

2 PETER

INTRODUCTION

The very fact of the epistle, 2 Peter, still being included in the New Testament, despite the most vigorous efforts to dislodge it, in utter disregard of campaigns against it waged for more than a century, and with total disdain and unbelief of those “great scholars” shouting their certainty that Peter did not write it, or that it should be dated in the 2nd century—the very fact of Christians throughout the world still accepting and believing this epistle as an authentic portion of the true Word of God—this very fact establishes the utmost confidence of the integrity and authenticity of 2 Peter. Why? The providence of God is most evident in a thing of this kind. Our Lord Jesus Christ promised to be with His church, “even to the end of the world;” and, inherent in such a promise is the intention of the Lord to protect and take care of that word (the New Testament) which nourishes and sustains the church.

When the eager enemies of Christ were devising every scheme they could think of to kill Him, He stood up one day publicly and shouted, “No one has taken it away from Me.” (John 10:18) These words apply with equal force to the New Testament, which is the continuous miracle of the ages.

It is time that Christians shouted to them, “You cannot take it away!” As a matter of fact, it is high time to launch a counterattack.

Date of the Epistle. The critical community has never been able to reach any kind of consensus regarding removal of the letter from its true place in the closing years of Peter’s life, except in one particular, that is, that they would like to move it!

John A. T. Robinson, *Redating the New Testament*, p. 352, wrote: “After reviewing the whole field of speculation regarding the date of this letter, confidently and dogmatically assigned a date of 61-62 A. D. This date is incapable of supporting the bias against apostolic authorship; and we are accepting it here as being “as good a guess as any.”

Authorship. There being no adequate grounds whatever for denying the date assigned for 1 Peter, above, the question of authorship is easily decided. The first words of the letter ascribe it to, “Simon Peter, a servant and apostle of Jesus Christ;” and it is inconceivable that a pseudonymous writer would have thus entitled it during Peter’s lifetime.

Raymond C. Kelcy, *The Letters of Peter and Jude*, p. 11-12, one of the more brilliant of the present generation scholars, listed half a dozen references to distinctive Christian teachings which occur in both epistles and at least ten words which are, “common to both epistles and are in other New Testament books.”

The references to certain experiences which Peter had received during Jesus’ ministry, such as that of the transfiguration (1:16-18) is exactly what we should have expected in an epistle written by Peter.

External Evidence. Kelcy, *Ibid.*, accurately pointed out that the first and most important witness to the antiquity and integrity of 2 Peter is that of definite, unmistakable references and allusions to it in the works of Clement of Rome, in early 70 A. D.”

The holy providence of God, despite all of this, provided and preserved a place for it in the sacred canon.

Place of Origin, Destination, and Occasion of Writing. Nothing is given on any of these questions in the epistle itself. The extensive warning against false, lascivious, teachings who, Peter prophesied, would invade the church seems to indicate that the occasion was that of providing this timely warning, at a time somewhat prior to the full development of the things warned against.

Purpose. This is clearly stated by Peter himself. His purpose was, “I shall always be ready to remind you” (1:12-13), “after my departure, you may be able to call these things to mind” (1:15), and, “I am stirring up your sincere mind by way of reminder” (3:1), “That you should remember the words spoken beforehand by the holy prophets.” (3:2)

The clause from 3:1 has been objected to on the grounds that, “It is far from obvious that the content of the two epistles is the same.” John A. T. Robinson, *op. cit.*, p. 179) Yet it should be observed that Peter did not say the content of his two letters was in any sense, “the same.” What he said was that “In both of them” his purpose was to induce remembrance of the teachings of the prophets and the commandments of the Lord and Savior through your apostles.” (3:2)

Summary. Thus we conclude that the apostle Peter himself authored this letter, that it was written subsequently to the first epistle, that both were written during the final years of the apostle’s life, probably from Rome, and that the purpose of it was to remind and strengthen Christians everywhere with reference to certain doctrines of the holy faith specifically treated in both letters.

MAY THE LORD BLESS THE STUDY OF HIS HOLY WORD!

CHAPTER 1

The keynote of this whole epistle is knowledge, but it is a very special kind of knowledge which is meant.

This chapter, after the signature, greeting and salutation (verse 1), gives the basis, and in a sense, the nature and location of this saving knowledge, contained in the exceeding great and precious promises (verses 2-4), the growth of the Christian in this true knowledge (verses 5-11), a mention of Peter’s concern for the perpetuation of this priceless knowledge (verses 12-15) and the inerrancy of the sources of this wonderful saving knowledge, (verses 16-21).

Verse 1

“Simon Peter . . .” This inclusion of Peter’s original name, along with the one the Lord had given him is significant. William G. Moorehead, *International Bible Encyclopaedia*, p. 2356, wrote, “If a forger had been writing in Peter’s name, he would have begun almost certainly by copying Peter’s name from the first epistle.” where it reads simply, “Peter, an apostle of Jesus Christ.”

“A bond-servant . . .” Eldon R. Fuhrman, Beacon Bible Commentary, Vol. 10, p. 320, wrote, “The Greek word behind this is *doulos*.” It means slave, but due to the sinister connotations of that word, it is better rendered servant, as here. It is quite revealing that, despite the Greeks having two words for slave, the apostles always used *doulos*. The other word (*andrapoden*) means, persons captured in war and sold as slaves; but *doulos* means one born into slavery.” It was by virtue of the new birth that the apostles, and all Christians, became slaves of Christ.

“And apostle of Jesus Christ . . .” This is the highest title that Peter claimed, and it has reference to his official status as a representative of Christ fully endowed with plenary authority.

“To those who have received a faith of the same kind as ours . . .” B. C. Caffin, Pulpit Commentary, vol. 22, 2 Peter, p. 1 wrote: “The word ‘obtained’ here means properly to ‘obtain by lot.’ as in Luke 1:9.” This word is rare in the New Testament but does occur in Peter’s speech. (Acts 1:17) The word for “like precious” is found only here in the New testament, but strongly suggests 1 Peter 1:7; and, as B. C. Caffin, Ibid., said, “Shows a correspondence with that epistle.” Note: The meaning of the whole clause according to, James William Russell, Compact Commentary on the New Testament, p. 590, who wrote, “Those who, whether Jews or Gentiles, held a faith like that held by Peter,” in short, all true Christians.

“By the righteousness of our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ . . .” This is none other than the “righteousness of God in Christ (Romans 3:22), meaning the perfect faith and perfect obedience of the Son of God, which are in fact the sum total of all the righteousness ever achieved upon earth. All of the apostles, as well as all Christians, were saved by the righteousness of God in Christ.

“Of our God and Savior Jesus Christ . . .” The words of Jesus Christ Himself demand our understanding of Him as a member of the Godhead. His promises of eternal life, of raising the dead, of judging all men, of being with His church to the end of the world, and countless others, have no meaning whatever apart from His oneness with the Father in heaven.

Verse 2

“Grace and peace be multiplied to you in the knowledge of God. . .” This is a special kind of knowledge. William G. Moorehead, *op. cit.*, p. 2357, wrote, “This is the knowledge that rests on fact, that comes to the believer as something supernatural, as being communicated by the Spirit of God, and therefore is true and complete.”

Peter’s introduction of the subject of this accurate and complete knowledge here at the very outset, Alfred Plummer, *Ellicott’s Commentary on the Whole Bible*, Vol. VIII, p. 444, wrote, “Anticipates the attack that is coming upon the godless speculations of the false teachers in chapter 2.”

It is now known that the types of gnosticism refuted by Peter were prevalent in apostolic times, and that there is no reason whatever for dating the epistle outside the lifetime of its author.

Verse 3

The true basis of saving knowledge is in God through Christ, who granted to the apostles full and complete knowledge of everything that pertains to life and godliness. The blessed promise of Christ that the Holy Spirit would guide the apostles into “all truth” is certainly in the background of the statement here.

The very fact of the saving knowledge delivered through the apostles being complete, effectively denies the need of any subsequent information bearing upon life and godliness. In the light of this truth, what must be thought of the claims of a Mary Baker Eddy or Joseph Smith, or any others claiming to add anything to the word of God?

“His Divine power . . .” E. M. Zerr, *Bible Commentary*, 2 Peter, p. 268, thought that inasmuch as salvation is the subject matter here wrote: “Divine power refers to the gospel, for Romans 1:16 declares that the gospel is the power of God unto salvation;” and this is certainly true.

“Has granted to us . . .” Raymond C. Kelcy, *The Letters of Peter and Jude*, p. 119, wrote, “The ‘us’ here points back to ‘ours’ of verse 1 and refers to the apostles of Christ.” Also James Macknight, *Macknight on the Epistles*, 2 Peter, p.

523, paraphrased the thought here and stressed the same idea: “Certainly God’s Divine power has gifted to us, the apostles of His Son, all things necessary to bring mankind to a godly life.”

“Life and godliness . . .” The “life” here means eternal life, ever the principal concern of New Testament writers. “Godliness” is from a word occurring four times in this letter and also in one of Peter’s speeches.” (Acts 3:12)

Verse 4

“For by these . . .” Albert Barnes, Barnes Notes on the New Testament, 2 Peter, p. 219, wrote, “This refers to the things mentioned in the previous verse, meaning that it was through those arrangements,” of the apostles being guided into all truth, that all Christians have the privilege of partaking of the Divine nature.

“Partakers of the Divine nature . . .” R. H. Strachan, Expositor’s Greek Testament, Vol. V, p. 126, wrote, “In Christ we are made partakers of the Divine nature.”

Through their primary obedience to the gospel of Christ, Christians are added to Christ’s spiritual body, induced “into Christ,” and “in Him” sharing His perfection, His righteousness, His death, and all the glorious benefits of being in Him.

Verses 5-7

In these verses B. C. Caffin, *op. cit.*, p. 2, wrote, “There are two links with the first epistle:

- (1) virtue is found in 1 Peter 2:9, and
- (2) brotherly kindness occurs in 1 Peter 1:22, 3:8. Also, there is another word of very great interest in the passage, the one here rendered “supply” which comes from a word suggesting lavish provision, the word “*epichorigeo*.” David H. Wheaton, *op. cit.*, p. 1252, said this word, “Is used in classical Greek to describe the munificence or rich citizens who would finance a theatrical performance or fit out a warship for the state they loved.” It had a special reference to the

abundant supplies provided for a chorus, a term which is derived from this word, as is also choreographer.

From this, it is suggested that Peter's list here is a chorus of Christian graces, the manner of his linking each with the others being like their holding hands!

"All diligence . . ." The Christian life is a working life, diligence meaning ardent application and industry.

"In your faith . . ." This the Christians already had; but "faith alone" was never considered sufficient for salvation by any of the New Testament writers.

"Virtue . . ." primarily means courage, a grace particularly needed in the hostile world of the period when Peter wrote.

"Knowledge . . ." This is a different word from the full knowledge mentioned above, a possession the Christians already had; and it therefore refers to a faithful continuation of their studies. It is also very likely true, as Alfred Plummer, *op. cit.*, p. 445, pointed out that, "Knowledge here means spiritual discernment as to what is right and what is wrong in all things."

"Self-control . . ." This comes from *egrateia*, which William Barclay, *The Letters of James and Peter*, p. 302, says it means, "The ability to take a grip on one's self." This is one of the great Christian virtues which might be called perfect temperance.

"Patience . . ." in the New Testament, this word carries the thought of endurance and steadfast continuity in faithful service. Jesus said, "In your patience you shall possess your souls."

"Godliness . . ." This is the quality of honoring one's duties to God, standing in this list even higher than duties to one's fellow man. This conforms, with the Savior's great pronouncement that the first and great commandment is to love God, and the second is to love men. (Mark 12:18-30) Important as the love to man assuredly is, it is secondary to the duty of loving God and obeying His commandments. It is amazing that in the culture of present day, religious

duties are relegated to a secondary status, and humanitarian duties have been elevated to the status that really belongs to religious duties.

“Brotherly kindness . . .” This is from *philadelphia* founded on the Greek term *philo*, meaning the love of brothers, or the affection that even an animal has for its young. There is even a higher type of love; and Peter would crown his list with that in verse 7.

“Love . . .” Raymond C. Kelcy, op. cit., p. 123 wrote: “This love (*agape*) is the highest type of love; it is more inclusive than *philadelphia*, and is the kind of love God has for sinful, unworthy men.”

William G. Moorehead, op. cit., p. 2357, said of this whole list, Paul began his list of the fruits of the Spirit with love (Galatians 5:22); Peter ends his with love. It is like a chain; each link holds fast to its fellow and is a part of the whole. It matters little at which end of the chain we begin . . . to touch one is to touch all. We are to add all diligence to supply these richly.”

Before leaving this, it should be noted that there is no mandate in these verses for adding these graces in the particular order of their appearance in the list.

Verse 8

Albert E. Barnett, op. cit., p. 178, wrote, “It is the necessity of possessing these things enumerated in verses 5-7 and to be achieved at least in part by human effort, that is stressed.”

“If . . .” How frequently this word appears in the New Testament suggesting here that in the last analysis, there is a vital and necessary contribution that man himself must make in the direction of his salvation, not in the sense ever of meriting or deserving salvation, but in the sense of doing those things without which not even God can save his soul.

Verse 9

“Blind or short-sighted . . .” The last clause is a limitation on the blindness, showing the kind Peter meant, which was not “total blindness: but myopia, or extreme near-sightedness.

SPIRITUAL MYOPIA

This is the blindness that afflicts all unspiritual souls who sacrifice the hope of eternal life for immediate convenience or pleasure. There are many biblical examples of persons afflicted with spiritual myopia.

- (1) Lot pitched his tent toward Sodom, solely because the immediate prospect seemed favorable.
- (2) The rich man neglected Lazarus begging at his gate, rather than accepting whatever inconvenience of the moment that might have been incurred in his relief.
- (3) Demas was dazzled by the near-at-hand attractiveness of the present age and forsook Paul (2 Timothy 4:10).
- (4) The parable of the prodigal son gives another example of one for whom the romantic allure of the “far country’ with its short term promise of diversion, pleasure and entertainment, blinded him to the tragedy of ultimate consequences.

SPIRITUAL HYPEROPIA

There is also a spiritual malady exactly the opposite of spiritual myopia, except in the one particular of producing the same undesirable consequences. It is spiritual hyperopia, or far-sightedness. It is generally accepted as a compliment when men are told that they are “far-sighted;” but there is a type of far-sightedness that goes much too far.

- (1) The eyes of a fool are in the ends of the earth. (Proverbs 17:24)
- (2) The one concerned with the mote in his brother’s eye while at the same time being unable to see the beam in his own eye is another example.
- (3) Hyperopia afflicts the emotions of some who cannot appreciate present blessings, who are restless and dissatisfied even with abundance, because they have set their eyes upon some Utopia, despising all present good in the fevered pursuit of some fantastic Shangri-La.

- (4) Hyperopia also interferes with the work that men should do, making it impossible for those afflicted with it to find anything close at hand to do.

What far-sighted souls we are! We go in a trance dreaming of worlds to conquer while at our very doors and within our very homes the Master is hungry and sick and in prison!

Great spiritual opportunities do not lie at the foot of some rainbow, but here—not upon some nebulous tomorrow, but today and now.

“Having forgotten his purification from his former sins . . .” “This refers to wrong acts committed prior to baptism, not to inherited depravity of human nature.” *Ibid*, p. 179

B. C. Caffin, *op. cit.*, p. 5, wrote, “Peter is apparently thinking of the one baptism for the remission of sins.” J. R. Dummelow, *One Volume Commentary on the Holy Bible*, p. 1050, wrote, “It refers to ‘the cleansing he received in baptism.’” Alfred Plummer, *op., cit.*, p. 446, wrote, “His old sins . . .” means those committed before he was ‘purged’ in baptism.”

William Barclay, *op. cit.*, p. 306, wrote, “Failure to climb the ladder of virtue is to forget that the sins of the old way of life have been cleansed away. Peter is thinking of baptism. At that time baptism was adult baptism, a deliberate act or decision to leave the old way and to enter upon the new.”

This passage sheds light on a number of important questions; and the following deductions would appear to be justified:

- (1) Conversion does not occur until baptism takes place.
- (2) “Old sins” are totally remitted at the time of baptism.
- (3) The salvation in this is neither final nor irrevocable.
- (4) Obedience to the commands of Christ is prerequisite both for cleansing from “old sins” and for the ultimate and eternal cleansing.

Verse 10

“His calling and choosing you . . .” are two of the biggest theological words in the New Testament; and this verse is invaluable in the revelation that neither calling nor choosing is a thing finally and irrevocably determined by God apart from what the Christian himself does. Also, any thought of impossibility as regards a Christian falling away and being lost is far away from the apostle’s mind in a statement like this verse.

“For as long as you practice these things . . .” David F. Payne, *A New Testament Commentary*, p. 600, wrote, Note the emphasis on God’s initiative and man’s response; both are essential, or the Christian may fall (literally stumble.”

James William Russell, *op. cit.*, p. 590, wrote, “All Christians have been called, but they must work out their salvation (Philippians 2:12). David H. Wheaton, *op. cit.* p. 1253, said, “Peter even hints at the possibility that one can fall from grace!”

Verse 11

Alfred Plummer, *op. cit.*, p. 447, wrote, ”Here ends the first main section of this epistle.”

“Will be abundantly supplied to you . . .” This is from the same word used in verse 5, regarding the provisions supplied for a chorus or theatrical company, indicating overflowing abundance.

“Into the eternal kingdom . . .” The Christians of Peter’s day were already members of the kingdom of the Lord. Peter’s words here are a reference to the eternal state of God’s kingdom, the state of its existence after the resurrection and in the eternal world to come. Entrance into that kingdom, or that phase of the kingdom, is also, in the light of this passage, contingent upon the Christian’s response to duty, not that any sinless perfection is required; but there must be, as an absolute minimum, the intention and purpose of obedience.

This reference to the kingdom is important in showing that it was everywhere accepted as a foundational Christian doctrine.

“Our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ . . .” Before leaving this verse, we should dwell upon the immeasurable confidence inspired by it. Some have misunderstood Peter’s reference to the righteous scarcely being saved in 1 Peter 4:18 as a declaration that Christians themselves shall barely be saved at all; but in the light of this verse it is clear that Peter was speaking about something altogether different in the first epistle. If only the Christian’s response is what it should be, his entrance into the eternal courts of joy shall be as abundant and overflowing as the generosity of those ancient “angels” who lavishly funded a chorus! Praise God for His wonderful word.

Verse 12

This verse and the next three verses deal with Peter’s purpose in writing this letter, giving glimpses of vital Christian principles at the same time. William Barclay, *op. cit.*, p. 308, wrote, “Peter here says that his people already possess the truth and are established in it.”

“Remind you of these things . . .” It is a mistake to view this as a reference restricted to what Peter had already written to those Christians; it is rather a citation of the entire corpus of Christian truth in which they were already established, not merely by Peter’s preaching and writing alone, but by that of all the apostles of Christ.

Also, there is the principle in view here that requires Christian teachers to keep reminding the saints of truth they already know. As Jesus said, “Go and tell John again! (Matthew 11:4)

Verses 13-14

These words flow out of the heart of a man who stood in full contemplation of impending death. The Lord Jesus Himself foretold Peter’s death at the hands of others (John 21:18-19); and in the hostile climate of Nero’s Rome, coupled with the fact of his then being an old man, and remembering that Jesus had said this would occur “when you are old,” Peter considered his own death to be something he could expect at any time “swiftly.”

“My earthly dwelling . . .” It is very possible the use of these very words triggered the forth coming reference to the transfiguration experience. Inherent in the use of “earthly dwelling” as the soul’s dwelling place is the permanence of the soul contrasted with that of the body.

“Laying aside my earthly dwelling . . .” Peter was soon to die. But he viewed the destruction of his body as the same as “putting off” clothes, or pulling down a tent. John A. T. Robinson, *Redating the New Testament*, p. 176, wrote, “These verses, 13-15, are the words of a man for whom death is much in mind, and this would fit the 60’s as the period when they were written.”

Verse 15

“These things to mind . . .” J. R. Dummelow, *op. cit.*, p. 1050, thought that “these things” had primary reference to Peter’s first epistle, but that, “More than his one letter is meant.” David F. Payne, *op. cit.*, p. 601, leaned toward the idea that, “The writer means the gospel of Mark, which early tradition tells us was a written record of much of Peter’s preaching.” However, the view here is that Peter meant the entire corpus of Christian doctrine which the church at the date of this letter already possessed.

This and the two previous verses reveal the purpose of Peter’s writing this letter, that being to record for all ages to come a written record of vital Christian teaching.

Verse 16

“We did not follow . . .” The plural “we” here is not a mere editorial device, but is inclusive of all the holy apostles of Christ, and inclusion Peter was always careful to make.

“Carefully devised fables . . .” David H. Wheaton, *op. cit.*, p. 1254, wrote, “Cleverly devised myths were a feature of the theological systems of the gnostic speculators,” already operating at the time Peter wrote. However, it is just as likely Peter had no reference at all to gnosticism, but rather as James Macknight, *op. cit.*, p.533, thought, “to the cunningly devised fables that were exhibited in the heathen mysteries.”

“Coming of our Lord Jesus Christ . . .” R. H. Strachan, *op. cit.*, p. 130, wrote, “Elsewhere in the New Testament and in this epistle, the expression is used of the Second Coming of Christ,” and there is no reason whatever for understanding it otherwise here.

“We are eyewitnesses of His majesty . . .” The “we” here refers to Peter, James and John, the three apostles with Jesus on the Mount of Transfiguration. Peter’s mention of the transfiguration in this context shows that he regarded it as, “An event foreshadowing the power and majesty of the Second Advent and which could be regarded as a pledge of the glory to be revealed at the second coming.” (Raymond C. Kelcy, *op. cit.*, p. 130)

Verse 17

John A. T. Robinson, *op. cit.*, p. 177, affirmed that, “It is generally accepted that the wording of this account of the transfiguration is independent of any of our gospel texts.” And, why not? Peter was there; his account did not need to be modeled after anything except his own remembrance of it.

Peter’s introduction of the events of the transfiguration calls attention to the great spiritual meaning of it. Moses and Elijah, great representatives of the Law and of the Prophets, appeared there with Christ, and in effect laid their commissions at the feet of the Redeemer. When the cloud overshadowed them and then lifted, both Moses and Elijah were seen no more; and the voice hailed Jesus as the “Beloved Son,” with instructions to “you hear Him.” Moses and Elijah were no longer to be heard, but Jesus only.

Verse 18

The big point of this verse is that Peter affirmed the event of the transfiguration of Christ to have been historical, objective and factual. It happened. “We ourselves heard.” “We were with Him on the holy mountain.”

“The holy mountain . . .” The attitude that would cause that mountain to be spoken of as “holy” was not in any sense a “late view,” being far older than any of the gospel writers and even older than the New Testament itself. The Old Testament reveals that any place where God manifested Himself was “holy.”

(Exodus 3:5, Joshua 5:15, Genesis 28:16-17, Exodus 19:12 and Acts 7:33.) Any Jew speaking of such a place as the Mountain of Transfiguration would naturally have referred to it as “holy.”

Where, precisely, was the mountain here designated as “holy”? The best guess would appear to be that the Mount of Transfiguration was either Mount Hermon, or one of its adjacent peaks. It would at least qualify as being a “high” mountain, as Matthew says (9,000 feet), which Mount Tabor was not but (1,800 feet).

Verse 19

“We have the prophetic word . . . “ The mention of the prophetic word in this context certainly justifies the observation that Peter, in addition to viewing the event of the transfiguration as a foretelling of the Second Coming, also viewed it as completely in harmony with Old Testament prophecy as well.

R. H. Strachan, *op. cit.*, p. 131, paraphrased this thus, “The transfiguration confirms prophecy. Thus we have still further confirmation of the words of the prophets, a fact to which you would do well to give heed, as to a lamp shining in a murky place, meant to serve till the Day-break and the Day-star arise in your hearts.”

“As to a lamp shining in a dark place . . .” “A squalid room” is also a valid rendition, having reference to the evil world in which the light of the gospel was shining.

“Until the day dawns . . .” This is the dawning of the light in the hearts of the redeemed, a dawning which took place initially in their conversion, but which is envisioned here as a continuing phenomenon of their lives in Christ.

“The Morning Star arises in your hearts . . .” This clarifies the whole passage as a reference to the light given to Christians through their taking “heed” to the sure word of prophecy. “Day-star” was the term used by the ancients to refer to the planet Venus, called also the Morning Star. The metaphor of “Christ” as a star is one of the most beautiful in Scripture.

Verse 20

Unfortunately, this verse has been made the basis of the Medieval Church's denial of every man's right to interpret the Scriptures, and their claim to the right of interpretation for the church alone (that is, their church alone). Nothing like this could possibly be in this passage.

Christ Himself bore witness of the fact that every man is responsible for studying and reading the word of God for himself, when He demanded of the lawyer, "What is written in the law?" How does it read to you? (Luke 10:26) In the light of these Scriptures, therefore, we must reject the notion that would find in this place an excuse for any man's leaving the interpretation of the Scriptures to the religious experts in some church, of whatever name. After all, it was the "religious experts" who crucified Christ in the beginning, demonstrating once and finally that of all the people on earth most likely to miss it, it is the "religious experts."

James Macknight, *op. cit.*, p. 535, rendered this verse writing, "No prophecy of Scripture is of the prophet's own invention." Albert Barnes, *op. cit.*, p. 232, also rendered the passage, "No prophecy was of their own disclosure." He further explained, "The truths which the prophets communicated were not originated by themselves; were not of their own suggestion or invention, but were of higher origin and were imported by God."

The ancient prophets of God were not permitted to give their interpretation of prophecies (instead of the prophecies); but they were to deliver the words of the prophecy as the Lord had given them. It is to this limitation that the words of this verse most likely apply. W. E. Vine, *Expository Dictionary of New Testament Words*, p. 268, wrote, "The writers of Scripture did not put their own construction upon the 'God-breathed' words they wrote."

Verse 21

The impenetrable and eternal mystery of how God spoke through men is not revealed in the word of God, but the fact of its having been done is indeed revealed.

Albert E. Barnett, op. cit., p. 186, wrote, “Scripture is viewed as objective and fixed in meaning, and the discovery of that meaning is the duty of believers.”

“Moved by the Holy Spirit . . .” R. H. Strachan, op. cit., p. 132, wrote, “This is the only reference to the Holy Spirit in this epistle.” However, as Peter credited the Holy Spirit as being the “mover” of all Scripture, no neglect of the blessed Spirit could be inferred.

The Lord had promised Peter and all the apostles that the Holy Spirit would speak through them. (Matthew 10:20) Peter would make this very clear in chapter 3:15-16.

By his marvelous words in this chapter, Peter laid the basis for what he would say of the false teachers in the next chapter. All of his allegations were founded in the word of the Lord that lives and endures forever.

CHAPTER 2

This entire chapter is a prophecy of the great apostasy foretold by Christ Himself and by Paul, Peter, and John. It is printed as a single paragraph in the ASV. But a workable outline of it is given by R. H. Strachan, Expositor’s Greek Testament, Vol. V, p 133-141, thus:

The false teachers and their judgment, (verses 1-3).

The historical illustration of Divine judgment on the wicked, and the care of the righteous, (verses 4-10a).

The false teachers, (verses 10b-14).

The example of Balaam, (verses 15-16).

The libertines are themselves slaves, (verses 17-19).

The consequences of apostasy, (verses 20-22).

Verse 1

“False prophets . . .” One of the outstanding teachings in Peter’s writings is the correspondence between the Old and the New Israel, an analogy that he had surely learned from the Lord Himself. Jesus had flatly predicted the same things Peter prophesied here. (Matthew 7:15-23)

William Barclay, *The Letters of James and Peter*, p. 314, listed a number of Old Testament references concerning the false prophets of Old Israel.

The false prophets said, Peace, Peace, when there is no peace. (Jeremiah 6:14)

Its priests teach for hire; and its prophets divine for money. (Micah 3:11)

The priest and the prophet reel with strong drink; they are confused with wine. (Isaiah 28:17)

They commit adultery and walk in lies; they strengthen the hands of evil-doers. (Jeremiah 23:14)

They lead my people astray by their lies and by their recklessness. (Jeremiah 23:32)

The prophets invited the people; "Let us go after other gods."
(Deuteronomy 13:1-5, 18:20)

“Will also be false teachers . . .” Is it possible that Peter was here prophesying a condition that Jude speaks of as already existent? This writer rejects outright any notion that either one of these epistles is dependent upon the other.

“Who will secretly introduce . . .” James Macknight, *Macknight on the Epistles, 2 Peter*, p. 540, wrote, “The significance of “secretly” is that, “The heresies were to be introduced under the color of true doctrine, in the dark as it were, little by little.”

“Destructive heresies . . .” Albert E. Barnett, *Interpreter’s Bible*, Vol. XII, p. 187, wrote, “Heresies are often thought of sects; but the thing in view here is, “given opinions, which came to mean the tenets of a party, “ at variance from

orthodox Christianity. They are called 'destructive' because, "They foster licentiousness and contempt for the way of truth." (Barnett, Ibid)

"Denying the Master who bought them . . ." This is a surprise, coming from one who himself had denied his Lord; and as Alfred Plummer, op. cit., p. 451, wrote, "No forger would have ventured to make Peter write this!" The reference is, of course, to the Lord Jesus Christ who, in a special sense, bought the church with His own blood. (Acts 20:28) The important deduction from this being that the apostate teachers foretold here would rise from among the Christians themselves, in full agreement with what Paul wrote in Acts 20:29-30. Again from, Plummer, Ibid, "The Apostle declares that these impious false teachers here redeemed by Jesus Christ," a fact absolutely opposed to teachings in Calvinism. B. C. Caffin, Pulpit Commentary, Vol. 22, 2 Peter, p. 43, also agreed that, "The word for Master, here, implies that the deniers stand to the Lord in the relation of slaves, bondservants."

Despite this clause, however, Calvinistic ideas are defended in spite of it by some. F. F Bruce, Answers to Questions, p. 131, attributed to the false teachers, not any salvation at all, but a "measure of enlightenment" showing "in the end, their real unregenerated nature."

Throughout this chapter, there are extensive teachings which demand the understanding that the apostates had indeed known the Lord in the primary salvation of their souls, but who fell away, forsook the right way, and "went back."

"Bringing swift destruction upon themselves . . ." Alfred Plummer, op. cit., p. 451, wrote, "This does not mean, "coming soon," but, "coming suddenly and unexpectedly so as to preclude escape."

Verse 2

"Many will follow . . ." True Christianity was prophesied to be followed by a period of wholesale defection from the truth. The vast majority of men will fall in with error and immorality. The truth will not be popular in the period foretold here. Adam Clark, Commentary on the Whole Bible, Vol. VI, p. 885, wrote, "Lasciviousness points to the nature of the heresies, a sort of

Antinomianism; they pampered and indulged the lusts of the flesh; and if the Nicolaitans are meant, it is very applicable to them, for they taught the community of wives, etc.”

“The way of the truth . . .” This was an early name for Christianity. (Acts 9:2)

“Will be maligned . . .” Antinomianism has foundation in the misunderstanding of Paul’s teaching on salvation “by faith,” which men have willfully perverted to mean “by faith alone,” being apparently blind to the fact that if one is saved by faith alone; he is by that very definition saved without morality of any kind.

Verse 3

“In their greed . . .” The making of money is the motivation for a great deal of false teaching, the false teachers invariably being concerned, not with what is true, but what is popular.

“With false words. . .” Any allegation that the apostate teachers appearing at various times during the historical progression of Christianity may be thought of as “sincere and honest” is vigorously denied by this. They, many of them, if indeed not the vast majority, are not sincere and honest in any sense of the words. Their words are “feigned,” translated by Edgar J. Goodspeed, *The New Testament, An American Translation*, in loco, “as pretended,” by J. B. Phillips, *The New Testament in Modern English*, in loco, as “bogus,” and by Charles B. Williams, *The New Testament, a Translation in the Language of the People*, in loco as “messages manufactured by themselves.”

“Their judgment from long ago . . .” As E. M. Zerr, *Bible Commentary*, 2 Peter, p. 273, wrote, “This means that the judgment or condemnation of such characters is of long standing, but that God has not changed His mind about it, nor tempered His wrath against them.”

“Their destruction is not asleep . . .” Alfred Plummer, *op. cit.*, p. 451, wrote, “It is of interest that this word occurs only one other time in the New Testament.” (Matthew 25:5)

Verse 4

Peter with this verse cited some historical examples of God's judgment and condemnation of the wicked (noting also that the righteous were spared), these being:

- (1) the example of sinning angels,
- (2) the case of Noah and his generation,
- (3) the example of Sodom and Gomorrah, and
- (4) the deliverance of Lot. Peter received this from the Lord; for he was present when the Lord cited these very things, and in exactly the same order. (Luke 17:25ff)

Stephen W. Paine, *op. cit.*, p. 995, wrote, "There is (in Peter's account) and absence of that rather wild and questionable theorizing and intrusion of non-spiritual concept which is evident to the casual reader of Enoch."

The reason for this is clear. Peter was not inspired by Enoch, but by the Lord Jesus Christ.

"Angels when they sinned . . ." Very little is known of this; but, if as widely assumed, Satan himself was the leader of the sinning angels, it was through pride that he fell (Ezekiel 28:12ff, and 1 Timothy 3:6); and from this deduction that pride was also the sin of angels, a suggestion not denied by Jude 6. The point Peter made was that God did not spare them, but condemned them.

"Cast them into hell . . ." James Macknight, *op. cit.*, p. 543, wrote, "The word here rendered "hell" is "Tartarus," a word not found in any other of the sacred writings. The meaning of the word must therefore be sought in the pagan literature.

R. H. Strachan, *op. cit.*, p. 135, wrote, "In Homer, Hades is the place of confinement of dead men, and Tartarus is the name given to a murky abyss beneath Hades, in which the sins of fallen immortals are punished."

James Macknight, *op. cit.*, p. 544, tells that there were other pagan references to Tartarus as being "in the air." It was natural for Peter, writing to

Greeks, to use their word with reference to the state of condemnation of the angels, but without endorsement of any of the pagan traditions about the fallen Titans.

“Committed them to pits of darkness . . .” The language here is figurative, darkness symbolizing their separation from God and their existence under his disapproval and condemnation.

“Reserved for judgment . . .” The fallen angels are not being punished now, but they are reserved to the Day of Judgment. The point is that according to Albert E. Barnett, *op. cit.*, p. 190, “If angels that sinned are confined in nether gloom until the judgment, assuredly heretical teachers and their immoral followers should know that, “Their destruction has not been asleep.”

Verse 5

Peter here refers to the flood recorded in Genesis as an historical event, denying the allegation of some that it was a myth.

“The ancient world . . .” In the Greek text here, Peter omitted the article; but R. H. Strachan, *op. cit.*, p. 135, wrote, “This is not a mark of illiteracy. The chapter is prophetic in form, and the omission of the article is characteristic of this style.”

“Noah . . . with seven others . . .” These were Noah, Shem, Ham, and Japheth, with their respective wives.

“A preacher of righteousness . . .” There is not a word in Enoch about Noah having been a preacher of righteousness; not, for that matter, even a word in the Old Testament about it. The link is not between Peter and Enoch, but between Peter and Christ. The implication is clear, even in the Old Testament that Noah attempted to persuade his contemporaries to renounce their evil ways and turn to God.

Verse 6

“Sodom and Gomorrah . . .” These cities were destroyed by God because of their wickedness; and it should not be lost on men of our own generation that the very type of sins prevalent in those two cities has become accepted in some

circles today. Such a thing is a commentary upon the depravity of our own era. What were those sins? James Macknight, *op. cit.*, 546, wrote, “The sin of Sodom was unnatural lusts (Genesis 19:5), and pride with fullness of bread and abundance of idleness, especially among the women, and hard-heartedness toward the poor. (Ezekiel 16:46 and Jude verse 7)

It is quite significant that the two destructions in view in this and the preceding verses were:

- (1) by water in the first instance; and
- (2) by fire in the second, a sequence which we have already observed was pointed out by Jesus Himself. (Luke 17:25 ff)

Albert E. Barnett, *op. cit.*, p. 190, wrote, “The sequence also prepares for 3:6-7 where the destruction of the world that then existed by water serves to warn that the heavens and the earth that now exist have been stored up for fire.”

Verse 7

Peter injected this to show that whatever judgments may be executed upon the wicked, God will acknowledge and preserve the righteous.

“Sensual conduct . . .” Albert Barnes, *Barnes’ Notes on the New Testament*, 2 Peter, p. 244, wrote, “The corruption of Sodom was open and shameless; and as Lot was compelled to see much of it, his heart was pained.”

Verse 8

In view of the rather sordid record of Lot’s life in Genesis, some have questioned why such an epithet as “righteous” should be repeatedly applied to him here. When Lot’s life is evaluated in connection with the depraved culture of his day, the true value of it is evident. He was displeased with the wickedness around him; he did not participate in it; he was thoughtful to entertain strangers, thereby entertaining angels unawares, as extolled in Hebrews 13:2; he was accounted righteous by Abraham who, in his great intercession for the doomed cities, evidently included Lot among the ten righteous persons, who, he felt, were living there; and when God commanded him to leave Sodom, Lot did

not hesitate to obey. In view of all these things, Peter's reference to him here is justified.

Verse 9

The great point of this is that the righteous will be preserved through all of God's judgments against the wicked.

"Under punishment . . ." From this, some have concluded that the fallen angels, and other wicked beings are now suffering punishment; but Peter may well have used "under punishment" as a short form for "under sentence of punishment." It seems clear from Matthew 8:29, that there is "a time" appointed for the punishment of the wicked, a time yet future. (Jude 6)

This verse is actually the culmination of all Peter had been saying, reaching all the way back to verse 4. Raymond C. Kelcy, *The Letters of Peter and Jude*, p. 141, wrote, "The protasis (that is, the conditional clauses antecedent to a conclusion) begins in verse 4; the apodosis (conclusion) is here.

Despite what is said in the second paragraph above, scholars like Russell and Caffin are sure that the wicked are under punishment at the present time. B. C. Caffin, *op. cit.*, p.45, wrote, "The wicked are already under punishment, awaiting judgment, as indicated by the parable of Dives and Lazarus." James William Russell, *Compact Commentary on the New Testament*, p. 592, wrote, "This verse implies that the unrighteous are always under punishment from the time that sin is committed, both before the judgment and after. Even between death and the judgment there is apparently a division between the righteous and the wicked. (Luke 16:19-21)

We do not despise such views as these, for there is certainly a measure of truth in them. The only uncertainty pertains to the scarcity of information in the Bible about such things, and the inability, really, to be certain about the full implications of what is revealed. The Lord simply has not given men a blueprint of the unseen world. E. M. Zerr, *op. cit.*, p. 274, for example, on this very clause made the deduction from the word "reserved" that, "The punishment of the unjust is to be at a future time." Albert E. Barnett, *op. cit.*, p. 191, struck a kind of middle position, which may be exactly right in saying, "They will get a

foretaste of the punishment which will become their permanent destiny after the Second Coming.

Verse 10a

This concludes the description of them that are kept under punishment till the judgment. The peculiar cast of the words here David H. Wheaton, *New Bible Commentary, Revised*, p. 1255, “Suggests that sodomy is here referred to.” It is as though Peter said that the sin of sodomy in particular is especially offensive to God and that the judgment of it is certain. Our generation needs this warning.

Verse 10b

“Daring . . .” R. H. Strachan, *op. cit.*, p. 137, wrote, “This is a shameless and irreverent daring.” A rather full description of the apostate teachers which will appear in the church is included in this and the following verses to the end of the chapter.

“Revile angelic majesties . . .” James Macknight, *op. cit.*, p. 547, said, “This includes reviling magistrates, but much more is meant. It is a loud-mouthed, blasphemous declamation against all that is high, honorable, or holy. Authority of any kind or all kinds is anathema to this class. They have one criterion that being whatever their selfish, lustful desires may prompt them to do.”

Verse 11

“Greater in might and power . . .” This is, greater in might and power than apostate teachers.

“Do not bring a reviling judgment against them . . .” The “them” here is the same as “the majesties” in the preceding verse. There is absolutely nothing in view here of angels bringing a railing judgment against other angels. This meaning, which appears so obvious in the light of what Peter actually wrote here, was certainly admitted to be possibly the true one as Alfred Plummer, *op. cit.*, p. 454, wrote, “Against them,” may possibly mean “against the false teachers.” . . . The angels bring no accusation against false teachers, but leave all judgment to God. (Deuteronomy 32:35-36, Romans 12:19, Hebrews 10:30) This

explanation avoids the awkwardness of making “dignities” in verse 10 mean “good authorities” and making it refer in this verse to “evil powers only.”

Peter’s verse here is the biblical equivalent of the statement in William Shakespeare, King Richard III act I Sc. 3 Line 70, that, “Wrens may prey where eagles dare not perch,” or Alexander Pope, Essay on Criticism, Part III, Line 66 that, “Fools rush in where angels dare to tread.”

R. H. Strachan, *op. cit.*, p. 137, suggested that the reference in this verse “is to the false teachers,” making the deduction that “angels are represented as not bringing before the Lord tidings as to the conduct of created beings.” Raymond C. Kelcy, *op. cit.*, p. 143, declared that, “It is far more natural to take the contrast as referring to the false teachers.”

Verse 12

“Reviling where they have no knowledge . . .” Stephen W. Paine, *op. cit.*, p. 996, applied these words to railers against the New Testament writing, “The characteristic of modern “liberal” critical teachers which amazes one most is their absolute confidence in their own conclusions, based upon evidence however trivial, and involving tremendously important departures from tenets maintained for centuries by the historical church.”

Alfred Plummer, *op. cit.*, p. 454, wrote that the contrast between the mere animals and the reprobate teachers is this, “Animals cannot help themselves; it is their nature to rush after what will prove their ruin; but false teachers voluntarily seek their own destruction against nature.”

Evil men, through fraud, violence, lust and deceit establish the very type of social climate which inevitably encompasses their own destruction as well as that of their victims.

Verse 13

“Suffering wrong as the wages of doing wrong . . .” is the same thing as Paul’s “wages of sin is death.” Evil behavior is its own wages. “Revel in the day-time . . .” David H. Wheaton, *op. cit.*, p. 1255, wrote, “Daytime revelry is a

feature of extreme dissipation; for the Christian, the day is a time of work. (John 9:4, Romans 13:13, (1 Thessalonians 5:7f)

“Stains and blemishes . . .” These are a reference to apostate Christians whose wicked and immoral behavior was a disgrace to the body of Christ.

“Reveling in their deceptions . . .” The Greek text here falls short of using the word for love feasts, which would appear to have been in the apostle’s mind, especially from his use of, “While they carouse (feast) with you” in connection with this. Perhaps he thought it was improper to apply a word of such sacred implications to the type of occasions used by the apostate teachers as a platform for their evil devices against the church.

Verse 14

“Eyes full of adultery . . .” Wheaton, *Ibid.*, p. 1256, wrote, “This is a compressed phrase for, ‘always looking for a woman with whom to commit adultery.’” Albert E. Barnett, *op. cit.*, p. 193 understood it to mean, “Whenever they see a woman, they have licentious thoughts.”

“Enticing unstable souls . . .” The imagery here is that of using a lure, “bait” to catch the unwary. The New English Bible translates this, “Lure to their ruin unstable souls.”

Michael Green, *op. cit.*, p. 111, wrote, “This metaphor is from fishing, and recurs again in verse 18.” Should not this have been expected of a fisherman?

“Accursed children . . .” These are the apostate teachers who at one time were truly born-again Christians. Eldon R. Fuhrman, *Beacon Bible Commentary*, Vol. 10, p. 332, was impressed with the reading in J. B. Phillips *New Testament*, “accursed children,” meaning, “under a curse.” They are under God’s curse now, and are heirs of doom in the world to come.

Verse 15

This clears up exactly the identity of the “accursed children” just mentioned. They were those who once were in the right way and then forsook it, who were lured from the path of duty by the wages of wrong-doing. Balaam was not always a false prophet; because, at one time, he was a genuine prophet

of God, one of the great Messianic prophecies of the Old Testament accredited to him; “There shall come a Star out of Jacob, and a scepter shall rise out of Israel, and shall smite the corners of Moab, and destroy all the children of Sheth (Numbers 24:17)

Peter’s choice of Balaam, once a true prophet of God, but later an apostate, is absolutely analogous to the apostate teachers, once true children of God, later “accursed children,” makes the meaning certain.

“Who loved the wages of unrighteousness . . .” The story is set forth fully in the Book of Numbers, detailing how Balaam, for the love of reward, attempted to curse Israel for the king of Moab.

The choice of Balaam is most appropriate in still another particular. Finding it impossible to curse Israel, despite every effort to do so, Balaam, originated the evil advice which he gave Balak, and which eventually was the undoing of Israel. He advised the temptation of the Israelites to commit adultery, a temptation to which they succumbed. (Numbers 31:16)

Verse 16

It is important that Peter accepted this event as historical; and Christians today should do likewise. Certainly, it is contrary to what is natural; because the event itself is supernatural. One who does not believe in miracles does not believe in the Bible at all, in any worthwhile sense. Take the supernatural out of Christianity, and there is absolutely nothing left.

Verse 17

“Springs without water . . . mists driven by a storm . . .” These are metaphors of the utter emptiness and disappointment that always come of accepting the teaching of apostates. This absolute emptiness is what is wrong with all false teaching. Stephen W. Paine, op. cit., p. 997, wrote, “It is this feature of the movement known as ‘religious liberalism’ which has caused great numbers of spiritually hungry people to desert cold, formal churches.”

In the desert, a spring without water would be the ultimate disaster; and clouds, or mists that promised moisture for burning crops, which instead of doing so were driven away, would be exactly the same thing.

“The black darkness . . .” James Macknight, *op. cit.*, p. 554, wrote, “In Scripture darkness signifies a state of disconsolate misery. Here it denotes the punishment of the wicked after judgment, which our Lord also hath represented by persons being cast into outer darkness. (Matthew 8:12)

Verse 18

“Speaking out arrogant words of vanity . . .” The empty, extravagant, and pretentious words of apostate teachers, is a phenomenon by no means absent from the earth at the present time. Albert E. Barnett, *op. cit.*, p. 194, describes their speech. They “use fine phrases that have no meaning, they bait their hook with the wanton appetites of sense.” Michael Green, *op. cit.*, p. 115, called it “ostentatious verbosity.” One translator referred to it as “canting nonsense.” But does it still go one?

“Those who have escaped from the ones who live in error . . .” There is no such thing as a partial escape, or a barely escape, from sin. One either has “cleanly escaped,” or he has not escaped at all.

Verse 19

Jesus the Lord Himself said, “Everyone who commits sin is the slave of sin.” (John 8:34); and Paul declared that, “When you present yourselves to someone as slaves for obedience, you are slaves of the one whom you obey, either of sin resulting in death or of obedience resulting in righteousness.” (Romans 6:16) Thus, what Peter said here is exactly an echo of the teachings both of the Savior and of Paul.

A glimpse of the allurements in the teaching of the apostates is this; because they were promising the people free and easy indulgence of all their sinful passions, “liberty” they called it; but the falsity of their claims was manifest in the fact of those false teachers being themselves veritable slaves of the darkest passions and debaucheries; Stephen F. Paine, *op. cit.*, p. 997, quoted a professor

by the name of Raauschenbusch who declared that, “The worst thing that could happen to God would be to remain an autocrat, while the world is moving toward democracy.”

Also, he mentioned another, a Professor Hartshorne, who said, “We no longer derive our ethical standards from established authority, whether state, church, family, convention, or philosophical system.” Such men suppose that they are “free;” but they are slaves.

Verse 20

The thing in view in this verse is a spiritual condition described as worse than being lost; and the thing that answers to such a condition is that of being lost without the possibility of being saved. Therefore, this verse is to be understood in connection with Hebrews 6:6, “Quenching the Spirit” (1 Thessalonians 5:19), “The sin unto death” (1 John 5:16), being “Dead while alive” (1 Timothy 5:6), that is, the state of having committed “An eternal sin” (Mark 3:29).

The apostate teachers in view in this chapter are in a state of total rejection of Christ, having thereby committed the sin against the Holy Spirit, called by Mark, “an eternal sin.”

Verse 21

Caffin, *Ibid.*, p. 49, said, “This verse implies that these unhappy men once had the full knowledge of Christ.” David F. Payne, *A New Testament Commentary*, p. 603, wrote, “The passage indicates that the heretics had been orthodox Christians in the first place.” Peter said they had escaped the defilements of the world, which could not be said of pretenders.” This verse also declares that the holy commandment had once been “delivered to them,” which is a far different thing from merely having been preached to them. These men had once been true teachers of God’s precious word.

Michael Green, *op. cit.*, p. 1128, wrote, “The subject of the whole paragraph is then the same . . . those overcome in verse 19 and 20 are also the same. There can be little doubt that the false teachers had once been orthodox Christians.”

Verse 22

The first of these proverbs is found in Proverbs 26:11, another indication of the familiarity which Peter had with the book of Proverbs. The origin of the second half of this verse is not known; but it is exactly the same kind of stark, realistic, down-to-earth saying as the other half, both expressions being exactly the type of homely wisdom that would have been familiar to a man like Peter. In fact, this whole chapter, the reference to “bait” in the enticement to sin, the impetuous and enthusiastic manner of the writing, as he piles word upon word, phrase upon phrase, rushing onto his conclusion—the whole thing is absolutely harmonious with what the New Testament reveals elsewhere of the mind and personality of this magnificent apostle.

Before concluding the study of this verse, it should be noted that we have to do here with a prophecy of what would take place in the after times of Christianity; and in a word, the prophecy has been most overwhelmingly and circumstantially fulfilled. Who can deny that the very things foretold by Peter are now in the world?

Peter was not finished with the prophecy at the end of this chapter; but he would go on to elaborate even more fully on these matters in chapter 3.

There is no logical way for men to deny that the Spirit of the Lord spoke through Peter in this epistle.

CHAPTER 3

There is here a continuation of the discussion of the great apostasy to occur in the “last days” (verses 1-7), revelations concerning the “Day of the Lord.” with refutation of the mockers (verses 8-13), and exhortations to steadfastness, and the doxology (verses 14-18).

Verse 1

“Beloved . . .” This word is somewhat of a keynote in this chapter, occurring here and verses 2, 14, 15, and 17. It contrasts with the vehement pronouncements against false teachers and mockers.

“Remembrance . . .” Peter had in mind their remembrance of the whole corpus of Christian truth as revealed not only by the holy apostles but by the prophets of the old dispensation as well. Raymond C. Kelcy, *The Letters of Peter and Jude*, p. 152, wrote, “It has been generally held that this refers to 1 Peter, and it is not necessary to think otherwise.”

Verse 2

This outlines the things Peter wished to refresh the memory of in the minds of his readers. David H. Wheaton, *The New Bible Commentary* p. 1256, observed that this verse, “Taken in general terms could describe the contents of 1 Peter.” However, David H. Wheaton, *Ibid.*, voiced the usual reservation that, “If this verse is taken as having to do with the Second Coming, it hardly describes Peter’s first letter.”

Some scholars are so uptight about Peter’s intimation here that both epistles are concerned with the Christian’s remembrance of vital truth. What truth? All truth revealed by the prophets and the apostles! True, Peter mentioned the Second Coming in this chapter; but that is by no means all of it.

The doctrine of the end of the world, the salient features of the great apostasy, forthcoming judgment of all mankind, the new heavens and the new earth, the inspiration of both the Old and New Testaments, to name only a few things, and many, many other cardinal tenets of the Christian religion are copiously mentioned in both epistles.

“By the holy prophets . . .” Even an innocent expression like this is pressed into service by the critics who assert that it indicates a later date, a time, they say, “When the reference to the prophets had become stylized!” (Michael Green, *Tyndale New Testament Commentaries*, 2 Peter, p. 125)

Only the advocates of a bankrupt cause would resort to an argument like that, especially in view of the facts that Luke mentioned “the holy prophets” (Luke 1:70), as did Peter also. (Acts 3:21)

“The commandment of the Lord and Savior . . .” This is very significant as showing that Peter had no reference whatever to some single promise of the

Lord, such as the Second Coming, but to the “commandment,” a comprehensive term here standing for the totality of our Lord’s teaching.

“Spoken by your apostles . . .” Peter included all the apostles as equal in authority with himself. As, B. C. Caffin, Pulpit Commentary, Vol. 22, 2 Peter, p. 65, wrote, “We must therefore understand this passage, along with verse 15, as a distinct recognition of the apostleship of Paul.”

This expression, “your apostles,” has been seized upon as the basis of an allegation that a post-apostolic time is indicated; however, as John A. T. Robinson, Redating the New Testament, p. 179, wrote, “This need not imply the end of the apostolic age, any more than when Paul said to the Corinthians, “If to others I am not an apostle, at least I am to you.” (1 Corinthians 9:2)

Verse 3

David H. Wheaton, *op. cit.*, p. 1257, declared that it is “likely” that the mockers here are the same as false teachers, of the preceding chapter; and J. R. Dummelow, *Commentary on the Holy Bible*, p.1052, considered it “probable;” but the view here is that they were almost certainly the same. This is indicated by two considerations.

- (1) They are sensual characters, walking after their own lusts, as were the false teachers; and
- (2) they are evidently men who were familiar with the “promise” of the Lord’s coming, who had once believed it, but then became mockers. From this, the deduction is that the great apostasy is still under consideration.

“In the last days . . .” There is a difference in this expression from “latter times” (1 Timothy 4:1), “the last days” (2 Timothy 3:1), from which (J. R. Dummelow, *Commentary on the Holy Bible*, p. 560, from which Macknight, *Ibid.*, concluded that, “Perhaps it means the last part of the days of the world’s duration.”

Verse 4

“Where is the promise of His coming . . . ?” As the centuries pass away, this objection recurs repeatedly, with greater and greater intensity.

The central thesis of Christianity is the Second Coming of Christ in the resurrection of the dead and the final judgment.

“For ever since the fathers fell asleep . . .” Michael Green, *op. cit.*, p. 139, wrote, “Nowhere else in the New Testament does this expression mean anything other than the Old Testament fathers.”

The Lord had predicted the fall of the Holy City, the destruction of its sacred temple, and the removal of the Jewish state, making of these things to be a type of the ultimate destruction at the time of the final coming and judgment.

“From the beginning of the creation . . .” It is not the time between the resurrection of Christ and this letter which is in view but the whole sweep of human history. Michael Green, *op. cit.*, p. 129, pointed out, “It is not said that things continue as they were from the coming of Christ, but from the beginning of creation.”

Verse 5

“It escapes their notice . . .” Far from being any intelligent and well-reasoned objection, the mockery of the scoffers was merely a loud and arrogant denial. Eldon R. Fuhrman, *Beacon Bible Commentary*, Vol. 10, p. 334, wrote, “It was based upon their unbelief in the supernatural, and because they resented any interference in their ‘walking after their own lusts.’” This is a perfect example of the enmity of the carnal mind against God. Michael Green, *op. cit.*, p. 129, wrote, “For men who nourish a belief in human self-determination and perfectibility, the very idea that we are accountable and dependent is a bitter pill to swallow. No wonder they mocked.”

“The heavens existed long ago and the earth was formed out of water and by water . . .” (Genesis 1:6-10) Disputes about what is meant by the earth being compacted out of water and amidst the water are best resolved by understanding this as Peter’s reference to what took place at Creation.

“By the word of God . . .” The universe itself was created by the great First Cause, who is God. The heavens and the earth were created by God. Alfred Plummer, *op. cit.*, p. 459, wrote, It was formed, “not by a fortuitous concourse of atoms, or by spontaneous generation.” Peter is presenting arguments against the mockers, his first being against their naturalism, as in this verse. God is behind everything, and that immeasurably important truth the mockers were willfully ignoring.

Verse 6

David B. Wheaton, *op. cit.*, p. 1257, stated the argument here as follows, “The argument used by the scoffers is phony. They have conveniently forgotten that God did intervene in judgment at the time of the flood.” God’s intervention and interruption of the orderly process of nature in the cataclysmic event of the great flood proved several things, willfully put out of their minds by the scoffers.

- (1) It cannot be argued that God will not again interrupt the steady rhythm of the earth. He did it once and certainly can do it again.
- (2) The excessive wickedness of men caused the first interruption, and it is logical to believe that excessive wickedness will be counteracted by another interruption.
- (3) It is quite easy for God to do such a thing. It was the mere word of God that created all things. Only a word brought the flood. Only another word will bring judgment.
- (4) The flood came upon the promise of God to Noah that it would be done. God kept that promise.
- (5) God has now promised that the world is stored up for fire; and God will keep that promise also.

Verse 7

This sequence of destruction, first by water, then by fire, was indicated by Jesus Himself in Luke 17:25ff, and reiterated by Peter, in chapter 2:5-6. No blueprint of what will occur is given, merely the bare fact of ultimate destruction by fire. Men may choose to disbelieve this if they will! Noah’s generation did not

believe God either; but those who are the elect will receive these words by faith that not a jot or a tittle shall pass away till all be fulfilled."

PROPHECIES OF THE END

There are a number of prophecies of the end of the world which do not suggest that it is to be accomplished by fire. Hebrews 12:27 mentions the shaking of the earth and the heavens in a context that implies their removal. Matthew's commission mentions, "The end of the world." (28:18-20)

"Heaven and earth will pass away, but My words shall not pass away . . ." (Matthew 24:35)

The prevailing impression created from reading the New Testament is that the general resurrection of all the dead, the Second Coming of Christ, and the general judgment of all mankind will occur simultaneously with the destruction of the earth.

"The day of judgment . . ." is always mentioned in the singular in the New Testament, indicating that it is the time when all of the happenings associated with it shall occur. The rational thought sustaining the biblical concept of a judgment day is extensive.

- (1) Without judgment day, there can never be any such thing as justice for every man.
- (2) Without a judgment day, the wicked would have the better of things in countless instances.
- (3) Without a judgment day and the accompanying assignment of the correct destiny for every man, the very justice of God Himself could be questioned.
- (4) The question of whether or not the universe itself is absolutely controlled by the God of eternal and infinite righteousness is definitely related to the biblical revelation of "the day of judgment."
- (5) The conviction that man is accountable to his Creator and that God will reward the fidelity of His servants and overthrow the ungodly is

the soul's last shield of protection from frustration, despair, and madness.

- (6) The revelation that there is to be a judgment day with consequences outlined in the Bible is the divine regulator, or governor, of human conduct, the only ultimate restraint of the unbridled lust and savagery of the human race.

“Reserved for fire . . .” is a very interesting expression; and James Macknight, *op. cit.*, p. 565, thought it related to the rainbow promise God gave to Noah (Genesis 9:11), and the declaration in Genesis 8:22, “While the earth remains, seed time and harvest, etc., shall not cease.” Note the words while the earth remains with the inherent suggestion that the earth shall not always remain. Macknight said: “The apostle has his eye on God’s oath to Noah, etc. Wherefore, the earth is not always to remain; but it is not to be destroyed by a deluge. It is kept from floods to be destroyed by fire.”

R. H. Strachan, *op. cit.*, p. 144, summarized the teaching of this verse writing, “The writer means that both the rainbow promise and the delay are to be regarded as implying that there will be no more great cosmic changes. The heaven and the earth are reserved for destruction by fire.”

Jesus Himself, a number of times, appealed to the flood as a warning to the wicked; and Peter also stressed it in his other epistle, as well as here. (1 Peter 3:9)

Verse 8

This verse is based upon Psalm 90:4, the thought being a refutation of the mockers who took the Lord’s delay as proof that He would not act. Barnett, as quoted by Michael Green, *op. cit.*, p. 134, wrote, “Faith orients man to eternity, whereas scoffers remain children of time.”

David H. Wheaton, *op. cit.*, p. 1257, pointed out that Peter here opposed the mockers with two arguments:

- (1) “time is of no consequence to God,” and

(2) “Through His love for men, God is keeping open the door of repentance for men as long as possible.” The first of these arguments is in this verse, and the second is in the next.

Verse 9

R. H. Strachan, *op. cit.*, p. 144, wrote, “Here the writer of this epistle enables us to view the summit of the Christian faith, and to rise to a magnificent conception of God.”

William Barclay, *The Letters of James and Peter*, p. 343, even went so far as to see a hint of universalism in it, “Ever and again there shines in Scripture the glint of the larger hope . . . that somehow and some time, God . . . will bring the whole world to Himself.”

God wants all men to be saved; and Jesus gave himself as a propitiation for our sins, and not for ours only, but for the sins of the whole world. Nevertheless, some men will exercise their free will to exclude God from their lives; and this God cannot prevent without taking away from men the very freedom of choice that makes them men.

“But is patient . . .” Long ago, Augustine said, “God is patient because He is eternal.” Alfred Plummer, *op. cit.*, p. 459, wrote, “He who is from everlasting to everlasting can afford to wait.” There would appear to be another reason for God’s delay, evident in the next clause.

“Not wishing for any to perish . . .” James Macknight, *op. cit.*, p. 568, wrote: “The time of the end is deferred, that the number of them that are saved ,may be filled up.” (Note: more in verse 12)

Peter also included the principle of God’s longsuffering towards men in 1 Peter 4:20, which recounts the longsuffering of God in the days of Noah.

Verse 10

The obvious intention of the apostle Peter being that of giving a literal account of what will take place on the day of the Lord. It is not clear whether the planet earth in totality is to be destroyed by water; it is the literal earth

which was , in a specific sense, destroyed by water; it is the literal earth which Peter here prophesied would be destroyed by fire.

What will it all be like? We do not know. Faith in God and in His holy word is the only true enlightenment that is available on such a passage as this.

“Like a thief . . .” Paul used this figure of the thief’s sudden coming (1 Thessalonians 5:2); the apostle John used it twice (Revelation 3:3, 16:15); but it was Christ who first used it (Matthew 24:43).

“The Day of the Lord . . .” As used throughout the New Testament, this word indicates the Second Coming and the judgment.

“In which the heavens shall pass away with a great noise . . .” The word for “heavens” here is from *ouranos*, a word with different meanings in the New Testament.” (W. E. Vine, *An Expository Dictionary of New Testament Words*, vol, ii, p. 208). Among these are “the atmosphere” (Matthew 6:26), “the heavens” (the sun , moon and stars) (Matthew 24:29, 35) and “the eternal dwelling place of God” (Matthew 5:16, 12:50).

“With a roar . . .” The word for roar is *rhoizedon*, a powerful word. Michael Green, op. cit., p. 138, wrote what the word is used for, “The swish of an arrow through the air, a rumbling of thunder, the crackle of flames, the scream of the lash as it descends, the rushing of mighty waters, or the hissing of a serpent.” Lumby, as quoted by Green, Ibid. writes, “Peter has chosen it as if he would unite many horrors in one.”

“It’s works will be burned up . . .” By this is meant the basic building blocks of all material things, the very atoms themselves. Well into the period spanned by countless people now living, the scientific world was certain that such a thing as that mentioned by Peter here was impossible.

Today, all nations tremble in fear of atomic fires that may devastate and make uninhabitable the whole earth. Besides that, the strides in the field of astronomy postulate a fate of our earth that almost invariably is described as fiery dissolution, whether from the explosion of our own sun, or by the sun’s becoming a “black hole” and drawing our earth into itself! No one knows, of

course, how the end will be; but only a fool can believe that the end will not occur; and there is no reason at all to reject Peter's prophetic revelation that the end will be by fire.

Another important meaning in this verse was pointed out by R. H. Strachan, *op. cit.*, p. 145, "No distinction is made between the Day of the Lord and the coming of Christ. This is remarkable as excluding any idea of millenarian teaching."

Those familiar with some of the so-called translations and certain writers will be aware that some attempt to translate "will be burned up" in this passage, as "shall be manifested;" but as B. C. Caffin, *op. cit.*, p. 68, wrote, "The reading 'shall be burned up' is well supported, and suits the context best."

Verse 11

The great ethical purpose of Christianity is clear in this. Christ came to save people from their sins, not in their sins; and the recognition of the ultimate fate of all mortals, should have but one issue, that of godliness and holy living.

B. C. Caffin, *op. cit.*, p.68, pointed out that the prophetic tense is in use here, "Seeing that all these things are being dissolved. The participle is present, and implies the certainty of the event foretold."

"All these things are to be destroyed . . ." People who will not believe in the Second Coming of Christ and the accompanying judgment of all the world inevitably have a tendency to live careless and sinful lives. There is a positive and definite connection between what one believes and what one does. It was to this principle that this verse is addressed. When people reject the knowledge of God and the revelation in His word, life for such persons automatically loses all real value. On the other hand, when people view life as a probation lived under the guidance and observance of the Father of all Creation, life becomes for them, endowed with infinitely greater dimensions. The goal, purpose, or intention of living immediately invests with true meaning and significance every experience of life. This is "the abundant life" in Christ.

William Barclay, *op. cit.*, p. 345, has given a wonderful summary of the end results of godless lives, gleaned from the heathen tombs, wrote, "I was nothing; I am nothing; so thou who art still alive, eat, drink, and be merry. Once I had no existence; now I have none. I am not aware of it. It does not concern me. Charidas, what is below, deep darkness, but what of the path, upward? All a lie. . . Then we are lost. Without the truth embodied in the second coming doctrine, life is going nowhere; there is nothing left to live for."

Verse 12

Peter seems here to be repeating the words he had heard from Jesus' own lips. "Looking for and hastening the coming of the day of God . . ." David F. Payne, *op. cit.*, p. 605, wrote, "This is a striking suggestion, implying that men, in some way, can speed up God's plans." It is suggested by many that this underlies Jesus' commandment to pray, "Thy kingdom come," meaning the kingdom in its eternal phase.

B. C. Caffin, *op. cit.*, p. 68, also observed that the remarkable coincidence of thought between this passage and the one in Acts 3:19-21, "Furnishes an argument of considerable weight in favor of the genuineness of this epistle."

"The Day of God . . ." in this verse is used of the very same day called "the Day of the Lord" in verse 10, where Jesus Christ is clearly intended, being an incidental but powerful witness of the apostolic identification of the Lord Jesus Christ with deity.

"Elements will melt with intense heat . . ." B. C. Caffin, *op. cit.*, p. 68, noted that the word for "heat" here is given a stronger term than used in verse 10, meaning "being melted away," or consumed, also, that, "The tense is the prophetic present, implying a certain fulfillment."

Verse 13

God had said through Isaiah that a new heavens and a new earth would be created, and that the former heaven and earth would be no more (Isaiah 65:17); and whether Peter meant by "His promise" in this verse, that of, or the Saviors' own promise through Himself may not be differentiated, for they are the same

anyway. It goes without saying that Christ and the apostles did not add very much information to that Isaiah gave. It was not intended for men to know more than this. Also, regarding speculations about “just how” all of the marvelous things that are foretold will come about is exceedingly dangerous and precarious.

Verse 14

By this verse, Peter made it absolutely clear that only holiness and righteousness shall survive in the eternal world; and his admonition has the effect of warning the Christians to strive toward the eternal values. All else will eventually fail any away.

Verse 15

“The patience of our Lord . . .” Indeed Paul did write of longsuffering, not only as an attribute of God, but as a grace to be cultivated by Christians.

“According to the wisdom . . .” This means that the wisdom revealed in Paul’s writings was not Paul’s, in the strict sense, but God’s, thus attesting the inspiration of Paul’s letters.

Verse 16

“In all his letters . . .” This indicates that Peter was familiar with a number of the New Testament letters ascribed to Paul in the New Testament, all of them being considered “Scripture” and “inspired.”

“Speaking in them of these things . . .” There are many subjects discussed in 1 Peter, which were also discussed by Paul in his letters. Among these are:

- (1) the great apostasy,
- (2) the eternal judgment,
- (3) the second coming of Christ,
- (4) the longsuffering of God,
- (5) the character of lawless and wicked men,
- (6) the need for watchfulness,
- (7) the fact of sinners being slaves of sin etc.

“Some things hard to understand . . .” Note that this does not say that it was impossible to understand them. The difficulties with some of Paul’s teaching invariably yield themselves to careful study. Alfred Plummer, *op. cit.*, p. 462, wrote, “The inference to be drawn from what Peter did here is not, ‘Do not read Scripture,’ but, ‘Be on your guard against being led astray.’”

“The untaught and unable distort . . .” This is not an accusation, the truth being that some of the most tortured wrestling of the Scriptures ever seen on earth has been by men of the highest academic training. James Macknight, *op. cit.*, p. 577, gave the true meaning thus, “The unteachable are persons whose passions blind their understanding and make them averse to truth.”

“Distort . . .” This word, also translated “twist” carries the meaning of “to twist with a windlass, to strain, to torture, to distort.” (B. C. Caffin, *op. cit.* p. 71)

It means to use Scripture contrary to the way it was intended, extracting meanings that are foreign to it.

“As they do also the rest of the Scriptures . . .” R. H. Strachan, *op. cit.*, p. 147, wrote that some very profound deductions are inherent in this. Paul’s writings here are clearly called “Scripture.” “We cannot escape the conclusion that the writings of Paul are classed with the ‘rest of the Scriptures.’” Michael Green, *2 Peter Reconsidered*, p. 31 as quoted by Robinson).

Michael Green, *op. cit.*, p. 148, wrote that the meaning here is thorough writing, “Peter constantly correlates apostles and prophets; both are led by the Holy Spirit. In chapter 1, the apostolic testimony to the divine voice, and the divine voice through the Old Testament scriptures, are regarded in the same light. In chapter 2:iff, the false teachers are accused of wresting the Old Testament; in chapter 3 of wresting Paul.”

There appears right here in this epistle a practice that in time was to become universal, that is, referring to the writings of both the Old Testament and the New Testament as “Scripture.”

“To their own destruction . . .” God will not deal easily with those who pervert His word and torture its meaning to support their own theories.

Verse 17

“Be on guard lest, being carried away . . .” B. C. Caffin, *op. cit.*, p. 71 wrote, “This is the “same word used by Paul in Galatians 2:13; and it was Peter and Barnabas, in that instance who were ‘carried away.’ “

“By the error of unprincipled men . . .” James William Russell, *Compact Commentary on the New Testament*, p. 594, thought this was, “A reference to the false teachers of chapter 2.” David F. Payne, *op. cit.*, p. 605, agreed with this, “Peter’s characterization of the heretics in this verse shows clearly the antinomian nature of the false teachers. Those who held it viewed themselves as under no obligation whatever to any laws, maintaining indeed that no laws applied to them.”

Verse 18

“In the grace and knowledge . . .” Quite clearly, both grace and knowledge here are used objectively as progress that the Christian is expected to achieve through diligent application, study and worship.

Some understood the “grace” to be that which Christ bestows but as, B. C. Caffin, *op. cit.*, p. 71, said, “Peter insists on the knowledge of Christ as essential in grace,” which of course it is.

“Beware” in verse 17 and “grow” in this, were seen by Eldon R; Fuhrman, *op. cit.*, p. 338, as, “The essence and theme of this whole epistle.” There are false teachers abroad; beware! A call to progress has been sounded; grow!

“To Him be the glory, both now and to the day of eternity. Amen. . .” This remarkable doxology is quite unlike those found in Paul’s letters. It is found only here in the New Testament. (B. C. Caffin, *op. cit.* p. 71)

“Now and to the day of eternity . . .” James Macknight, *op. cit.*, p. 578, wrote, “This teaches that eternity is a day without any night, a real and perpetual day.”

B. C. Caffin, *op. cit.*, p. 71, described the eternal day thus, “It is only one day, but an everlasting day, without yesterday to precede it, and without

tomorrow to follow it; not brought forth by the natural sun, which shall exist no more, but by Christ, the Sun of Righteousness.”

Albert E. Barnett, *Interpreter’s Bible*, Vol XII, p. 206, gives us a wonderful comment on this doxology writing, “There is high Christology here, putting Christ on an equality with God. The aged apostle says that:

- (1) Christ is central and crucial;
- (2) Christ shares the glory of the eternal God;
- (3) Christ is to be glorified now; and
- (4) Christ is the glory of that eternal day which encompasses and fulfills all our days.

Amen seals what he writes with a mighty “Yea.” What he has set down he believes to be true, so by an oath he authenticates his faith.”

This glorious epistle is a triumphant affirmation of a magnificent faith in Jesus Christ. Such a production is utterly beyond the power of any human being to forge. There are only a very few men who ever lived on earth who could have written a letter like this; and they are those apostles who heard Jesus Christ deliver the discourse recorded in Matthew 24. The entire epistle carries the inherent hallmarks of integrity, authenticity, yea more, the, “True inspiration of the Holy Spirit.”