

DIGGING DEEPER
2 PETER



Digging
Deeper
2 Peter

Study Guide

Acknowledgments

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2 PETER

Introduction

Our world is filled with cult leaders, religious scams, and others who would lead people astray. Estimates of the number of cults worldwide run as high as ten thousand. Some of these cults and many false teachers have even infiltrated the church.

The first letter of Peter was written to Christians facing persecution. Thus, 1 Peter reviews the person and work of Christ and stresses comfort and hope. But 2 Peter was written to counter false teachers who had infiltrated the church. The best way to counter-act false teaching is to know the truth which is the emphasis of this second epistle. A key word in the book of 2 Peter is “knowledge”, and is used 13 times.

Written from Rome in approximately A.D. 67, Peter wrote his final words urging believers to reject false teachers and to hold fast to the truth. Peter knew that he was about to die: ***‘I think it is right to refresh your memory as long as I live in the tent of this body, 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’ (1:13-14 NIV).*** With death in sight, Peter reminded his readers of their great heritage and urged them to look forward to the Day of the Lord. Soon thereafter, Peter fell victim to Nero.

2 PETER

Chapter 1

A. Peter's Greeting

Read 2 Peter 1:1.

- In contrast to **1 Peter 1:1**, this letter begins with the names *Simon Peter*. Peter comes from *Petros*, the Greek translation of the Aramaic word *cephas*, meaning, “stone.” Jesus had given this name to Simon: “*Now when Jesus looked at him and said, ‘You are Simon the son of Jonah. You shall be called Cephas’ (which is translated, A Stone)*” (**John 1:42**). The Gospels do not present Peter as rock solid, but he became a solid rock in the days of the early church, as we learn in the book of Acts.
- “*Simon Peter, a bond servant and apostle of Jesus Christ.*” Peter identified himself first as a bondservant, then as an apostle of Jesus Christ. The word translated “bondservant” (*doulos*) means “slave,” one that is subject to the will and wholly at the disposal of his master. It’s interesting to consider that a *bondservant* was a willing servant, one who had been set free by his master but chose to return and serve him willingly.
- The title “apostle” designated his apostolic position as leader and one of the twelve original disciples (see **Matthew 10:2; John 20:21-23**). Even more than a title of authority, “apostle” means one sent on a mission, an ambassador. Peter and the other apostles (including Paul—see **Romans 1:1**) had been chosen, called, and given the authority and responsibility to evangelize the world. “*Servant/Apostle*”—Both of these words together bring to mind a very important characteristic of a Christian leader: “*Servant-leadership.*”

- Possibly, the best term to describe a godly, biblical leader is this term “servant-leader.” There are many different thoughts regarding what a godly leader looks like. Some typical images of leaders, which are common in our society, are a drill sergeant, football coach, corporation executive, orchestra conductor, dictator, etc.
- Some qualities we associate with these leaders are strength, authority, power, dominance, decisiveness, superiority, intelligence, one who is never wrong, nor has needs.
- **Mark 10:42-45**—Servant-leader; **John 13:1-16, 34**—The servant-leader focuses on giving of self; **Philippians 2:3-4** Old Testament example **Genesis 13:5-12**. The servant-leader does not lord authority over others, but willingly serves the needs of all (**1 Peter 5:2-3; 2 Corinthians 4:10-12; 12:14-15; Acts 20:17-35**).
- It would appear that great leaders are modest, humble servants. But how? In this extremely self-centered world, how can one become a humble, servant-leader? Like everything else in the Christian life, it is simply another gift from God; it’s all by grace.
- Becoming a servant-leader is as much a matter of grace as salvation. Faith is always the only condition on the human side. Everything in the Christian life is freely given to us (**Romans 8:32**). Nevertheless, it costs—it costs us nothing *and* everything. Because the cross stands at the entrance to the Christian life, it’s this way, or not at all.
- In **Mark 8:31-35**, notice **verse 34**. We must deny/die to self which can only take place at the cross. Something to keep in mind is that promotion to leadership positions comes only from God (**Psalms 75:5-7; Romans 13:1**). However, we must remember that exaltation by God only comes at the cross.
- Our example is Christ Himself (**Philippians 2:5-9**). The lower we go with Jesus into death, the higher we

go with Him in resurrection. Without the death of self, which can only take place at the cross, our lives will only produce the deeds of the flesh (**Galatians 5:19-21**). The very best the flesh can ever produce is self-righteousness. Only those who embrace **Romans 6** can become confidently modest, humble, servant-leaders who walk by faith.

- ***“To those who have obtained like precious faith with us by the righteousness of our God and Savior, Jesus Christ.”*** The words *those* and *us* refers to those who were not apostles and to the apostles themselves (of whom Peter was one). All those believers who had *received the same kind of faith* as the apostles’ faith and had received it from the same source: through *the righteousness of our God and Savior Jesus Christ*. The apostles had been eyewitnesses of Jesus’ life, death, and resurrection. Some second and third-generation Christians may have been concerned that somehow their faith was inferior. But Peter reassured them that their faith was equal to the faith of the apostles; it was just as precious and just as sure, for it was faith that was obtained through God’s righteousness, not through any right-doing of man (**Romans 1:17; 3:21-22**).

Read 2 Peter 1:2.

- The first part of Peter’s greeting here is identical to **1 Peter 1:2** and similar to Paul’s repeated comment in each of his letters from Romans to Philemon. *Grace* is God’s unmerited favor; peace is the “fruit of the Spirit.” The Bible actually speaks of three different types of peace:
 - peace with God (**Rom. 5:1**)
 - peace from God (**Rom. 1:7**)
 - peace of God (**Col. 3:15**)
- These persecuted and suffering believers may have been feeling very little grace and an absence of peace.

Therefore, Peter reassured them that both grace and peace would not just be added, but multiplied, and be theirs “*in abundance.*” How? “*In the knowledge of God and of Jesus our Lord.*” The Greek word *ginosko* is the normal verb for “know.” When used with the prepositional prefix *epi*, the meaning becomes “comprehend thoroughly, know exactly.” This “knowledge is a progression that is best explained in **Proverbs 24:3-4**, and appears to be a three step process which we will explain more fully with the commentary on Chapter 1, verse 5.

B. God Has Given Us All Things

Read 2 Peter 1:3.

- Peter refers not to information about religion, nor cross-cultural seminars about differences between “faith” and “isms,” but to genuine, honest, personal, solid, life-changing, dynamic eye-openness to the true God Himself—“*the knowledge of Him*” (**John 17:3; Ephesians 4:13**). There is nothing in this verse about man other than being the recipient of God’s grace. It is God’s power that has given (that’s grace) to man everything needed for life (physical) and Godliness/God-likeness (spiritual), but take note how it comes: “*through the knowledge of Him.*”
- What’s at the center of this knowledge? God Himself; not just knowing about Him, but knowing Him, or as Paul comments in **Ephesians 4:20**, “*learn Christ.*” The phrase “*who called us by glory and virtue*” explains what attracts people to Jesus. Jesus’ glory (the impact of who He is, His splendor) and His goodness, grace, mercy, and love to sinful man is what draws sinful people to Him.

- “***Called***” means we believers are chosen (see **1 Peter 1:2, 15: 2:9, 21; 3:9; 5:10**). We are called to God for salvation and then to be molded/changed into His image. The call of God is always to Himself. Some Scriptures to consider: **Matthew 4:18-20; Mark 3:13-14; 6:7**.

Read 2 Peter 1:4.

- Continuing from his thought in 1:3, Peter explained it was through His divine power and through the knowledge of Him that Christ has bestowed “***His exceedingly great and precious promises***,” so that through these promises, believers “***may be partakers of the divine nature***.”
- How can we “participate”? To believers who are growing into Christ-likeness, Christ has granted a portion of His goodness (moral excellence) in this life. That participation in the divine nature begins with our new birth and extends into eternal glory. How can we “participate”? Believers are unified with Christ and share His nature (**Romans 8:28-29–“*molded into His image*”**).
- There are two very important phrases in the New Testament: “***In Christ***” and “***Christ in you***.” No wonder Peter called these “***exceedingly great and precious promises***”! In his first letter, Peter had written, “***You have been born anew, not of perishable, but of imperishable seed, through the living and enduring word of God***” (1 Peter 1:23). After our new birth, we begin to take hold experientially of all the things promised to us as children of God. There is no way to appropriate these all at once; it happens over time (**Galatians 2:20**).
- Being a partaker of the divine nature enables believers to escape the “***corruption that is in the world through lust***.” Many first-century false teachers emphasized a secret “knowledge” of God;

such people were called Gnostics (from the Greek word for “knowledge”). Gnosticism undermined Christianity in several basic ways:

- It insisted that important secret knowledge was hidden from most believers
- It taught that the physical body was evil.
- It contended that Christ only “seemed” to be human but was not.
- While these false teachers spoke about secret knowledge, Peter wrote of “knowing” Jesus Christ. Peter used their language to explain that all their conclusions were incorrect; people escape corruption and partake in the divine nature by God’s gift.

C. The Seven Virtues / Fruits / Qualities

Read 2 Peter 1:5-7.

- “*And also for this very reason*” refers to all that Peter has written in verses 1-4. “*Giving all diligence*” could be translated “give careful consideration to the following: add to your faith virtue (purity).” As mentioned elsewhere, the Christian life begins and ends with faith (**Romans 1:17**).
- Peter begins with faith and then presents seven virtues or fruit that appear to be progressive and develop out of our faith in Christ.
- The first is virtue or purity and is a direct product of our faith in our co-crucifixion with Christ (**Romans 6:6; Galatians 2:20**). In **Isaiah 6:1-7**, Isaiah reveals to us his experience as he drew near to God; God was like a mirror reflecting Isaiah’s sinfulness and in verse 5 he says, “*woe is me, for I am undone, because I am a man of unclean lips.*” With that, the Lord dispatched an angel having a live coal to lay upon Isaiah’s lips. This could be seen as an Old

Testament physical picture of our occupation with Christ which exposes the flesh and our need for the cross to purge us of our sin—and in its place comes purity.

- The next virtue or fruit is knowledge. From **Proverbs 24:3-4** we learn “*by wisdom a house is built, by understanding it is established, and by knowledge the rooms are filled with all precious and pleasant riches.*” There is apparently a progression, which begins with wisdom. A definition for wisdom is “looking at life from God’s point of view.” As we begin to look at life from God’s point of view, our spiritual house is built. It goes on to say, “*by understanding, it is established.*” As I look back on my Christian life, there was a point in my growth process where I was looking at life from God’s point of view. And all of a sudden I came to a crossroads in life and it was as if God was saying, “Ok, you’ve seen these biblical principles and now it’s time to apply them to your life.” I can remember at one point thinking about the Scripture that says if you exalt yourself, I’ll humble you, but if you humble yourself, I’ll exalt you. I came to a place where I was faced with that situation. I was thinking, “The world tells me that I’ve got to look out for number one. I’ve got to reach out for all the gusto I can.” But the Scripture says quite the opposite. I decided on that particular day I was going to go with God—I was going to humble myself and see what God would do. As I applied that Scripture to my life, I saw what God did and I said, “Now I understand.” The final phrase of **Proverbs 24** is “*by knowledge the rooms are filled with all precious and pleasant riches.*” The word for knowledge can be defined “familiarity gained through experience.” You’ve looked at it from God’s point of view, which is wisdom; you’ve applied it to your life and you

understand, now you know. When we get to this point, nothing can shake us off that rock of truth (**James 3:13**).

- “**...and to knowledge, self-control.**” Then there was this big issue of self-control. It was such a struggle for me personally because I had a problem with anger. Often I would find myself in a situation where someone would say something to me and I would get very frustrated, impatient, and angry. But as my faith grew in my co-crucifixion with Christ, I began to see the Holy Spirit was holding the flesh in the place of death. Now someone would say something and the anger would immediately come up on the inside, but I could control it on the outside. There was a control that started with an outward control, but as I continued to walk by faith and to grow in the grace and knowledge of the Lord, there came an inner self-control.
- “**...and to self-control, patience.**” Both self-control and patience are fruit of the Spirit (**Galatians 5:22-23**). As I continued growing and seeing self-control in my life, now the situations that were causing anger seemed rather trivial, and there was a growing patience with those unreasonable people in my life. Rather than going off having controlled my external anger but inwardly frustrated, all of a sudden there was a peace and patience with them.
- “**...and to patience, godliness.**” Our definition of godliness is “God-likeness.” Godliness is not man imitating God, but rather God reproducing Himself in a man. Christ-likeness is not a man imitating Christ; it’s Christ reproducing Himself in a man. When we look deeper at this term “godliness,” it’s the idea that God is actually living His life in and through us. As we grow in the grace and knowledge of the Lord Jesus Christ we will begin to see this progression of our faith producing purity and

knowledge and self-control and patience and God-likeness.

- “...and to godliness, brotherly kindness.” It’s interesting that one of the first things most new Christians want to see in their lives is brotherly kindness—love for other Christians. Looking at this progression, there is considerable spiritual growth that must take place before we will experience true brotherly kindness toward one another. In **1 John 2:9-11**, we read, “*He that says he is in the light (abiding in Christ) and hates his brother is in darkness even unto now. He that loves his brother, abides in the light and there is no occasion of stumbling in Christ. But he that hates his brother is in darkness and walks in darkness and knows not where he goes because the darkness has blinded his eyes.*” What John is communicating is that unless we are abiding in Christ, which is a maturing process, and unless we have grown spiritually to a point where we are occupied with Christ, there will be many times when we fail in loving another Christian. Why is that? A lack of spiritual maturity; the person who is unloving or even bitter toward his brother is basically walking in darkness, walking in the flesh.
- “...and to brotherly kindness, love.” The characteristics of love are best seen in **1 Corinthians 13**: “*Love is patient, love is kind, love doesn’t act unbecomingly, love doesn’t seek its own, love is not easily provoked.*” Love is patient and Peter speaks of patience. Love is not easily provoked and Peter mentions self-control. Love does not seek its own which is a picture of godliness. Christ gave up the majesty of being God and became a servant and humbled Himself to the point of death. **John 15:13**, “*Greater love has no man than this, that he lay down his life for his friend.*”

Read 2 Peter 1:8.

- When we look at our lives do we see that our faith is increasing as well as our purity and knowledge, self-control, patience, brotherly kindness, godliness (god-likeness), and love? If we can see that these are a part of our lives and are increasing, then Peter says we will no longer live barren and unfruitful lives.
- Let's give some thought to the words "barren" and "unfruitful." In **2 Kings 2** there's an interesting story. Elisha has come into this certain city and the men of the city said to Elisha, "***Behold, I pray thee the situation of the city is pleasant as my Lord sees it, but the water is naught and the ground is barren.***" As Elisha looked over this city, it looked beautiful. It was springtime, everything was growing and budding. To the eyes, the men said it looked very pleasant. However, underneath all that beauty, the water was stagnant and the ground is barren. The word "barren" has the idea of a miscarriage. Everything is growing, the fruit is on the trees, everything looks beautiful, but then just as the fruit is about to ripen, it prematurely falls to the ground to rot and die. Often our lives are barren and unfruitful. Elisha said, "***Bring to me a new bowl and put salt in it.***" (Salt is an Old Testament picture of the risen Jesus Christ). They brought it to him and "***He went out to the source of the water and cast in the salt there and said, 'Thus says the Lord: "I have healed this water; from it there shall be no more death or barrenness."***" Notice he went back to the spring, to the source of the water and threw the salt in there. We could say that Jesus Christ must be at the source; or more accurately, He must be the source of our lives.

- Peter is saying go back to the source—Jesus Christ, and add to that faith in Christ, virtue, knowledge, self-control, etc. If these things are in you and are increasing, you will no longer have a barren and unfruitful life. Notice the key phrase at the end of verse 8: “*in the knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ.*”
- Our daily walk with Christ, our daily faith in Christ, our abiding in Christ, our occupation with Christ must become a dynamic part of our lives which will result in spiritual maturity as well as good fruit. Abiding and resting in Christ does not depend on positive character qualities and good works. Rather, it produces those character qualities and good works. A person who claims to be abiding in Christ and occupied with Him while remaining unchanged does not understand the Christian life and what God has done for him or her. A moment by moment, day by day walk of faith, which comes from a true knowledge of Jesus Christ, will produce a growth in these character qualities, which then will produce believers who make a difference in our world and persevere to the end.

D. Warning For Those Who Lack These Qualities

Read 2 Peter 1:9.

- “*He who lacks these things...*” What things? Faith, knowledge, self-control, etc. Notice Peter says he is blind. Thinking back to **Ephesians 4:17-19**, “*Walk not in the vanity of your mind, having your understanding darkened.*” The thought that Paul is communicating in this Ephesian passage is that as we begin to walk in the vanity of our minds (pursuing worthless things) and as we are occupied with

anything other than Jesus Christ, at some point, our understanding is darkened. Or as Peter says, “*we are blind and cannot see clearly.*” We forget that we were “*purged from our old sins*” (Romans 6:6).

- As we rest in the truth that the old man has been crucified, the Holy Spirit holds the flesh in the place of death and we’re able to walk free from sin’s power, or as it says, “*we’re purged from our old sins.*” It’s interesting to give thought to Peter’s reference to being blind or nearsighted. It could even be translated “shortsighted.” Peter may have meant that believers who are not growing in their faith could see only as far as the world around them. Their shortsightedness left them blind to the big picture, the whole idea of what Christ can do in and through a life. Thus, they remained tied to what the world has to offer.

E. The Key to A Confident, Successful Christian Experience

Read 2 Peter 1:10.

- The word “therefore” ties this verse to the preceding passage. Because Christ has empowered believers through the knowledge of Him, because He has given believers great and precious promises so that they can participate in His Divine Nature and escape the corruption that is in the world, and because believers are growing in their faith so that they do not become barren and unfruitful, we can be certain of His calling and choosing.
- On the one hand, we could say that our calling and election is already sure and confirmed because of our position in Christ. However, as we consider the believer’s behavior, if we’re seeing that we’re

growing in the knowledge and grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, if we're adding to our faith purity and knowledge, etc., this will confirm, **not** to God, but in our own minds, our calling and election.

- We will be able to see that our calling and election is indeed sure which will produce a security in Christ not only concerning eternal life, but also for our daily lives. Peter wanted to rouse the complacency of the believers who had listened to false teachers and believed that because salvation is not based on their good deeds they could live any way they wanted. Basically, he is asking, what does our life say about our faith? (**James 2:18**) ***"If you do these things you will never stumble."*** The believers to whom Peter wrote were in danger of buying into the message of these false teachers who taught that grace was a license to sin. Peter was countering this teaching by explaining that a true Christian who was called and elected by God and who was abiding in Christ would be able to avoid the trappings of the flesh and the lure of the world (**Colossians 1:22-23**).

Read 2 Peter 1:11.

- Peter is referring here to those believers who by grace through faith live a fruitful and triumphant life with God. For these, there will be an abundant entrance into heaven, a rich welcome into glory. This pictures the type of welcome that Stephen experienced as he was martyred in **Acts 7:56**: ***"I see heaven opened and the Son of Man standing at the right hand of God."***
- I remember hearing of a man who made the following comment; ***"When I die, I want to slide into heaven on my stomach, stretching out my hand for the threshold of heaven, burned out for Jesus."*** His idea of an abundant entrance into heaven—thinking that God

would look down on him and say, “*Well done my good and faithful servant.*” That is not the picture that God gives.

- A most often quoted Scripture is **1 Corinthians 3:12-15**: “*Now if anyone builds on this foundation with gold, silver, precious stones, wood, hay, straw, each one’s work will become clear; for the Day will declare it, because it will be revealed by fire; and the fire will test one’s work, of what sort it is. If anyone’s work which he has built on endures, he will receive a reward. If anyone’s work is burned, he will suffer loss, but he himself will be saved, yet so as through fire.*” The idea here is that God will put the fire to our works, which we thought were so good, and anything that was done in the power of man for self-motives (wood, hay, and straw) will be burned up. But those works that were done in the power of Christ will remain and are rewardable—thus, an abundant entrance into heaven.
- A picture of those who have been called and chosen but have been unfruitful and stumbled along the way, they will reach heaven and receive their salvation, but it will be as Paul says only “*as by fire.*” Whether this welcome will be any different is unclear, but Peter encourages his readers to confirm their calling and election and to ensure a rich welcome by growing in their faith and adding to their faith as they grow. Here is something to think about—unless God’s promise of eternal life with Him is true, unless the whole idea of a rich welcome and an abundant entrance into heaven is true, morality makes no sense at all. We might as well get what pleasure we can each day until death does us in. The Bible points to the culmination of this life when all believers will live with God forever. Today may be rather tedious, hum-drum, discouraging, or hurtful, but God promises a bright tomorrow when we enter into His presence and Jesus welcomes us at the finish line.

F. Peter Restates Importance of Knowing and Adhering to the Truth

Read 2 Peter 1:12.

- The New Revised Standard Version begins this verse in this way: “*Therefore I intend to keep on reminding you of these things...*” What things? The truth that He has communicated up to this point—that grace and peace will be multiplied to us through the knowledge of God and of Christ. His divine power has given to us everything pertaining to life and godliness, and we take possession of it as we apply faith to the knowledge of all that He has done for us. He has given to us great and exceeding promises, and we become partakers of His Divine Nature. Also the reminder to add to our faith purity, knowledge, self-control, patience, godliness, brotherly kindness, and love, and if these are increasing in our lives we will neither be barren or unfruitful. Add to all this that we can look forward to an abundant entrance into heaven.
- Good football coaches are constantly reminding their players of the basics of the sport because athletes need reminders of the fundamentals. Likewise, it is the same with believers. We are in constant need of the reminders of the fundamentals of the faith, even though we know them and are established in these truths. However, **Ephesians 4:17-19** is also a reminder that, as we walk in the vanity of our minds, our understanding is darkened and the result is that we drift from these truths.

Read 2 Peter 1:13-14.

- The NIV says it this way, “*I think it is right to refresh your memory as long as I live in this tent of*

this body because I know that I will soon put it aside as our Lord Jesus Christ has made clear to me.”

Peter intended to continue to remind the believers, to refresh their memories, to wake them up regarding the basic truths of their faith as long as he lived.

Read 2 Peter 1:15.

- Peter would do all that was possible to see that after his departure they would be able to remember these things. It's not clear how Peter intended to do this, but it is evident he was concerned that these truths are not forgotten after the deaths of those who had been eyewitnesses to Jesus' ministry on the earth.

Read 2 Peter 1:16.

- Peter could be referring to the cleverly devised myths of the false teachers or to fables about God's incarnation, resurrection, Second Coming (1 Timothy 1:4; 4:7; Titus 1:14; 2 Peter 3:4; 2 Timothy 2:17-18). Peter's comment, "*...but (we) were eyewitnesses of His majesty*" is probably a reference to the fact that Peter, James, and John were eyewitnesses to the transfiguration (Mark 9:2-8). The disciples had also witnessed some unusual demonstrations of power when He stood up in their boat and took command of the wind and waves and when He walked on water. He also gave them a tremendous glimpse of glory when He healed the sick, cast out demons, and fed the 4,000 and 5,000 people.

Read 2 Peter 1:17.

- The transfiguration was a brief glimpse of Jesus' true glory from God the Father. This was God's

affirmation of everything that Jesus had done and was about to do. The transfiguration actually assured the disciples that their faith in Christ was well placed and their eternity was secure. Jesus Christ was truly the Messiah, the Son of God. On earth, Jesus appeared as a man, a poor carpenter from Nazareth, but at the transfiguration, His true identity was revealed with the glorious radiance that He had before coming to earth (**John 1:5; Philippians 2:6**).

Read 2 Peter 1:18.

- Not only had Peter, James, and John seen Christ's glory, but they had also heard it as well from God Himself (**Matthew 17:1, 5**).

Read 2 Peter 1:19.

- Peter had reflected on what he and the other apostles had seen, heard, and experienced. Now, he was reminded of another assurance: he added the prophets to the mixture of evidence showing the error of the false teachers. What God had said on the mountain made the word of the prophets of the Old Testament even more certain. The transfiguration actually verified and validated all that the prophets had foreseen. God would come to earth as a human and save people from their sins. If the people were struggling with Peter's eyewitness account, they could go back to the Old Testament Scriptures and there find the same truth (**Matthew 5:17**). Peter is advising believers that they should pay attention to the Scriptures as one would pay attention to a light shining in a dark place. He encouraged the believers to continue in this manner until the day dawns and the Morning Star rises in their hearts. The day that will dawn refers to the Second Coming of Christ.

Christ is the Morning Star and when He returns He will shine in His full glory (**2 Corinthians 4:4-6**).

Read 2 Peter 1:20-21.

- Christians must be able to rest on the infallibility of Scripture or their faith is of no value. Thus Peter's words "***knowing this first.***" Perhaps the false teachers were denying Scripture by denying its divine origin saying that the words were merely the writer's interpretation, not God's words. False prophets produced false prophecies from their own fleshly inspiration; however, genuine prophets did not interpret the message as God gave it to them—they simply spoke what was spoken to them and recorded the God-originated and Spirit-motivated words. The same God who spoke to the disciples at the transfiguration had spoken to the prophets, guiding them in their writings.
- God inspired the writers, so their message is authentic and reliable. "***Scripture is given by inspiration of God***" (**2 Timothy 3:16**). God spoke to men called prophets the exact message He wanted written. Sometimes He spoke audibly, sometimes in visions, sometimes He put the message directly into their minds. The Bible is the only book in the world whose author is God. It was written over the course of 1,600 years by more than 40 men, and yet it still has absolute unity from beginning to end because God is the author.

2 PETER

Chapter 2

A. Introduction

This chapter includes severe warnings against the false teachers who had infiltrated the church and threatened to turn young believers away from the truth. It contains parallels to **Jude 4-16**.

B. Beware of False Teachers

Read 2 Peter 2:1.

- The end of Chapter 1 leads into the topic of Chapter 2. Peter explained that God had worked through humans to give His words to people. At the same time, however, evil was at work. The true prophets spoke and wrote God's Word, but there were also false prophets among the people.
- Back in Old Testament times, we see false prophets contradicting the true prophets. Some examples are found in **Deuteronomy 13:1-5**, **1 Kings 18:19**, **Jeremiah 23:16-40** and **Jeremiah 28:1-17**. These Old Testament false prophets were often telling people only what they wanted to hear. They did not speak God's words and they brought messages to make the people and the kings feel comfortable with their sin.
- So in verse 1, Peter said, "***there will be false teachers among the people.***" The words "among the people" indicate that the false teachers come out from among the believers and the church. Some interesting

Scriptures regarding Jesus' warnings about false teachers are **Matthew 7:15, Matthew 24:11 and Mark 13:22-23**. It wasn't long after these words were spoken by Jesus that false teachers infiltrated the churches just as the gospel message was spreading.

- Like Peter, the apostle Paul was aware of the dangers of false teachers and spoke out against them (**Acts 20:29-30; 2 Corinthians 11:13-15; Galatians 1:6-7; 1 Timothy 4:1-2**). John also warned against false teachers in **2 John 7**.
- The false teachers would secretly bring in destructive heresies and Peter explained that these heresies would actually deny the Lord. The word "deny" means to contradict or reject. Thus these heresies could have taken the form of denying Christ's Second Coming or belittling the significance of Jesus' life, death, and resurrection. Some actually claimed Jesus was not really God, denying His deity.
- Peter points out that the false teachers had no allegiance to Christ who had paid the price for them with His own life. Peter goes on to explain the seriousness of denying Christ in saying that by turning away from Him it would bring swift destruction on oneself. Swift destruction doesn't necessarily mean that something terrible would happen immediately because many false teachers seem to work and prosper for years. However, as Psalm 73 makes clear, when that certain destruction comes, it is swift and final. **Psalm 73:16-20** reads, *"When I thought how to understand this, it was too painful for me—until I went into the sanctuary of God; then I understood their end. Surely, You set them in slippery places; You cast them down into destruction. Oh, how they are brought to desolation, as in a moment! They are utterly consumed with terrors. As a dream when one*

awakes. So, Lord, when You awake, You shall despise their image.”

C. Tactics and Motivation of a False Teacher

Read 2 Peter 2:2.

- Despite the certainty of their destruction, the false teachers unfortunately will be successful in two areas. They will turn many from the truth who will follow their destructive ways (**Proverbs 19:3**); and if that’s not enough, they also speak evil of the truth and discredit not only the gospel of Christ, but also the deeper grace truths (**1 Timothy 6:1; Titus 2:5**). All throughout Scripture, we see this lived out—“*the way of truth is evil spoken of*” (**Jeremiah 5:30-31; Acts 13:45**).

Read 2 Peter 2:3.

- Peter certainly spared no words in his condemnation of the false teachers. He exposed their prime motivation, which is greed. Only money, not love for the people or truth, mattered to them. Notice his comment that “*by covetousness they will exploit you with deceptive words.*” The more people they get into their churches, the more money they have for bigger church buildings and bigger salaries; therefore, the people become merchandise. These false teachers were also distorting the truth and teaching what people wanted to hear. Such teaching brings financial gain because their message is popular; therefore; people come to hear (**Jeremiah 6:13-14**).
- Greed can take other forms besides money. False teachers may be greedy for power or popularity—it leads to preoccupations with numbers, converts or

speaking engagements. Peter ends verse 3 with, “*for a long time their judgment has not been idle, and their destruction does not slumber.*” The teachers may seem to be getting away with their exploitation, but all the while, condemnation is hanging over them and destruction will definitely be their end.

D. False Teachers Identified with Those Whose Punishment Is Certain

Read 2 Peter 2:4.

- If some people still did not believe in the punishment of these false teachers, Peter went back to the Old Testament examples of God judging evil in the past. He pointed out that God did not spare the angels when they sinned, which could be a reference to the angels who rebelled along with Satan (**Ezekiel 28:15**). Or it could refer to the angels described in **Jude 6** and **Revelation 12:7-9**. If God did not spare His angels, neither will He spare the false teachers—judgment will come. Peter says the angels who sinned were cast into hell. These sinful angels will be kept in hell, a place of punishment, until the judgment, their final doom (**Matthew 25:40-41**). False teachers will face the same judgement as the rebellious angels.

Read 2 Peter 2:5.

- Another example of God’s certain judgment against evil is when he brought the flood on the world’s ungodly people. Peter referred to the flood three times in his two letters (**1 Peter 3:20**; **2 Peter 2:5**; **2 Peter 3:6**).

- It's interesting to give thought to Peter's comment that God did not spare the ancient world, for the great sinfulness of all mankind led Him to destroy the entire rebellious civilization. Yet even as God was destroying all the sinful people in Noah's day, He protected those who believed Him—eight people in all, Noah and seven of his relatives (**Genesis 8:16**).
- Peter refers to Noah as a preacher of righteousness. However in all his preaching, few believed. Noah's faith in God made him an outcast. He invested all that he had in God's promise; he placed his entire family, fortune, everything he had, inside that ark. But his witness was entirely rejected. He convinced no one outside of his immediate family. As a preacher, he would have been regarded as a total failure, but he *"found grace in the eyes of the Lord"* (**Genesis 6:8**).

Read 2 Peter 2:6.

- Here is a third example of God's punishment of evil in the cities of Sodom and Gomorrah. In **Genesis 18 and 19**, it describes the sinfulness of those cities and Abraham's efforts to keep them from being destroyed. When not even ten righteous people could be found, God destroyed the cities by burning them to ashes. He rained on Sodom and Gomorrah fire from heaven and actually some versions say that those cities were condemned to extinction. The cities don't exist today. Peter explained that the horror of those cities, the ending of them, is an example of what is going to happen to the ungodly. Their ending will result in punishment and banishment from the presence of God. Peter's point is if God did not spare angels or the people who lived before the flood or the citizens of Sodom and Gomorrah, He would not spare the false teachers of his day.

Read 2 Peter 2:7-8.

- Just as Noah had been protected from the flood that destroyed the earth, so Lot (Abraham's nephew) had been rescued from Sodom and Gomorrah's destruction. The people of Sodom were wicked and great sinners against the Lord; we see that in **Genesis 13:12-13**. When God destroyed the cities of Sodom and Gomorrah, He rescued Lot who apparently was a man of some importance. When the angels went to take Lot from the city, they found him sitting in the gateway where the city officials met. The wicked manner of life or the licentiousness of the people of Sodom refers to an "*open and excessive indulgence in sexual sins*," and we see that in **Genesis 19:1-9**. However, Peter described Lot as a righteous man who was horrified by the evil in the city. The Genesis account does not make Lot appear to have been very righteous at all; in fact, it portrays Lot as having little backbone, little concern about immorality, drunk and so deeply involved in the city that the angels had to literally drag him away from it.
- Peter's description of Lot as righteous probably is best seen in **Genesis 18** by Abraham's prayer. When God chose to bring swift and complete judgment on the evil of Sodom and Gomorrah, He also graciously saved His chosen ones. Believers today tormented by the sin they see around them can take heart in the knowledge that one day God will make everything right. The wicked will be punished and the righteous, God's chosen ones, will be rescued just as God rescued Lot from Sodom and Gomorrah. He is able, to rescue believers from the temptations and trials we face in a wicked world. Lot was not sinless, but he put his trust in God and was spared when Sodom was destroyed.

Read 2 Peter 2:9.

- The point that Peter is now making is that if the Lord has done all this in the past, then He obviously knows how to rescue the godly from temptations and trials today as well as in the future. Peter comforted his readers with God's changeless nature.

E. Tactics and Motivation of a False Teacher (Continued)

Read 2 Peter 2:10.

- The certainty of the punishment described in the previous verses is for all evil people but is especially true of the false teachers. These false teachers were following the corrupt desire of the sinful nature, of the flesh. This wording refers to all kinds of immorality and perverted sexual practices. Apparently, the false teachers taught that Christian freedom placed believers above moral rules. They were actually promoting sexual indulgence. In addition, Peter mentions here that they despise authority. This authority could refer to church leaders or to the denial of the sovereignty of God. Most likely the authority despised by the false teachers referred to anybody, including God, who may have any rule over them at all. The false teachers lived as they pleased and Peter wanted to make it clear that they would not get away with it.
- The last part of the verse, "***They are presumptuous, self-willed. They are not afraid to speak evil of dignitaries,***" further describes the false teachers as arrogant and self-willed. Only such an attitude could account for their defiance of authority as described here. The phrase, "they are not afraid to speak evil of

dignitaries” possibly refers to spirit beings. The false teachers apparently were slandering spirit beings that they didn’t understand, perhaps by doubting the existence of supernatural powers.

Read 2 Peter 2:11.

- Peter’s point is that not even the good angels in heaven, though greater in might and power than the evil angels, would consider bringing against them slanderous accusations before God. Although the false teachers slandered the evil angels, the angels of heaven never slandered them when they pronounced God’s judgment on the evil angels, but they said, ***“The Lord rebuke you” (Jude 9)***. Perhaps the false teachers’ biggest problem was having egos so overgrown and inflated that they had no respect for authority, good or evil, lawful or unlawful.

Read 2 Peter 2:12.

- Of course, “these” refers back to the false teachers who were blaspheming in matters they obviously didn’t understand. Peter further describes these false teachers as brute beasts or creatures of instinct who are no better than animals. They lived and spoke from mere instinct that is from the flesh, the sin nature. Like brute beasts, the false teachers would be caught and destroyed. The false teachers of Peter’s day had set aside self-restraint in order to follow their passions, leading to self-destruction and eternal punishment.

Read 2 Peter 2:13.

- Peter explained that the false teachers would receive ***“the wages of unrighteousness”*** for the harm they

have done in turning people aside from the truth to their lies. While the false teachers tried to pass themselves off as superior teachers with great knowledge, they caroused in the daylight, in drunkenness and sexual immorality. Such acts were normally done under the cover of darkness, but these men were so arrogant and self-willed that they did not even attempt to cover up their behavior. They took pleasure in doing it in broad daylight.

- Let's read the last part of the verse in the NIV: "***They are blots and blemishes reveling in their pleasures while they feast with you.***" The false teachers were like blots and blemishes—like stains or rotten spots; they ruined the Christian's gatherings by their very presence. The feast may even refer to the Lord's supper. Keep in mind Paul's comment in **1 Corinthians 11:27** as he is speaking of the Lord's supper: "***Therefore whosoever eats the bread or drinks the cup of the Lord in an unworthy manner will be guilty of sinning against the body and blood of the Lord.***" Eating the bread and drinking the cup in an unworthy manner means that they have come to the Lord's table for the wrong reasons—not to remember Him, not to honor Him in any way, but they came for their own self-motives of gorging themselves or to get drunk.

Read 2 Peter 2:14.

- Peter had no easy words for these false teachers, no excuses for their behavior. Their sinful words and actions came from deep within. Their thoughts and motives were evil. "***Having eyes full of adultery***" refers to looking on women with lust. Peter said that they could not cease from sin. Like brute beasts that followed their instincts, they were in bondage to the flesh.

- “*Enticing unstable souls*”—like a fisherman baiting the fish, the false teachers waited out their catch; they didn’t waste time with the strong believers but sought out those who were not firmly grounded in truth and were weak in their faith.
- Finally, Peter says, “*They have a heart trained with covetous practices...*” or they have hearts trained in greed. These false teachers who were duping Christians, luring them away from the faith, were filled with pride, immorality, sensuality, greed, lust, slander, and self-will. No wonder Peter called them “*accursed children.*”

Read 2 Peter 2:15.

- Peter once again looks to the Old Testament for an illustration to apply to these false teachers. In their greedy, sinfulness they had left the straight road to God and gone astray. They followed in the steps of Balaam, who we see in **Numbers 22-24**. Balaam was hired by a pagan king to curse Israel. He hired himself out to a pagan as a prophet. He did what God told him to do for a period of time, but eventually his evil motives and desire for money won out (**Numbers 25:1-3; 31:16**). Like the false teachers of Peter’s day, Balaam loved the wages of doing wrong. The false teachers were not interested in serving God, instead they were using God and religion for financial gain and personal advancement.

Read 2 Peter 2:16.

- Balaam had been hired by King Balak of Moab to put a curse on the people of Israel. He feared their numbers and the power of their God. Balaam liked the offer of a reward for placing a curse on the people. He claimed to do only what God told him,

but the money was a strong temptation. Balaam probably thought he could figure out a way to obey God and still get the money. On his way to see King Balak, three times Balaam's donkey saw the angel of the Lord standing in their path ready to kill Balaam. Each time the donkey stopped and refused to go forward, Balaam beat the donkey.

- Finally, the donkey spoke and an angel rebuked Balaam for his wrong attitude and wrong motives. Balaam realized that the donkey had saved his life, restraining his madness; it was sheer madness to think he could go against God. Finally, Balaam obeyed God and refused to curse the Israelites. Like Balaam, the false teachers' attitudes were akin to madness. Balaam at least listened to the donkey. The false teachers listened to no one thinking they could oppose God and get away with it. They were steeped in sin, took great pleasure in it, and lured others to join them.

Read 2 Peter 2:17.

- The false teachers' messages ended in disappointment. Like a spring that gave no water, their messages could not deliver what they promised (**Proverbs 13:12**). Like clouds that brought no rain, their messages were without substance and could be blown away by the slightest wind of truth. What seems unbelievable is that the false teachers could make people believe their empty promises and enticements (**Jude 12, 13**) These false teachers taught lies; their fate had already been sealed because for them, the deepest darkness has been reserved. The word "darkness" refers to the final fate of all wicked people. The false teachers would be forever cast from God's light into the deepest darkness of hell.

Read 2 Peter 2:18.

- The false teachers drew attention to themselves by their boastful words. They spoke openly and loudly but their words were ultimately empty. They had no substance, no truth. Instead, they enticed people by offering new believers the lifestyles that they themselves followed living in complete disregard of moral laws. By appealing to the lustful desires of the flesh, the false teachers were able to draw many new Christians away from the truth. Who would believe the message of these false teachers? Not the strong followers of Christ. The false teachers focused on *“the ones who have actually escaped from those who live in error.”* That is, those new converts still unsteady in the faith, not yet firmly rooted in Christ, not yet free of pagan associations and habits. Those who live in error refer to the pagans. To these young believers, the empty, boastful words sounded very convincing.

Read 2 Peter 2:19.

- The freedom the false teachers promised was freedom to live as one pleased. However, such a promise of freedom was empty, for the false teachers were not free. Instead, they themselves were slaves of corruption. They had tossed truth aside in the name of freedom only to find themselves enslaved once again. Why? Because people are slaves to whatever masters them (**Romans 6:6**). Many believe that freedom means doing anything they want. But no one is ever completely free in that sense. The freedom Christ brings is freedom *from* sin, not freedom *to* sin. Let's focus again on the last part of verse 19: *“For people are slaves to whatever masters them”* (NIV).

- Too often freedom from authority leads to preoccupation with new pleasures that freedom brings. But these actions can quickly enslave a person. It's interesting to think back that Jesus had talked about true freedom to the false teachers of his day. To the Jews who had believed Him, He said, ***“If you hold to My teaching, you are really My disciples. Then you will know the truth and the truth will set you free.”*** They (the religious leaders) answered Him, ***“We are Abraham’s descendants and have never been slaves of anyone. How can you say that we shall be set free?”*** Jesus replied, ***“I tell you the truth. Everyone who sins is a slave to sin. A slave has no permanent place in the family, but a son belongs to it forever. So if the Son sets you free, you’ll be free indeed”*** (John 8:31-36; Romans 6:16; 1 Corinthians 6:12).

Read 2 Peter 2:20-21.

- The “they” that Peter is speaking of seems to be a reference to the false teachers. They had identified themselves as believers and had turned away from the corruption of the world. However, in time they turned aside from the faith becoming once again entangled in and overcome by the society in which they lived—an immoral and corrupt society alienated from God. Peter wrote that these false teachers were worse off at the end than they were at the beginning because they rejected the only way out of sin, the only way of salvation—like a person sinking in quicksand who refuses to grab the rope thrown to him or her. The one who turns away from Christ casts aside his or her only means of escape. Peter goes one step further by saying, ***“It would have been better for them not to have known the way of righteousness than to have known it and then to turn their backs on the sacred command that was passed on to***

them.” Most likely, these teachers had been part of Christianity but had not been truly born again (**2 Corinthians 13:5**). The Apostle John wrote, “*They went out from us, but they did not really belong to us. For if they had belonged to us, they would have remained with us. Their going out showed that none of them belonged to us*” (**1 John 2:19**). So Peter wrote these words that they would have been better off never having known God’s truth than deliberately blaspheming His grace, love, and forgiveness by rejecting Him (**Hebrews 6:4-6; 10:26**).

Read 2 Peter 2:22.

- Those who knew the truth and turned away from it were among the lowest of the low. To Jews no creatures were lower than dogs and pigs. The point Peter is making is that those who return to evil are no better than dogs that return to their vomit or sows that go back to wallowing in mud. (**Proverbs 26:11**—Dogs, pigs and foolish people) Those who make an outward profession of religion without a spirit-controlled inner transformation will soon return to their old ways of life. Dogs and pigs do what they do naturally, and people also return to their natural inclination toward sin.

2 PETER

Chapter 3

A. Introduction

The previous chapter focused on denouncing the false teachers. This chapter returns to the faithful believers offering them love and encouragement.

B. The Lord's Return Is Inevitable Despite the Claims of Scoffers

Read 2 Peter 3:1.

- Peter's purpose was to remind the believers that their lives ought to be characterized by sober mindedness and sincere understanding. It's interesting that Plato used the following phrase to refer to pure reason: "uncontaminated by the senses"; this would probably translate for us as "*pure reasoning, uncontaminated by the flesh*" (**Philippians 4:8-9**). Let's give some thought to this phrase "pure reasoning, uncontaminated by the flesh." Our only hope for this type of sober-mindedness would be through faith in our co-crucifixion with Christ, where the flesh is held in check and the Spirit is influencing and controlling our minds (**Romans 6:6**). Sober-mindedness is the absence of any deceptive influence or control, including the flesh, and replaced by the truthful influence and control of the Spirit.

Read 2 Peter 3:2.

- Paul had written in **Ephesians 2:19-20** that all believers are "*members of the household of God*"

built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets with Christ Jesus Himself as the Cornerstone.” Peter writes that the church was to remember what the holy prophets had spoken in the past and recorded in Scripture. They were also to recall the commandment of the Lord which could refer back to **John 13:34** when Jesus said, *“A new commandment I give you: Love one another. As I have loved you, so you must also love one another. By this everyone will know that you are My disciples, if you love one another.”* Keep in mind that the Holy Spirit unified the prophets and apostles in an unchanging message of hope and truth.

- The prophets had written of the Messiah who would come and the apostles had spoken and written that Jesus, the Messiah had come.

Read 2 Peter 3:3.

- Peter wrote that above all, we must understand what is to be expected in the last days, which began with Christ’s resurrection, and will continue until His return. Jesus and the apostles warned that during the time period we live in, scoffers will come (**1 Timothy 4:1-2; 2 Timothy 3:1-9**). Peter warned that the false teachers will ridicule the Scriptures and will live to please themselves and their sinful desires. Remembering what we studied in Chapter 2, these false teachers loved money and attention. Through distorting the truth they effectively divided believers and caused many to go astray. Paul called them *“hypocritical liars whose consciences have been seared with a hot iron”* (**1 Timothy 4:2**).

Read 2 Peter 3:4.

- The false teachers’ scoffing focused on the promise of Christ’s Second Coming. Jesus had promised that He would come again (**Mark 13:24-27**), but many

years had passed and nothing had happened. Concern about the delay of Christ's Second Coming had caused Paul to write words of encouragement to other believers. Some believers in Corinth questioned the truth of the resurrection (**1 Corinthians 15:12-58**). Some in Thessalonica were concerned that their loved ones who had died would miss the Second Coming (**1 Thessalonians 4:13-5:11**). Others in that city had stopped working in order to wait for Christ's return and had become a burden to the church (**2 Thessalonians 3:6-15**). James also wrote to the believers, encouraging them to have patience as they awaited the Lord's return (**James 5:7-11**). Of course the scoffers based their argument on the fact that nothing has really changed, so why think that it ever will?

Read 2 Peter 3:5-6.

- What these scoffers were forgetting in their argument that all things had remained unchanged was that God had created the world; creation disproves their comment that all things continue unchanged because the creation of the earth was a change on the formless void we see in **Genesis 1:1-2**. The very reason the world was continuing in a stable, predictable pattern was because God in His grace had created it that way. By the word of God, the heavens were created (**Genesis 1:6-8**); by the word of God, an earth was formed out of water (**Genesis 1:9-10**). The point Peter is making here in Chapter 3 is that as the creation was an act of God, so was the flood.
- The word "world" refers to God's judgment and destruction of the inhabitants of the world, not the world itself. Peter had alluded to this in **2 Peter 2:5** where he had stated that God protected Noah did not spare the ancient world when he brought the flood on its ungodly people. The real issue with the false

teachers is the same that's been going on ever since the Garden of Eden. The issue is to occupy us with anything other than Jesus Christ. If God can be discredited, if Jesus Christ can be set aside, then man is free to be his own god, to be in control of his own life.

Read 2 Peter 3:7.

- By God's word, the heavens and the earth were created. We saw that in verse 5. By His word, the earth's inhabitants were destroyed in judgment. We saw that in verse 6. By the same word, God will bring future judgment and destruction. God had intervened before—He will intervene again. But instead of destruction by water, Peter wrote that the heavens and the earth have been reserved for fire. In Noah's day the earth was judged by water, but the Second Coming it will be judged by fire. This fire is described in **Revelation 19:20, 20:10-15; Isaiah 66:15-16; Malachi 4:1; Psalm 97:3; Daniel 7:9-10; Matthew 3:11-12**. Judgment has already been destined. The Day of Judgment and destruction of the godless ones will come—it's only a matter of God's timing. The word "reserved" means "stored up or laid away." "Being kept" means "being guarded or held." It's interesting that 2 Peter is the only New Testament epistle that mentions the world will actually be destroyed by fire.

C. The Lord's Delay Is Due to His Mercy and Patience

Read 2 Peter 3:8.

- Peter had made his point that Christ would certainly return and bring judgment, but the question still

remained. Why was the Lord delaying so long? Peter offers two reasons in verses 8 and 9. First, the Lord does not count time as people do. He is above and outside the sphere of time. God sees all of eternity, past and future. Indeed, to Him one day is as a thousand years and a thousand years as one day. Peter urged the believers to once again remember the Scriptures. Psalm 90:4 says, “***For a thousand years in Your sight are like a day that has just gone by or like a watch in the night.***” God may have been slow to these believers as they faced persecution every day and longed to be delivered, but God is not slow. He simply doesn’t operate according to our timetable.

Read 2 Peter 3:9.

- The second reason for the Lord’s delay concerning His promise of His return was not slackness on His part. God was not tardy or late. The Lord is delaying His return because He is longsuffering and compassionate and wants as many people as will to come to faith in Him.
- When has God ever failed to keep a promise? When has God ever fulfilled a promise in quite the exact way that we think He should? When we think about this whole issue of His slowness, what could God possibly be waiting for? Look around at needy souls, lost without a Savior, ignorant of God’s promise. If we’re walking in the Spirit, then we’ll have the same compassion that God has for these folks and have a desire to see them come to Christ. Read the book of Jonah to see God’s compassion for the lost. Love is the reason that He delays the destruction of the world. Of course we see that in **John 1:4, 7, 9; and 3:16**. Some Scriptures that reveal God’s patience that we could consider are **Exodus 34:6; Numbers 14:18; Psalm 86:15; Jeremiah 15:15; Ezra 18:23; Romans 2:4, 9:22, 11:32; 1 Timothy 2:4**.

D. The Day of the Lord Described

Read 2 Peter 3:10.

- The “Day of the Lord” is referring to the day of Christ’s return and of God’s judgment on the earth. Peter repeated a warning used by Jesus that this day will come as a thief in the night (**Matthew 24:42-44; Revelation 3:3, 16:15**). Christ’s Second Coming will be swift, sudden, unexpected, and terrible for those who do not believe in Him. But for those who have put their faith in Christ, it will be a time of great joy (1 **Thessalonians 5:2, 4-5**). At the end of the verse Peter writes: “*...the heavens will pass away with a great noise, and the elements will melt with fervent heat; both the earth and the works that are in it will be burned up.*” Peter is quoting words that he had heard Jesus say describing the end. In **Matthew 24:29**, Jesus had said immediately after the distress of these days, “*the sun will be darkened and the moon will not give its light and the stars will fall from the sky and heavenly bodies will be shaken.*” See also **Luke 21:21; Isaiah 13:10-13, 24:19, 34:4; Joel 3:15; Micah 1:4**.
- Peter is communicating that this earth will not last forever. As God intervened to judge the earth by water, so one day He will intervene again. But in that day the judgment will be by fire and everything will be destroyed. He describes three aspects of this:
 - “The heavens will pass away with a great noise” describes the end of the earth’s atmosphere in the sky above.
 - “The elements will melt with fervent heat” could mean that the celestial bodies will also be destroyed (the sun, moon, stars and planets).

- “The earth and the works that are in will be burned up” can be translated “the earth and everything that is done on it will be disclosed.”
- This extremely difficult phrase has given rise to numerous possibilities but there seems to be an indication that the earth will disappear, being burned up, so that all the works that people counted on in this earth and in place of God will be revealed for their futility. When will these events occur? Some have placed them between the events of Revelation 20 (the thousand year reign of Christ, Satan’s doom, the final judgment) and Revelation 21 (the new heavens and the new earth and the descent of the new Jerusalem.) In **Revelation 20:11**, John says, “*Then I saw a great white throne and Him who was seated on it, earth and sky fled from His presence and there was no place for them.*”

Read 2 Peter 3:11-12.

- Peter’s description of the coming destruction of the earth ought to cause all Christians to carefully examine our lives. His question, “*what kind of people ought you to be*” is rhetorical. They already knew the answer, but he told them anyway—you ought to live holy and righteous lives. Such lives would be in direct contrast to the unholy living and godlessness found in the world and taught by the false teachers. Peter had described this kind of living in **1 Peter 1:13-16, 22-25; 2:1-3, 11, 21; 3:1-12; 4:1-11**.
- “*That day will bring about the destruction of the heavens by fire and the elements will melt in the heat*” (NIV). In case anyone had missed it, Peter repeated his point about the final end to the world. However, Christians will be safe through it. We can look forward to it.

Read 2 Peter 3:13.

- Believers are looking forward to the end of the earth because it means the fulfillment of another of God's promises: His creation of new heavens and a new earth. God's purpose for people is not destruction, but re-creation, not annihilation, but renewal (**Isaiah 66:22; Jeremiah 29:11**). In **Revelation 21** there's a beautiful description of the new heavens and earth. Believers are assured that righteousness is at home there because God Himself will live among the people.

Read 2 Peter 3:14.

- Peter is saying here that God's kingdom will be characterized by righteousness; therefore, believers ought to live holy and righteous lives now in preparation for living in the kingdom. The idea is to live in eager expectation of His coming. In 2:13, Peter described the false teachers as blots and blemishes; however, the believers were to be spotless and blameless as Christ was—the lamb without blemish and without spot. Our only hope for living this kind of life is through the cross, through our co-crucifixion with Christ. As **Galatians 2:20** states, “*I am crucified with Christ,*” and **Romans 6:6**, “*Know this, that the old man has been crucified that the body of sin might be rendered powerless and hence forth we are no longer slaves to sin.*”

Read 2 Peter 3:15.

- Remember the false teachers were attributing the delay to slackness on God's part; however, the believers were reminded to bear in mind that the

delay in the Lord's return was an indication of His patience.

- At the end of this verse Peter mentions Paul and says, ***“Just as our brother Paul also wrote you with the wisdom that God gave him...”*** In **Galatians 2:11-14**, Paul describes a time when he publicly rebuked Peter for being inconsistent in his dealings with Jews and Gentiles. While that has left some to believe there was friction between Peter and Paul, it appears they had great respect for each other as they worked in the ministries to which God had called them. Peter and Paul had very different backgrounds and personalities and they preached from different viewpoints. Paul emphasized grace, while Peter wrote about Christian life and service. Peter spoke sincerely of Paul as he here refers to him as “our beloved brother Paul.” Peter obviously recognized the value of Paul's letters in the growth of the church, for he described Paul as ***“writing them with the wisdom that God had given him.”*** In other words, these were inspired works.

E. Peter's Final Warning and Encouragement

Read 2 Peter 3:16.

- It's interesting to consider that the teachings of the apostles were never distorted by the person to whom they were given. Whether the letter came from Paul or Peter, the message could be depended on, for it had come from God Himself. By this time the early church was considering Paul's letters to be inspired by God, therefore Peter wrote of Paul's letters as if they were on a level with the other Scriptures. In the early days of the church, the letters from the apostles were read to the believers and often copied and passed along to other churches. The believers

regarded these writings to be as authoritative as the Old Testament Scriptures.

- The things that are hard to understand in Paul's letters, like our co-crucifixion with Christ, may have put off some readers. Paul himself mentions in Corinthians that the preaching of the cross is foolishness to those who are perishing. The grace message is often misunderstood and abused, and the false teachers had intentionally misused Paul's writings by distorting and condoning lawlessness. No doubt this had made the teachers popular because people like to have their favorite sins justified.

Read 2 Peter 3:17.

- Again, Peter is warning his readers about the dangers of false teachers by explaining the false teachers' tactics and future destruction. His thought was that being forewarned, the believers would not be carried away with the error of the lawless. To be carried away means to be led astray into error. "***Therefore beloved Christians,***" appealed Peter, "***be forewarned so that you can stand firm in faith until the end.***"

Read 2 Peter 3:18.

- Peter concludes this brief letter as he had begun by urging his readers to grow in the grace and knowledge of the Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. As we grow in knowledge of our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ, as we learn more about Him, as we learn Jesus, not just about Him, but truly learn Jesus (**Ephesians 4:20**), then we will grow in grace. Grace is unmerited favor, a free gift from God and as we grow in our understanding of who Christ is and what He has done for us, we will grow in grace.

- Peter ends this epistle with, “***To Him be glory both now and forever.***” As we grow in grace, He gets the glory; but as we grow in our effort to serve the Lord and any good thing does come of it, then we get the glory. So Peter’s case rests. The false teachers have been exposed and believers have been forewarned and encouraged.



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