emperor Nero in Rome. He realized that he would soon be executed. Since he was an eyewitness of the ministry of Jesus, he decided to write another letter to the believers he'd written to before, assuring them that what they'd been taught about Jesus was true and accurate. I think it is right to refresh your memory as long as I live in the tent of this body, he wrote, because I know that I will soon put it aside, as our Lord Jesus Christ has made clear to me. And I will make every effort to see that after my departure you will always be able to remember these things. It was particularly important for Peter to write to these believers again because some people had been telling them that since Jesus hadn't returned already, his return couldn't be expected at all. (Where is this "coming" he promised?) Because they didn't expect any future judgment, these false teachers lived immoral lives. Their teaching was undermining the faith and confidence of many believers. Their conduct was giving the assembly of Jesus-followers a bad reputation and encouraging others to excuse immorality themselves. (Peter likely learned about the threat of these teachers from a letter sent by Jude, another of Jesus' brothers, to warn believers against them. Peter's letter echoes Jude's in many places. See pp. 1815–1816.) In his letter, Peter first challenges his readers to godly living, and then answers the false teachers' skepticism by stressing that he, along with James and John, personally saw the glory and majesty of Jesus when we were with him on the sacred mountain (see p. 1783). All will see this same glory when Jesus returns. Peter reminds his readers that the prophetic message in the Scriptures testifies to Jesus' return as well. (For the early Christian communities "the Scriptures" would refer to the First Testament.) Peter then observes that false teachers have slipped in

among the people of God throughout their history, so his readers shouldn't be surprised that this is also happening in their own day. In powerful imagery, he describes the false teachers' destructive effect on the community and the judgment that awaits them. In the final section of his letter, Peter addresses the false teachers' denial of Jesus' return head-on. He explains that the Messiah is indeed coming back, but his return has been delayed, because God is patient with you, not wanting anyone to perish, but everyone to come to repentance. The proper response to this delay is to live holy and godly lives so as to be in a position to welcome the Lord gladly when he does return. We are looking forward to a new heaven and a new earth, where righteousness dwells. Since this is our hope, Peter concludes, we should make every effort to be found spotless and to remain at peace with God.