

2 PETER

WRITER

The author of this inspired New Testament letter is the same as the first letter that carries his name (1:1). Though there are some differences in the style of writing, vocabulary and Greek structure between 1 Peter and 2 Peter, there is little doubt that the apostle Peter wrote this letter (See intro. to 1 Pt). Since Peter used Silvanus to write the first letter, we could assume that if Peter personally wrote this letter (1 Pt 5:12), there would be some differences in writing style between the two letters. Add to this the fact that it is common among writers that styles of writing often differ between the documents of a particular writer. There is thus no reason to question that Peter was the source from which these two documents of the New Testament were produced. In this letter Peter continues his concerning for his fellow Jews.

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PURPOSE

Peter knows that his death is in the near future. Therefore, he wrote this last epistle to warn his readers against false teachers who had entered the fellowship of the disciples and were teaching those things that would lead to their destruction. He exhorted his readers to remain faithful to the truth. He exhorted them (1) by instructing them to grow in holy living that is based on true knowledge (1:1-21), (2) by revealing the unholy life-style of those who forsake the truth (2:1-11), and (3) by giving them hope for the future because of the judgment of God upon all wickedness (3:1-18). In view of the trying political times, this is a stern letter of exhortation that the disciples remain faithful.

Prevention of Apostasy

(1:1-21)

Outline: (1) Introduction (1:1), (2) Living a holy life (1:2-11), (3) Source of true knowledge (1:12-15), (4) Faith based on facts (1:16-21)

Chapter 1

INTRODUCTION

1:1 *Simon Peter:* Peter's identification of himself as Simon Peter leaves little doubt that the apostle Peter is the writer of this letter (See Mt 4:18; 16:17; At 15:14). His original name was Simon, but Jesus changed his name to *Petros* which means "rock" (Mk 3:16; Jn 1:42). ***Bondservant:*** Peter is the *doulos* (slave) of Jesus Christ. All Chris-

tians have placed themselves in the position and work of slaves for their Lord Jesus Christ. They have relinquished their choices to Christ who directs their lives through His inspired word (Compare Jn 12:48; Gl 2:20; see comments Rm 12:1,2). One's slavery to Jesus is not by compulsion. It is by choice. Christians willingly serve out of a heart of gratitude for the grace of God that was revealed on the cross for our sins (2 Co 4:15; Ti 2:11). **To those:** This letter was probably addressed to the same audience as the first letter. It was written to Jewish and Gentile Christians. It was specifically written to Jewish Christians who were of the *diaspora* (3:1; see comments 1 Pt 1:1). The word *diaspora* was used by the Jews to refer to all Jews who were scattered throughout the world by the time Jesus came into the world. The *diaspora* began when Jews were scattered throughout the Assyrian Empire after the Assyrians conquered the northern kingdom of Israel in 722/21 B.C. The second scattering happened when the southern kingdom of Israel was conquered by the Babylonians in 586 B.C. It was through these scattered Jews that God worked in order to preach the gospel to the world in the 1st century. Jews annually came to Jerusalem for the Passover/Pentecost feasts, and then returned to their homes to preach Jesus (See comments Is 2:1-3; At 2). When the early evangelists went forth to preach, they went from synagogue to synagogue. What was thus a scattering of Israel through captivity because of their apostasy from God, became the opportunity for God to evangelize the world. **Obtained a like precious faith:** The faith of the Christian is certainly precious. It is a faith that gives strength in times of trial and suffering in a world of uncertainty (Hb 6:18,19). It is a faith that was made possible by the righteousness of God and Jesus who willingly gave Himself for our redemption (See comments Rm 3:21,22; see Jn 10:17,18). Our faith, therefore, is not the invention of our own minds (vs 16). It

is not the result of our own law-keeping and good works of a religion that we may have created after the traditions of our fathers. Our faith is not based on superstitious beliefs (vss 16-18). Our faith is based on God's grace through the sacrificial offering of the Son of God in whom we believe. We believe because of the evidence of His miracles and resurrection, wherein Jesus was proven to be the Son of God (Rm 1:4; see comments Jn 20:30,31; Hb 2:3,4). Our faith, therefore, is not wishful thinking. It is based on the evidence that moves us to conclude that it is more reasonable to believe than disbelieve. Because our faith is based on evidence, it "*is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen*" (Hb 11:1).

LIVING A HOLY LIFE

1:2 *Grace and peace:* God's grace brings peace of mind. This common New Testament greeting is possible because grace frees us from our own inabilities, which inabilities could never have justified us before God. Honest people know this. Therefore, those who recognize their sin before God rejoice when they hear that God has extended grace through Jesus for sins for which atonement could never have been made through law-keeping and meritorious deeds (Rm 5:1,2; see comments Rm 3:20; Gl 2:16). ***Through the knowledge of God and of Jesus:*** This knowledge (*epiginosko*) is the highest knowledge that brings understanding of God and Jesus His Son (See vss 3,8; 2:20; 3:18; Ep 1:17; 4:13; Cl 1:9; 3:10; 1 Tm 2:4). It is the knowledge of accepting who God is through accepting Jesus as the revelation of God on earth. As we grow in obedience to the will of Jesus, we grow to understand better the nature of the God who sent Jesus into the world (3:18). The more we grow in love, for example, the better we understand the God of love (See comments 1 Jn 4:7-11). Our growth in understanding the nature of God, therefore, brings peace

of mind (1 Jn 2:3; 3:19; 5:13-15,18-20; see 3:18; 1 Pt 1:2). The one who never grows in holy living can never understand the nature of the God of heaven. One can only grow to understand God if he grows in holiness.

1:3 This statement by Peter reassures us that God has supplied us with everything in this life that is necessary for living according to His directions and for developing a nature that prepares us for eternal dwelling. ***Given to us all things:*** One of these things certainly includes the word of God (See comments 2 Tm 3:16,17; see Jn 14:26; 16:13; At 20:32; 1 Th 2:13). It is through the word of God that we learn how to conduct our lives according to the will of God. But what is in Peter's mind is more than the revealed word of God. The word of God is certainly the guide that we must follow in order to be certain concerning the conduct of our lives in behavior and godly living. However, the "all things" is plural, and thus, refers to more than one thing. We would assume, therefore, that Peter has in mind the work of God in our lives in order to work all things together for good (See Rm 8:28). He would also have in mind Christian fellowship among those who have responded to the grace of God that was revealed on the cross through Jesus (See comments Jd 3). We would also include here the provision by God of an environment that would sustain our very being in preparation for heavenly dwelling. All these things are included in the knowledge of Jesus through whom God worked for our salvation. ***Life and godliness:*** All things that are necessary to live a spiritual life in this world have been granted to us by God (2 Tm 3:16,17). All things that are necessary to live a life of spiritual service toward God in holy living have also been provided. God has provided all that is necessary for the Christian life. If one does not respond to God in the way that God desires, therefore, he is without excuse (See 2:20-22). ***Through the knowledge of Him:*** Peter again uses the Greek word

(*epiginosko*) that refers to the highest knowledge. Contrary to some of his Gnostic readers who presumed to have inner insights that supposedly gave them an advantage in “spirituality,” Peter reassures his readers that their obedient faith that is based on their knowledge of Jesus is what is necessary on their part for the life about which he speaks. In the context, therefore, the “all things” would have specific reference to the knowledge of Jesus. This is God’s part to provide all that is necessary for godly living that would lead to salvation.

1:4 *Exceeding great and precious promises:* It is true that Christians enjoy the fulfillment of God’s past promises concerning our salvation in Christ. The fulfillment of those promises reassures us that the present promises God has given concerning the future will also be fulfilled. God has promised another salvation in the future. It is a salvation from this present environment of suffering (See 3:10-13). It is this and many other promises of God that motivate us to live a godly life (2 Co 7:1; see Hb 8:6). ***Partakers of the divine nature:*** The divine power of verse 3 makes it possible for us to put on the divine nature. Through obedience to the gospel, obedient believers are clothed with Christ, and thus, they put on the divine nature (Gl 3:26,27). They are cleansed of sin, and thus brought into the fellowship of the Father, Son and Holy Spirit (See comments Mt 28:19,20). Putting on Christ is dressing oneself in the divine nature of godliness and sanctification of the Spirit (See Rm 8:9; 2 Co 3:18; Gl 2:20; Ep 4:24; Cl 3:10; Hb 3:14; 12:10). ***Escaped the corruption:*** Those who have put on the divine nature in Christ have been delivered from the lust of the world because they are now slaves of Jesus. The Christian has escaped the temptations of the world by directing his attention to the One who died on the cross for his sins (1 Co 10:13; Js 1:13,14). It is not that he is no longer tempted. What the Christian has is another focus or

direction of life. Before his conversion, he could look only to the world for direction in life. But after knowing Christ, he has a new focus. It is a focus that directs his attention away from the values and behavior of this world (See comments Rm 12:1,2; Cl 3:1,2).

1:5 *Giving all diligence:* Emphasis here is on hastening one's spiritual growth. Peter places the responsibility for growth on the shoulders of individual Christians. God will not do for Christians that which is the responsibility of Christians to do for themselves. In the area of spiritual growth, it is the responsibility of each Christian to spiritually grow (3:18). This responsibility makes each individual accountable for his own behavior. And since one is accountable for his own behavior, he will give account of himself before God (2 Co 5:10). ***Faith:*** Since faith comes by hearing the word of God, one must begin and continue his growth in faith by his study of the word of God (Rm 10:17; Hb 11:1,6). We must know where God wants us to go before we can arrive at the destination that has been prepared for us. Faith that is based on the directions of God, therefore, will lead to a strong character, and eventually, eternal life. ***Virtue:*** Virtue refers to strength in character (1 Pt 2:9). Christians must give diligence to develop characters that are able to endure the sufferings of this world's environment, which is the best of all possible environments for the preparation of spiritual characters for eternal dwelling. In order to develop such characters, one must grow in knowledge of God's eternal purpose. ***Knowledge:*** By growing in knowledge of God's word, one develops the ability to discern between right and wrong (1:2). His fear of God, and his love in response to a knowledge of what God has done to save him, gives him the power to exercise self-control in his life.

1:6 *Self-control:* God's people must be those who have their lives and emotions under control (See At 24:25; Gl

5:23; 1 Co 9:25-27). They apply discipline to their lives in order to carry out their work as children of God. Their self-control helps them to maintain a commitment to their calling. In every aspect of behavior, Christians are to be identified by their emotional control of themselves, both in their relationships with others and in their worship of God.

Patience: Perseverance is the ability to patiently remain steadfast in one's demeanor of life. Regardless of the instability of the environment in which one lives, he must consistently remain committed to his Christian principles and work (See 2 Co 1:6; 6:4; Hb 11:27; Js 1:2,3). When one remains faithful throughout all trials, he has the emotional and spiritual foundation of the word of Jesus upon which to live the godly life. **Godliness:** One's reverence for the word of God will motivate him to act according to God's instructions. Godliness is living like God wants us to live. No one can live godly and worship God correctly if he is ignorant of what God wants (compare comments Mk 7:1-9). Therefore, Peter assumes that one diligently applies himself to God's instructions in order to conduct his life after the will of God. Godliness, therefore, works to maintain relationships with others that are based on the directions of God.

1:7 Brotherly kindness: The one who is concerned for his brother will not act harshly toward his brother (Rm 12:10; Gl 6:10; 1 Th 3:12; Hb 13:1). He will not speak in a manner that brings injury to the character of his brother. He loves his brother because God first loved him (1 Jn 4:19).

Love: Love is the foundation upon which all relationships are established and maintained between God and man and between man and man (See comments Gl 5:14,22,23; see Mt 5:44-46; Jn 13:34,35; 1 Co 13).

1:8 If these things are in you and abound: Peter's use of the word "if" places a condition on being fruitful. Therefore, one must make every effort to apply and grow in the

qualities he has just discussed. These fundamental principles of character must be maintained and increased in order to be a fruitful disciple in one's knowledge of who Jesus is (See Jn 15:1,2). One can intellectually know Jesus. However, unless he grows in the spiritual qualities about which Peter has just spoken, he will not know Jesus or the Father who sent Him into the world. These things, therefore, are in the disciple who responds to the will of God.

1:9 *He who lacks these things:* The one who lacks the above qualities is blinded to the fact that he has been cleansed by the sacrificial blood of Jesus (1 Jn 2:9-11). He seeks to maintain the calling of being a Christian, and yet, he lacks the inner character of what a Christian is. God's grace that was poured out to save him has lost its motivating appeal to live the godly life (See 2:20-22). He is thus deficient in spiritual understanding of those things that lead to one's understanding of who God is. He has forgotten that he was purged of sin when he obeyed the gospel (At 2:38; 22:16), and thus, is living a life that is ungrateful for the grace of God (See comments 1 Co 15:10; 2 Co 4:15; see Ep 5:26; Hb 9:14).

1:10 *Make your calling and election sure:* Through individual initiative to focus one's life on the behavioral characteristics of verses 5,6, one assures his salvation. He assures his salvation, not because he has meritoriously obeyed legal demands of law. He has assured himself by the development of the inner man that is manifested through his spiritual demeanor of life. When we concentrate on the spiritual development of the inner man, our focus is on God, not on the things of this world (See 2 Co 13:5; Cl 3:1,2; 1 Jn 3:19). Salvation, therefore, is dependent on our focus on the inner man in order to be directed to live according to the commandments of God (See Mt 7:21; Ph 2:12). In this sense, every man is responsible for his own salvation. ***You will never stumble:*** If one continually focuses on main-

taining the inner man, the result will be that he will not fall away from the grace of God. It is not that one cannot sin, or fall away. Peter's point is the same as John's. One's spiritual walk in the light of God's direction will keep him within the realm of the cleansing blood of Jesus (See comments 1 Jn 1:7-9). He may sin, but he is not living a life of sin. Therefore, he will not fall away. He is not like the one whose life is not centered on God as described in verse 9 (See 2:20-22; Gl 5:4; Hb 6:4-6).

1:11 *The everlasting kingdom of our Lord:* Since the saints to whom Peter writes are already obedient subjects of the present kingdom reign of Jesus over all things, reference here must be to the kingdom of God that is yet to come. Christians now reign in life with Jesus who is now reigning (Rm 5:17). However, there is also a heavenly kingdom that is yet to come (See comments 1 Co 15:24-28). Entrance into this realm of dwelling will be given to all those who are of the nature of what is explained in verses 5,6. Since the Christian's focus of life is on the development of the inner man, he will be a qualified citizen for eternal dwelling in the heavenly kingdom that God has promised to those who love and serve Him (Ti 1:2; 1 Pt 1:3-6). The purpose of church, therefore, is to offer the opportunity for candidates on earth to be spiritually prepared for eternal dwelling in the kingdom that is yet to come.

SOURCE OF TRUE KNOWLEDGE

1:12 *Always remind you of these things:* Peter's readers were obediently focused on those things that would lead to their eternal salvation. Nevertheless, as an apostle and elder of the church, he knew that it was his responsibility to continually remind them of those things they already knew (See At 20:28; Ph 3:1; 1 Jn 2:21). His work to remind them of those truths that have already been revealed illustrates the responsibility of all those who spiritually lead

the flock of God through teaching (See comments Ep 4:11-16; 2 Tm 4:1,2). The church must continually be rehearsed in those things that often become forgotten with the passing of every generation. Since the church is always one generation away from apostasy, leaders must continually carry out the task of teaching the word of God to every generation of the church (1 Pt 5:12; Jd 5). Submitting to the rehearsal of teaching, therefore, is the character of those who are preparing themselves for eternal dwelling. It is for this reason that Christians must continually be a part of Bible class opportunities during which they are reminded of those things that they have been taught.

1:13-15 Disciples must never complain against those teachers who are doing their duty of teaching the fundamentals upon which our belief is based. It is right for teachers to teach such things since members must continually be stirred to remember the truth they have always known. Therefore, members must not quench the Spirit (1 Th 5:19) by becoming dull of hearing those things that remain the foundation of our faith (Hb 5:11,12). *Put off my tent:* Peter's reference here to his tent (tabernacle) is to his body. He speaks of the body in a manner wherein he does not consider it his real self. We indwell our bodies. The physical body houses our soul and spirit (See comments 2 Co 5:1-8; 1 Th 5:23). In this context Peter speaks of his death. His death was foretold by Jesus (Jn 21:18,19). Because of the situation in which he was at the time of writing, he sensed that his death was near in the future. One motivation for Peter's writing of this epistle was to deliver these final instructions to the church. He knew his death was imminent (See 2 Tm 4:6).

FAITH BASED ON FACTS

1:16,17 *Cunningly devised fables:* Peter and the other Christ-sent apostles did not invent Christianity by organiz-

ing a theology out of fables and myths. They were eyewitnesses to Jesus' life and miracles (Lk 1:2; 24:44-49; At 1:22; Jn 20:30,31). They gave the testimony of their experience, and in this context, Peter reminds his readers that their belief is based on the testimony of the apostles. Fables are developed over years of hearsay and the fertile imagination of people in any society. However, Christianity exploded out of Jerusalem after the Pentecost of A.D. 30. It expanded throughout the Roman Empire in a matter of a few years. Fables do not develop in this way. Therefore, the only way to explain the phenomenal growth of the 1st century church is to understand that it had a miraculous beginning as the result of a resurrected Founder. There is no other logical answer to the growth and commitment of the early disciples (See intro. to At). ***Eyewitnesses of His majesty:*** Specific reference here would be to Peter, James and John who had the privilege of personally witnessing the transfiguration of Jesus (See comments Mt 17:1-7; Mk 9:2; Lk 9:28-36). They did not proclaim the majesty of Jesus by faith. They walked by fact because they personally experienced Moses and Elijah with Jesus on the mountain. We walk by faith today because we trust in the written record of their personal experiences. The word of God, therefore, is the foundation of our faith (Rm 10:17).

1:18 *We heard:* Peter had certainly told this story numerous times. The experience of Peter, James and John on the mountain of transfiguration became a foundational fact upon which they witnessed the sonship of Jesus. It was an evidence to confirm the message they were proclaiming throughout the world (Hb 2:3,4). God bore witness to Jesus, and thus, we believe because of the written testimony of Peter and others who actually experienced the miraculous confirmation of Jesus to be the Son of God (Jn 3:2; see Mt 16:13-19).

1:19 *The prophetic word:* The coming of the Messiah,

the Son of God, was revealed to the Old Testament prophets (Lk 16:31; 24:25-27,44; see At 2:16-36; 3:18-24; 10:43; 1 Pt 1:10-12). The fulfillment of the prophecies of the prophets was confirmed to be fulfilled by the miraculous work of Jesus (See comments Mk 16:17-20; Hb 2:3,4). ***Do well to take heed:*** The tense of the verb here is present tense. Therefore, they were to continually heed the things that were confirmed to be true. If they started to doubt that which was prophesied and fulfilled, they would waver from their faith (Compare comments 1 Co 15:1,2). ***Light that shines in a dark place:*** Jesus is the light that shines forth in a world of sin (Jn 8:12; see Is 9:2; Mt 4:2; Jn 1:4,5,9; 9:5; 12:35). He is the hope of deliverance from a life of misdirection and confusion. When we focus on Jesus, our life gains direction and hope. We are born out of the mire of sin (Ep 2:1-3). Jesus thus provides a new dawn in our lives to the abundant life. ***Until the day dawns and the morning star arises:*** As one centers his life on Jesus, there is a new dawn of life within his heart (See Jn 10:10). Jesus brings life to those who are obedient to the gospel. This life grows within one's heart as he continues to grow in the grace and knowledge of Jesus (1:4; 3:18). As we are enlightened by our knowledge of Jesus, we understand the purpose for which we were created and the destiny of our souls. We thus focus our lives on the purposes of God for the creation of all things (See comments Cl 1:16). Peter's reference to the "morning star" here probably refers to Jesus being the object of our attraction. He gives hope of a new day in life (Jn 10:10), and an eternal life that is yet to come (Ti 1:2).

1:20 *Own interpretation:* The meaning here is not that individuals cannot interpret the Scriptures for themselves. Such is actually a misinterpretation of the passage itself. What Peter is saying is that no prophecy is of private origin. No Scripture was ever written as a result of the inven-

tion of any individual. “*All Scripture is given by inspiration of God ...*” (2 Tm 3:16). What the Christian believes in reference to what the Bible teaches, is not the invention of religious minds who created religion after their own desires.

1:21 This verse explains what Peter just said in the preceding verse concerning the origin of Scripture. Scripture did not come by the initiative of men. It came as a result of men being directed by the Holy Spirit to record accurately and without error the word of God. Prophetic teaching, therefore, did not originate with men. It originated with God, who through the Holy Spirit, inspired prophets both to speak forth His will and record the same for all men of all history (See 2 Sm 23:2; At 1:16; see comments 1 Co 2:10-13). Since God had revealed to man all that He desires to make the man of God complete and thoroughly furnished unto all good works (2 Tm 3:16,17), then we no longer need any inspired prophets to teach us. All that is necessary for godly living has been revealed and recorded. All that God wants us to have in reference to our knowledge of Jesus is revealed in the word of God. Peter wants us to know this so that we go to the written word of God, and not to fables or feelings, in order to confirm our faith. When men leave the word of God as the foundation of their faith, they create a god after their own imagination and a religion that is based on superstition and fables.

Identity of the Apostate

(2:1-22)

Outline: (1) Warning of false teachers (2:1-11), (2) The character of false teachers (2:12-22)

Chapter 2

WARNING OF FALSE TEACHERS

Peter now turns to a warning concerning false teachers whose lives have manifested the result of their erroneous

teaching. They have eroded away the foundation upon which they conduct their lives. Now these false teachers are turning their heresies toward others in the church. Peter's warning concerning these teachings is that they destroy the moral foundation of Christian behavior.

2:1 *There will be false teachers among you:* Peter uses the example of the Old Testament people of God. There were false teachers in Israel who led the people away from God (Dt 13:1-5; 18:20; 1 Kg 22:5-12; Jr 5:31; Ez 13:3). Since there were false teachers among God's people in the Old Testament, Peter warns that there will be false teachers among the disciples at the time he wrote (See Mt 24:5,11,24; 2 Co 11:13; Gl 2:4; At 20:28-31; 1 Tm 4:1,2; 1 Jn 4:1). And since there were false teachers among God's people in the 1st century, we must assume that there are the same among His people today. ***Secretly bring in:*** The teaching comes in secretly in the sense that it has an appeal to the flesh (See comments Gl 2:4). When men create religions after their own desires, they create religions that appeal either to the lusts of flesh, lust of the eyes and the pride of life. ***Destructive heresies:*** The teachings were destructive because they denied the very foundation upon which our faith is built. They denied the sonship of Jesus by denying the incarnation of Jesus (See comments 1 Jn 2:22,23; 4:2,3; Jd 4). The Gnostics denied that Christ came in the flesh. Such a denial assumed that there was no resurrection. Therefore, the false doctrine which Peter is discussing is a denial of the redemptive work of the incarnate Son of God (1 Co 6:20; 7:23; Hb 10:29; see "Historical Background" in intro. to 1 Tm). In this context, therefore, the term "false teacher" refers to someone who denies a fundamental doctrine that refers to a matter of salvation. The term is not used in the New Testament to refer to someone with whom we may disagree on a matter of opinion. This is one of those terms that is unfortunately misused and often applied

to anyone with whom we might disagree. One would do well, therefore, to be careful how he uses this term “false teacher.” In the context of this chapter of Peter’s epistle, he gives us a definition of who the Holy Spirit considers to be a false teacher. It is one who denies any fundamental doctrine concerning the nature of the incarnate Son of God, and as a result, behaves after the manner of conduct that Peter describes in this chapter. ***Bringing on themselves swift destruction:*** In this context, Peter may be referring to Judaeo-Gnosticism that had affected the church of Asia Minor where many Jews had been converted. They brought in their philosophy of religion which he will explain in this chapter. The indication here is that their destruction was looming in the near future, not centuries later when Jesus comes in His final coming (Ph 3:19; 1 Th 5:2,3; see comments 2 Th 1:7-9).

2:2 Peter is here prophesying of the result of the teaching. Many would accept the teaching because it appealed to the lusts of the flesh. The religion would not be characteristic of the nature of the disciplined life about which he has just spoken (See comments 1:5-11). The religion would encourage one to live after the uncontrolled lust of unclean living. ***The way of the truth will be blasphemed:*** Those who follow after the religion Peter will discuss in this context, will teach that the righteous behavior about which he has written in chapter 1 is not from God. Those who follow the false teachers will speak against godly living. They will blaspheme by accusing that the way of godly living is erroneous.

2:3 *Through covetousness:* James affirmed that these religionists took advantage of the benevolent heart of sincere Christians (See comments Js 5:4-6; compare Lk 12:15; Rm 1:29; 16:18; Cl 3:5; Ti 1:11). Through deceptive speech, they enticed honest and sincere brethren to support their greed for material things. Gullible Christians, therefore,

become the victim of those who used the benevolent responsibilities of the church as an opportunity for gain (See comments Mk 7:9-13; 2 Th 3:6-15; see 1 Tm 6:5; Ti 1:11; compare 2 Co 2:17). Because they had taken advantage of sincere disciples, their judgment was certain (Ph 3:19; Jd 4).

2:4 Peter gives three examples in verses 4-6 of how God had in the past brought judgment on the wicked. His examples prove that wickedness will not be tolerated by God. Though the judgment may be delayed in reference to our calendar, the judgment is certain to happen. **Angels:** We do not know when this rebellion against God took place. The fact is that it did. The consequence was that these angels who sinned were stripped of their natural habitation and work for which they were originally created (See comments Jd 6). These angels are now reserved in “everlasting” confinement. They are securely kept by God until their judgment which will also take place on the last day (Mt 25:41). These angels were created with free-moral agency. For some reason, however, they chose not to remain in their submissive role. Peter’s argument here is that if God cast down angelic beings, he will most certainly judge those false teachers who proclaim teachings that deny the incarnation and resurrection of Jesus. Those teachers who promote erroneous teachings that undermine the moral behavior of Christians will face the certainty of God’s judgment. **Cast them down:** The Greek word here is *tartarus*. It is a word that literally means “to cast down” or “consign to tartarus.” This would be the torments of Luke 16:23-26 (See comments). Those who have lived on earth in sin against God are thus confined in hadean existence of torments after death until the judgment of the last day.

2:5 Did not spare the old world: Peter is not referring to a portion of humanity that was destroyed in the flood of Noah’s day (Gn 5-9). He is talking about the totality of humanity. All but eight souls were swept away by the glo-

bal waters of the flood (3:5,6). If God would go to such lengths to cleanse the world of the evil inventions of men, then certainly He will judge the false teachers who are affecting the church. In reference to salvation, God is not interested in quantity. He is interested in spiritual quality (See comments Mt 7:13,14). ***Preacher of righteousness:*** Standing alone in his generation of evil workers, Noah stood up and preached that which was right in the eyes of God. Throughout the time when the ark was in preparation, he was preaching a coming calamity that would befall those who rejected God (1 Pt 3:20). However, the world that then was did not repent, and thus, it was consumed by the waters of a universal flood.

2:6-8 Turning the cities of Sodom and Gomorrah into ashes: Sodom and Gomorrah, with the cities of Admah and Zeboim, did not escape the righteous judgment of God (Gn 19:1-26). They were destroyed with fire from heaven because the population of the cities followed after all sorts of wickedness (See comments Jd 7). As with the world that existed before the flood, they had morally digressed to the point that they could not repent. They could not repent simply because they had no desire to repent. ***Delivered righteous Lot:*** Peter says that the wickedness of the two cities oppressed or greatly disturbed Lot. His righteous character would not be desensitized by the commonality of the wickedness around him. He never ceased to abhor sin (See Ps 119:139). He was thus delivered by God from his wicked environment. It is worthy to note that God determined that the wickedness of the environment of the cities was beyond spiritual repair. He did not leave Lot in these cities as a preacher of righteousness. As Noah, He withdrew his men from these cultures that were beyond repentance. In some cases in the world today, there are populations that are beyond spiritual repair. They are doomed to destruction because they have given up a fear of God and

the judgment to come. They will not repent simply because they are consumed with a life of rebellion against God. ***Seeing and hearing their unlawful deeds:*** The character of Lot is manifested in the fact that he did not condone or conform to the sin of the culture in which he lived. The commonality of sin did not twist his judgment that the evil behavior of the society was sin against God. Societies must never be allowed to determine that which is either right or wrong in the eyes of God. It is God who determines what is right and wrong. Societies seek to digress by conformity to that which is accepted within the society. Once any society gives up a fear of God, it is a society that is set on a course of moral self-destruction from which it cannot return. Sodom and Gomorrah were in such a situation. They were on a course of moral degradation from which they could not return. For this reason God chose to bring their existence to an end as He chose to do the same with the world of Noah's day. Only God can make these decisions because it is only He who knows the future.

2:9 *The Lord knows how to deliver the godly:* Lot was physically delivered out of the temptations of the culture in which he lived. God will deliver us out of temptations (1 Co 10:13; see Ps 125:3). Peter reassures his readers by affirming that God can deliver the righteous out of temptation and destruction if they will seek the way of escape. He is possibly looking forward to an imminent deliverance that they would receive from those who were inflicting suffering upon them at the time he writes and in the near future. God delivered the church from the onslaught of Jewish persecution by the destruction of Jerusalem in A.D. 70 (See comments Mt 24). He delivered the church from the state persecution of the Roman Empire by bringing down those Caesars of the Roman Empire who persecuted the church (See comments Rv 13). Because he was writing primarily to a Jewish audience, Peter surely had in mind that regard-

less of the calamity that was building against national Israel, God would deliver the faithful Jewish Christians from the coming destruction of national Israel. ***The Lord knows how ... to reserve the unrighteous:*** At the time Peter wrote, the unrighteous of the past were reserved in punishment. They were still in existence, but in reservation for judgment. They had been finally judged (Hb 9:27), but were awaiting the final judgment and their final punishment (See comments Mt 25:41; 2 Th 1:7-9).

2:10 *Especially those who ... despise authority:* In this verse Peter says that God will take special note of those who live immoral lives and those who despise authority (Jd 4,7,8). It seems that God will assign greater condemnation to those who conduct their lives after immoral behavior and defiant attitudes. What eventually led to Rome's decision to bring an end to the Jewish State was the rebellious behavior of the Jews. Peter's exhortation to Jewish Christians was that they not involve themselves in such arrogance. By assuming the submissive behavior of Jesus, they would escape the destruction that was to come in the destruction of Jerusalem. ***Presumptuous:*** The immoral and defiant are daring. They suppose themselves to be something when they are nothing in the eyes of God. Their arrogant self-sufficiency leads them to believe that they are right with God when actually they are living in defiance to His will. And such was the attitude of the Jews who died in the fall of national Israel. They would not believe that God was bringing national Israel to an end because the Messiah had already come. ***Speak evil of dignitaries:*** The arrogant speak evil against any who are in authority (Jd 8). Their behavior here manifests their heart. They are not of a submissive heart, and thus, they do not submit to God's will (See 1 Pt 5:5-7). In this context, Peter is discussing religious people. These are the false teachers who were among the members of the church (vs 1). They spoke heresies in

conjunction with the defiant manner of their behavior. They were so presumptuous as to think that they were without sin (See comments 1 Jn 1:7-9). These were Jewish false teachers who were possibly urging Jewish Christians to join in their rebellion against Rome. They thus questioned the messiahship of Jesus, and continued to believe that God was working through national Israel. What they did not understand was that national Israel was only the means through which God worked in order to bring the Messiah and Savior into the world. Once the Messiah came, national Israel had fulfilled her purpose for existence.

2:11 Righteous angels are greater than these false teachers. However, because they are greater in power and might, they are not so arrogant as to speak against authority as these false teachers (See comments Jd 9). It is the nature of those who have created religion after their own philosophies of men to assert themselves to be their own authority in behavior and beliefs. Whenever one leaves the authority of the word of God, he seeks religious authority either in his own reasoning, his own feelings, or his own religious traditions. All presumptuous authority leads one away from the commandments of God (See comments Mk 7:1-9). They lead one to reject the commandments of God in order to keep one's own self-imposed religion (See comments Cl 2:20-23).

THE CHARACTER OF FALSE TEACHERS

In this section Peter gives a vivid description of the nature and character of those false teachers who have become their own self-proclaimed authority. He is very graphic in his description. He is detailed in order to give Christians God's revelation concerning what He considers to be immoral and arrogant behavior among those who would presume to be leaders. What follows, therefore, should be a warning to all who would conduct their lives after the be-

havior of what is revealed here. It is possible that Peter is describing arrogant Jews who had set themselves against the rule of Rome. He does not identify those about whom he speaks. We can assume that the character of those he describes could have been some Jews who were influencing Jewish Christians to rise up in rebellion against Roman rule.

2:12 *Natural brute beasts:* These teachers are like brute beasts who function without the rationality that is characteristic of morally controlled men (See comments Jd 10). ***Things that they do not understand:*** Their religious arrogance has convinced them that they speak with authority concerning those things that are beyond the physical world. However, in their presumptuous attitudes, they do not understand that their senses are limited to the physical world, and thus, cannot empirically know that which is beyond the curtain of the physical world (See 1 Co 2:14; 1 Tm 1:7). ***Utterly perish:*** Their self-imposed religious system of thinking led them to believe that they were right before God. For this reason, they would not repent. *“I tell you, no. But unless you repent you will all likewise perish”* (Lk 13:3). This statement of Jesus was made to Jewish religious leaders who had constructed their own religion after their own traditions (Mt 15:1-19; Mk 7:1-9). They, as well as these religious people, would not repent because they had deceived themselves into thinking that they were right before God (See comments 2 Th 2:10-12). Peter says that their destruction is certain because they lead corrupt lives (See comments Mt 7:21-23; 25:41).

2:13 *The reward of unrighteousness:* The reward or result of their unrighteousness would be their utter destruction (See Nm 31:9,19; Rm 6:23). Peter seems to have more in mind than the fact of just punishment that would be meted out to the unrighteous. His meaning seems to be according to what Jesus said concerning what God can do. *“And do*

not fear those who kill the body, but are not able to kill the soul. But rather fear Him who is able to destroy both soul and body in hell [gehenna]" (Mt 10:28). The unrighteous will face destruction that will not be reversed (2 Th 1:9).

Riot in the daytime: These unrighteous have no shame. Wicked men usually carry out their wickedness under the concealment of night (Ep 5:11,12; 1 Th 5:7; see Rm 13:13). These arrogantly conduct their evil behavior in daylight. Their open manifestation of evil behavior reveals the arrogance of their minds. ***Stains and blemishes:*** Peter here affirms that they were taking advantage of the disciples at their love feasts (See 1 Co 11:17-22; Jd 12). Their presence marred the loving fellowship of those who in sincerity shared their food with one another. The loving occasion of the celebration feast was tarnished by the unscrupulous characters of hypocritical disciples who behaved themselves after the directions of Satan. ***Feast with you:*** The love feast (breaking of bread) continued with the early church for many years (See comments At 2:41-47). When Peter wrote these words, the love feast was continuing among the disciples (See comments At 20:7). This was a common meal the disciples ate, during which they remembered the Lord (See comments 1 Co 11).

2:14 *Eyes full of adultery:* They looked upon the physical appearance of women with the intent to commit adultery (See comments Mt 5:27,28). ***Cannot cease from sin:*** They cannot cease simply because of the wickedness of their hearts. They were driven to unrighteous behavior because they had given themselves over to satisfy the lusts of the flesh, lusts of the eyes and pride of life (1 Jn 2:15,16). ***Enticing unstable souls:*** Those disciples who were both ignorant of the Bible and spiritually weak were the victims of those teachings that justify the satisfaction of the lusts of the flesh (2 Tm 3:6). ***Exercised with covetous practices:*** Their minds were set on the things of the world, and

thus, they roamed among the fellowship of the saints establishing relationships that would reap financial benefit (See comments Mt 6:19-34). They saw the fellowship of the disciples as an opportunity to reap gain.

2:15,16 *Forsaken the right way:* These are apostates from God's will. They have turned away from godly behavior. ***The way of Balaam:*** The way of Balaam is covetousness. Greed for money drove Balaam to sell the use of his prophetic gift for evil causes (See comments Jd 11; see Nm 22:4-35; 25:1-9; 31:16). Balaam's sin was that he was willing to do that which he knew was wrong in order to reap financial gain. Those who practice unscrupulous business dealings in order to reap financial gain, sin after the manner of Balaam. Those who minister among the disciples simply for the benefit of financial gain have gone after the way of Balaam. Their greed is greater than their motivation to live the right way according to God's will.

2:17 *Wells without water:* The Holy Spirit now pronounces judgment upon the inner character of these spiritually empty hypocrites. A waterless well is a great disappointment to the one who has sought for it in order to satisfy thirst (See comments Jd 12). The hypocritical teachers about whom Peter writes could deliver intellectual teaching. However, because of the wickedness of their hearts, they offered no spiritual leadership that would satisfy those who were seeking godly examples of Christian conduct. ***Black darkness:*** The word "forever" is not included in many manuscripts. However, Peter has in mind the punishment of hell that is awaiting those who are of the character that he has just described. They think that they are walking in the light (See 1 Jn 1:7-9). Their tragedy is in the fact that they have deceived themselves. They are actually in darkness, and thus, will reap the reward of darkness for their sinful conduct of life. This should be a warning to every Christian who is ignorant of the word of God, and

yet, thinks that he is walking according to the will of God (Hs 4:6). Ignorance of the word of God is the foundation upon which Satan deceives religiously minded people into thinking they are right with God while they are living and believing a lie (See comments 2 Th 2:10-12).

2:18,19 *They entice through the lusts of the flesh:* When John wrote the judgments of Revelation, those who were among the disciples in Thyatira were suffering from the influence of the wickedness about which Peter here writes (See Rv 2:20). Those who have given themselves over to satisfying the lusts of the flesh are here speaking enticing words in order to lead others into their wicked immorality (See Rm 16:17,18). They are seeking to draw back into sin those who have escaped through obedience of the gospel (At 2:38; 22:16; Rm 6:3-6). *They promise them liberty:* These have turned “*the grace of our God into licentiousness*” (See comments Jd 4). They have twisted the liberty of the grace of God into a teaching whereby they justify their own immorality (See Jn 8:34; Rm 6:16,20). They have wrongly concluded that since they were saved by God’s grace, and not by perfect law-keeping, then they had liberty to sin while expecting God to extend His grace to cover their sin (See comments Rm 6; Hb 10:26; see Rm 7:6; 8:2; 2 Co 3:17; Gl 2:4; 5:1). The one who feels at liberty to practice any lustful sin has brought himself into the bondage of Satan. Those who are in such bondage often entice others to join with them in their sin. They do so in order to justify themselves in fulfilling the lusts of the flesh.

2:20 *Escaped the pollutions of the world:* Peter speaks here of those who were once Christians. They had come out of sin and were saved because of their obedience to the truth (1 Pt 1:22,23). They had obeyed the gospel, and thus, they had been washed of all sin (At 2:38; 22:16; Rm 6:3-6). However, they fell from grace by returning to the life

of sin from which they had escaped (Compare Ep 2:1-3). ***The latter end is worse:*** It is worse because the sanctified life of godliness no longer had its appeal as it did when they were first converted to Jesus (See Mt 12:45; Lk 11:26). Because of their hardness of heart by sin, they were desensitized to the appeal of the gospel (See comments Hb 6:4-6).

2:21 *Better for them not to have known:* These apostates were condemned in their sin before they obeyed the gospel in order to be saved (Rm 6:23). They would have carried on in such sin and been condemned to hell in the end (Mt 25:41; 2 Th 1:7-9). Now they are again in a state of condemnation because of their return to the life of sin in which they lived before their conversion. However, in the process of their conversion and fellowship with the church, they had now mocked the name of Jesus in the communities in which they lived. They had blasphemed the name of Jesus by their conduct. At the time Peter wrote, they were in the process of leading innocent weaker Christians into their immoral and unscrupulous manner of life. The Holy Spirit here reveals the omniscient foreknowledge of God who envisioned their apostasy. God knew that they would apostatize from the faith. Because He knew, He can reveal statements as this, that is, that it would have been better for them if they had not known the fellowship of the church (“the way of righteousness”). It would have been better that they had not known the way of righteousness in order that they not have caused the damage that they did to the innocent sheep of God. They have only intensified their sin by rejecting the grace of God after coming to a knowledge of what God did for the world through the incarnation and cross of Calvary (See Lk 12:47).

2:22 *Dog returns to his own vomit:* The Holy Spirit’s quotation of this repulsive proverb reveals what God thinks of those who leave the way of righteous living in order to follow after the lusts of the flesh (Compare Pv 26:11). Their

actions manifest a total disregard for God's love and grace that was poured out on the cross through the sacrificial offering of the incarnate Son of God.

Judgment of Apostates

(3:1-18)

Outline: (1) The day of the Lord (3:1-6), (2) Consummation (3:7-18)

Chapter 3

THE DAY OF THE LORD

In the first letter that Peter wrote, he alerted his readers to an imminent end of all things. *"But the end of all things is at hand"* (1 Pt 4:7). At the same time, James also wrote to Jewish Christians, *"to the twelve tribes who are scattered abroad"* (Js 1:1). James' warning was the same as Peter's. *"Establish your hearts, for the coming of the Lord is near"* (Js 5:8). Both writers wrote in the three to five years before the destruction of Jerusalem and consummation of national Israel. Both forewarned Jewish Christians that there was an imminent judgment of God coming upon the Israel that had rejected the Messiah and Savior of the world. When using the terms "coming," "at hand," or "near," neither writer was deceiving his readers into believing that the final coming of Jesus was imminent. Their reference to the coming of the end of all things, therefore, must refer to the consummation of national Israel that culminated in the destruction of Jerusalem in A.D. 70. Therefore, when we come to this chapter of 2 Peter, it is apparent that Peter at least had in mind the coming of the Lord in judgment on national Israel, which coming was prophesied by Jesus in Matthew 24. However, in understanding the metaphorical language of this chapter, as Matthew 24, there is certainly revealed a type of the final coming at the end of time. God's final judgments will end all dispensations and kingdoms of this world. The judgment upon national Israel gave a physical signal to Israel that His covenant with

them had ended at the cross. His judgment at the end of this world will finalize this world and this present dispensation. Therefore, as we study through the contents of this chapter, we cannot help but keep in mind the end of all things when Jesus comes again to do away with this world. Peter has in mind the finalization of national Israel, but progresses to the finalization of all things with the termination of the world as we now know it.

3:1 *I stir up your pure minds:* Peter here states one of his reasons for writing. It is to remind his Jewish readers of things they had already been taught. We would assume, therefore, that the verbal presentation of the contents of this chapter had already been taught to the Jewish disciples before it was written in this inspired letter. This would lead us to believe that the early apostles and prophets of the church did teach the churches the prophecy of Matthew 24 when they went throughout the Roman Empire. The subject of Jesus' prophecy had direct relevance to the lives of Jewish Christians. Therefore, we would correctly conclude that what Jesus had prophesied was the subject of many midnight discussions among the 1st century Christians.

3:2 *The holy prophets:* The church was built upon the foundation of the inspired preaching and teaching of the apostles and prophets (Ep 2:20). It was founded upon the apostles and New Testament prophets because God, through them, "*revealed by the Spirit to His holy apostles and prophets*" the mystery of the gospel (Ep 3:5). It could be argued that Peter in this context refers to the Old Testament prophets. However, though the Old Testament prophets prophesied of the dispensation of the new Israel, they did not understand their prophecies (1 Pt 1:10-12). The full revelation of the mystery came only through the New Testament apostles and prophets (See Jn 14:26; 16:13). It came to the Old Testament prophets through inspired prophecy,

which prophecy they did not completely understand. For this reason, it is best to affirm that Peter in this context is referring to the inspired New Testament speakers and writers. One point is clear that both the Old Testament and New Testament prophets proclaimed the end of national Israel. Both Isaiah (Is 10:20-23) and Daniel (Dn 9:24-27) spoke of the consummation of national Israel. The New Testament prophets (evangelists) went forth calling the Israel by faith to come out of national Israel in view of the fact that the end of national Israel was in the near future.

3:3 *Scoffers will come in the last days:* Peter now seems to take his readers through a chronology of both biblical teaching and historical events. He states that they must first remember that it was previously spoken that scoffers would come in the last days of national Israel. “Scoffers” here seems to be a specific signal of the presence of the last days. Those who ridiculed the pronouncements of Jesus concerning the fall of national Israel would reject the Christians’ belief that the end of all things was at hand (1 Pt 4:7). Around A.D. 67, Paul wrote a similar warning concerning the times. “*Know this also, that in the last days perilous times will come*” (2 Tm 3:1; see 1 Tm 4:1-3; 2 Tm 4:3-5). The existence of the scoffers and mockers was evidence that the disciples were in the perilous times of the last days of national Israel at the time Peter wrote. Therefore, we must not skip over 1,900 years of history in order to apply the above warnings to the end of the world. This is especially true in view of the fact that the “scoffers” and “perilous time” were already present and occurring in the immediate environment of the readers of both Peter and Paul (See comments 1 Jn 2:18). It was the last days of national Israel. The nation was coming to an end. Therefore, we must keep in mind that the term “last days” does not refer to a long period of time. The term itself defines the meaning. Reference is to the last days of a dispensation of a

long period of time. In this sense, therefore, Peter is not discussing the “Christian age” as the last days. He is discussing the finality of the dispensation of national Israel. ***Walking after their own lusts:*** Paul said that they would be “*lovers of themselves, lovers of money, boasters, proud, blasphemers ...*” (2 Tm 3:2-5). Jude said that they “*walk after their own ungodly lusts*” (Jd 18). Paul, Jude and Peter all record the nature of those who would ignore or scoff at the Son of God and judgments of God. Such is the nature of unrighteous people who refuse to have the knowledge of God in their minds. They are not simply indifferent to the views of the Christian. They are antagonistic to them. But such is also the nature of the religious materialist about whom Peter, James and Jude wrote concerning the last days of national Israel. The religious materialist had economically padded his environment with a religion of consuming things upon his own lusts (Js 4:3). Those who are so involved in the world refuse to accept the fact that their material security will be destroyed. The world of the rich Sadducean Jew was coming to an end in the destruction of national Israel.

3:4 *Where is the promise of His coming:* These scoffers ridiculed the message of Christians who believed Jesus’ pronouncements against Jerusalem. The fact that they mocked the teaching of the coming in judgment upon Israel was evidence that Christians had been proclaiming their belief of Jesus’ prophecy of Matthew 24. In Matthew 24 Jesus had foretold the nature of those who would reject the impending judgment of national Israel. “*For as in the days that were before the flood, they were eating and drinking, marrying and giving in marriage, until that day when Noah entered the ark*” (Mt 24:38). However, these scoffers had forgotten past judgments of God in time as the flood of Noah’s day, Sodom and Gomorrah, and even Jerusalem in the days of the Babylonian conquest of 586 B.C. Things

had not continued as they were since the days of creation. God had before come in judgment in time on Israel. All such judgments were to remind men of future comings in judgment. However, those who refuse to listen, will not heed the in-time judgments of God. **Promise:** Jesus made a promise of His coming. “*For as the lightning comes from the east and shines even to the west, so also will be the coming of the Son of Man*” (Mt 24:27,37-44). To persecuted Christians who believed Jesus’ promise, the fulfillment of this promise would be their deliverance from Jewish persecution. In a secondary sense, deliverance from the confines of the material world and persecution of the wicked at the end of time would also be a fulfillment of one of Jesus’ promises (See Jn 14:3; 1 Th 4:13-17). In general, therefore, we all look forward to a time of deliverance from the harshness that the world delivers to the Christian’s spirit (See vss 12,13). We look forward to a time when this world will pass away. Therefore, we look for a new heavens and new earth wherein dwells righteousness (3:13). **Coming:** The disciples preached the coming (presence) of the Lord in judgment on Israel. The unbelieving Jews never believed that Jesus was the Messiah, and thus, they are here now scoffing the fact that He would come again. These scoffers were mocking the preaching of the disciples concerning God’s judgment on Israel that was proclaimed by what they believed to be a false messiah.

3:5,6 *They willfully forget:* These scoffers of the Christian’s hopes willfully forgot that God once destroyed humanity from the face of the earth by a global flood (Gn 6-8). Only Noah and his faithful family were spared. Jude also stated that these “*mockers in the last time would walk according to their own lusts*” (Jd 18; see 2 Tm 3:1-5). Their presence in the lives of Peter’s and Jude’s immediate readers indicated that they were in the last times of national

Israel. Last times also existed before the destruction of the world by the flood of Noah's day. In the years previous to the flood, Enoch preached about ungodly people in Noah's generation. In the judgment of the flood, God came to execute judgment on the ungodly (Jd 14,15). This statement of Enoch that is quoted by Jude encourages us to keep the comments of both James, Jude and Peter in the historical context of the destruction of Jerusalem and the end of national Israel. Jude's quotation of Enoch's prophecy is significant. Enoch spoke of the judgment of mockers in Noah's day. Their judgment was their destruction by the flood. Jude uses this "coming in judgment" in Noah's day to illustrate the coming in judgment upon national Israel (See comments Js 5:7,8). We would not be out of context, therefore, to use in-time judgments of God as the flood and the destruction of national Israel to warn of the final coming in judgment of the Lord at the end of time. By the time Peter concludes this chapter, he has progressed to the end-of-time judgment that is yet in the future. His immediate readers were going to experience an in-time illustration of the final judgment at the end of time. ***The world that then existed was destroyed:*** Peter emphasized the fact that God can cause catastrophic judgment upon the physical world. The world that existed before the flood was destroyed by the waters of the flood. This passage teaches that more than humanity was destroyed by the flood that occurred in the days of Noah. Peter uses the Greek word *kataklystheis* which means "to overthrow with water." The earth before the flood was "*standing out of water and in the water*" (See Gn 1:7-10). It was first formed as a watery mass (Gn 1:1-3). When the waters and land were separated, there were the "waters" or canopy of firmament above and the watery mist that came up from the earth to water vegetation (Gn 2:6). However, by water God overthrew that world. The physical world that we now experience is far different

from the physical appearance of the surface of the earth that existed before the flood. The flood radically changed the surface of the earth. This present earth is also destined for another change in the future. Peter's point is clear. Noah's flood was not a local washout by a local rainstorm. It was global (Gn 7:11). The God who created the world can cause such global judgments. Since He could, then certainly He could terminate local elements of persecution and world empires that existed at the time Peter wrote and at the time we now study this epistle. We must remember that the Lord can and will terminate the physical world which He created out of nothing. Peter wants to encourage the faithful that the God they serve is not a limited God who has been created after the image of man. He has power over all things (Hb 1:3).

CONSUMMATION

3:7 *Reserved for fire:* The world that existed before Noah, perished by the waters of the flood. Peter now compares that world with the one that now is. It is a world that is stored up for destruction by fire. For this reason, we would conclude that Peter is turning in the context to the finality of all things at the end of the world. Noah's world physically perished in the sense that all humanity, except eight souls, died and the face of the earth was resurfaced by the waters of the flood. Peter makes a comparison with this present world that will also physically perish. We caution ourselves not to make too close a comparison between the two events. However, consider two things. The earth's surface that Noah knew before the flood perished in the flood. It was overthrown by water. Also, the wicked population of the world that existed before the flood was destroyed from off the face of the earth. In other words, the face of the earth was changed and repopulated. A different "heavens and earth" existed after the flood than before the

flood of Noah's day. However, this present heavens and earth as we now experience them are reserved for destruction by fire in the last day of God's final destruction of the things that exist (vss 10-12). Disobedient angels have been reserved for the destruction of the last day (2:4; Jd 6). Peter stated that God knows how "*to reserve the unrighteous under punishment for the day of judgment*" (2:9). Therefore, everything is now in reservation or preservation for the judgment of the last day. ***Destruction of ungodly men:*** The ungodly of Peter's readers were being reserved for destruction in God's judgment on national Israel. However, Peter would certainly have in mind all the ungodly, whether living or dead, who are presently reserved as the fallen angels, for the judgment of destruction of the last day (See comments Lk 16:19-31; 2 Th 1:7-9).

3:8 *Do not be ignorant:* Christians must not forget that God is timeless. He is not bound by time to determine the occurrence of events of this world. Peter's illustration of the timelessness of God is reminiscent of Psalm 90:4. "*For a thousand years in Your sight are like yesterday when it is past*" When God makes a promise, man is confined to wait as time passes until the fulfillment of that promise comes to pass. However, from the viewpoint of an eternal God, when the promise is made it is as if it is already fulfilled. There is no waiting with God because He is not confined to time. Peter's point here is that because we are limited to time between promise and fulfillment, we must not lead ourselves to believe that God either thinks or behaves as men in reference to time. What God has said, He will do. What we might consider to be slowness on the part of God to fulfill His promise is not slowness from the viewpoint of God.

3:9 *The Lord is not slack:* God is not slow to bring about His promise. He does not desire that men perish. The Greek word here for "perish" is *apollumi*. It means

“to loose away” or “to destroy.” God does not want men to be destroyed in the great destruction that will be coming upon those who do not obey the gospel (See comments 2 Th 1:7-9). On the contrary, God desires that men repent. He desires that they turn their lives to obedient behavior of the divine will (See Ez 18:32; Jn 3:17; At 17:30; 1 Tm 2:4; Hb 2:9). Therefore, we do not serve a mean God. He is not one who seeks to eternally destroy man from His presence. He is not a God who has predestined some to destruction. We serve a patient God who is timeless in His desire that men turn to serve Him. Though He is patient, there will be a time when He will bring the destruction about which Peter has just spoken in this context. The unrighteous will then suffer the judgment of a fiery hell (Mt 25:41-46).

3:10 *The day of the Lord:* The “day of the Lord” is a common Old Testament reference to any of God’s judgments in time. In Old Testament contexts, reference was to judgments in time on the enemies of Israel (Is 2:12; 13:6-9; 19:1; Ez 30:1-4), as well as, the nation of Israel (Jr 4:13; Am 5:18-20). When the day of the Lord came upon the enemies of Israel, it was a day of judgment on the wicked, but deliverance for the righteous (See Jr 46:10; Ez 13:5; 30:3; Jl 1:15; 2:1; 3:14; MI 4:1,2). If reference in the context of 2 Peter 3 is to God’s judgment on Jerusalem, then the “day of the Lord” would be the same as “that day” about which Jesus spoke in Matthew 24:36. It would be a great day of calamity for national Israel, but a day of deliverance for the spiritual Israel of God, the church. In the Old Testament, the term “day” in reference to God’s judgment referred to the time when God brought judgment on nations (See Is 13:6-9; 28:5; Ez 30:3; Jl 1:15). In this context reference is possibly to the day of judgment upon national Israel. The destruction of Jerusalem was just another “day” of God’s judgment days on Israel for their rejection of His will (See Is 2,3; Hs 4:3; Am 3:2; MI 3:2ff). However, the

last day of earth history will be the final day of God's judgment wherein He will destroy the world as we know it. It will be a day of destruction for both the wicked and the world, but a day of deliverance for the righteous. ***Come as a thief:*** That day would come as a thief to those who had no concern for the fulfillment of God's promises (See 1 Th 5:1-3). It would come as a thief to those who have allowed the possessions of this world to possess them. Jesus said that disobedient Jews would be "*eating and drinking, marrying and giving in marriage*" just as those who were destroyed by Noah's flood (Mt 24:38). To unbelievers, God's judgments always come as a thief in the night. They are not expecting His judgment simply because they have no belief in His word. They carry on with life as usual. When God's judgment comes, then to them the coming is as a thief. The mind of the materialist is on things of this world. The materialist is possessed by possessions, and thus, controlled by the carnal. However, when the end comes, both in Jerusalem's destruction and the world's destruction, that which the materialist so coveted will be taken from him. ***Will pass away:*** As a thief takes away material possessions, so the Lord in judgment takes away the material. He takes that which diverts the minds of those who are not looking for His coming. The last thing the materialist wants is for a thief to come and take away his possessions. The last theology he wants to believe is a teaching that the things for which he has given so much time to acquire will ultimately be destroyed. But the Lord's coming in judgment will not be as a thief to the believer. Believers are expecting His coming. They are "*looking for and hastening the coming of the day of God*" (vs 12). The exhortations of both Jesus and Peter are parallel. Both are saying that believers must not become caught up in the material things of life, and thus, forget that God has made a promise to deliver the righteous from the world, as well as, to deliver

them from the worries of possessions. The righteous, therefore, must set their “*minds on things above, not on things on the earth*” (Cl 3:2; see Rm 12:2). This helps us to understand the tremendous thought behind warnings as John’s in 1 John 2:15. “*Do not love the world or the things of the world. If anyone loves the world the love of the Father is not in him.*” If we interpret that the immediate context of 2 Peter 3 refers to the imminent destruction of Jerusalem in A.D. 70, then we would view this in-time judgment to illustrate metaphorically the final coming in judgment at the end of time. It would be metaphorical simply because there is no in-time judgment that would literally and accurately portray what will happen at the end of time. The final coming of the Lord and destruction of the present world will be unique. It will be different than any coming of the Lord or destruction by the Lord throughout history. Bible students commonly interpret the words “coming” and “destruction” in passages that refer to the judgments of God to refer to end-of-time destruction of this present world. However, whether reference in this context is directly to Jerusalem’s destruction or the earth’s destruction, we must recognize that metaphorical figures are being used by Peter. There are no words in human language that would adequately define that which has never happened in human experience. Since the final coming and termination of this present heavens and earth has not yet occurred in human history, then we suppose that Peter has no words in his dictionary to adequately explain things concerning an end-of-time event. We must be cautious, therefore, in placing literal meanings on words that are used here by the Holy Spirit to explain something for which there are no earthly definitions to explain. If the words in the context refer to the destruction of Jerusalem, then they would still be used in a metaphorical sense in reference to the destruction that will come at the end of time. The elements of Jerusalem did not melt. The

physical stones of the city did not burn out of existence. We must remember that in the metaphor of prophecy, God wants us to look beyond the metaphor to something that is greater, and often spiritual. It is possible that as Jesus progressed from in-time judgment to end-of-time judgment in His prophecies of Matthew 24 and 25, Peter moves from talking about a specific in-time judgment on national Israel to a general end-of-time judgment on the world at the end of time. Assuming that this is true, then the Spirit metaphorically uses the following words of this passage to explain the final event of world history. ***Pass away:*** The present heavens and earth will be done away. We wonder if they will be terminated completely, and thus, annihilated from existence. What Peter is possibly saying is that the present heavens and earth as we now know them will pass away. ***Great noise:*** Noise occurs in the presence of atmosphere. Atmosphere is something of this world. At the end, we wonder if there will be a sudden explosion or implosion. It is certain that Peter uses the metaphor of great noises, that both startle and make aware, to refer to the termination of that which is to be an event that will not be hidden or secret. The words Peter is using are meant to excite the believer and terrify the unbeliever. ***The elements ... the earth:*** Peter's reference is to those things that now exist. What is perceived through the senses by the physical eyes of man and experienced in daily life will be "melted." This could possibly refer to termination. It would refer to termination if we would place our literal understanding on the metaphor "burned up." However, we must caution ourselves to at least try to be consistent in our interpretations of highly metaphorical passages. In our dictionary, "melted" does not mean annihilation. "Burned up" also does not mean annihilation. "Burned up" simply means that what is physical has changed in state of existence. It may exist as ashes, but it exists. However, the state in which it first

existed has been changed in the sense that it no longer exists as it did before being burned up. Its previous form of existence has been terminated. **Fervent heat:** No known fire is able to destroy the elements of the present material world. Intense heat, according to the second law of thermodynamics, can destroy the usefulness of matter or change its composition. A match can be “burned up,” but there still remains the charcoal. The heat the match produced in its transformation has escaped into space where it cannot be recovered. The charcoal cannot be burned again or changed back into a match. In a sense, therefore, it has “burned up.” However, the remains of the burning still exist. Therefore, the matter (the match) has only been transformed into what is less useful. The “fervent heat” about which Peter speaks is in some way metaphorical of what will happen at the end. The metaphor illustrates what is greater than the metaphor itself. Therefore, the “fervent heat” would be greater than the definition of the words themselves as we understand them. Peter is simply trying to explain that God has a method of destruction that will get the job done. We must not worry ourselves about the details. **The works:** We use earthly things to generate works that manifest our accomplishments. However, Peter says these works will also be terminated. All those precious accomplishments over which men have boasted with pride will be consumed in the great bonfire to come. All the time spent on such great works will profit nothing toward that which will exist in eternity. We cannot help but think that Peter’s real message here is about our senseless concern for the material things and accomplishments of this world. After all, it is the materialist in the context who is scoffing, “Where is the promise of His coming?” Peter’s message is to the same group of materialistic Jews as those to whom James wrote who should weep and howl because of the coming miseries (See comments Js 5:1-3,5). **Burned up:**

As literal fire consumes the usefulness of that which exists, then we assume that there will be consumption of this present world by something in the future. Peter identifies the earth as that which will be consumed. That which will consume will be “fire,” whatever is meant by this. At least in our understanding, “fire” is a most powerful consuming thing or event. We would assume that this metaphor represents something greater than the literal fire we experience. The meaning is certainly that things will be changed from how they presently exist or terminated from existence.

3:11 Whether Peter is discussing the destruction of Jerusalem or the final coming, the point is the same. Since the material world on which we place so much emphasis and time is going to be done away, then Peter reasons that our minds should be on things that are above this world (Cl 3:1,2; Rm 12:2). He mentions two things that should characterize those who recognize the termination of the things of this world: (1) **Holy conduct:** “Holy” is from the word that means “to separate.” The believer’s conduct should be as one separated or detached from what will be terminated. Christians must not become attached to the material world, which in verse 10 will have its end in the consuming fire. Their minds must be on things that are above. Their minds must be on those things that will permeate the consummation of all earthly things (Rm 12:2; Cl 3:2). (2) **Godliness:** In maintaining an emotional and spiritual detachment from the things of the world, the Christian must seek after God’s ways. He must conduct his life as God would direct through His word. Peter’s lesson is clear. The more we understand the temporary existence of this world, the more we will focus our attention on that which will permeate the final destruction of all things. The same lesson would apply to those Jewish Christians who were still trusting in the security of national Israel. If Peter’s context is directed to them, then they must trust only in what will

permeate the ashes of Jerusalem. That which would last would be Jesus and His church. There were possibly too many Jewish Christians in Peter's audience who still gave some allegiance to the hope that national Israel would somehow be restored to her former national glory (See comments At 1:6). However, God would in their lifetime, and in just a few years from the time Peter wrote these words, erase from the earth the objects of their national pride. Therefore, the destruction of national Israel, which included the destruction of Jerusalem and the temple, would help Jewish Christians take their minds off their past and focus them on Christ and the future.

3:12 *Looking for and hastening the coming:* Christians are looking for the day of the Lord because it will be a day of deliverance from the confines of this present world and the sufferings of the persecutions of this environment. We "*eagerly wait for the hope of righteousness by faith*" (Gl 5:5). Paul compared the agony of suffering in this present state with the glory of what is to come. "*For I consider that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory that will be revealed to us*" (See comments Rm 8:18). The glory that will be rewarded to the Christian will far outweigh the most intense suffering one might incur in waiting for it. "*For our light affliction that is but for a moment, is working for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory*" (2 Co 4:17). Paul's argument is that our affliction is only momentary in comparison to the eternity of the glory to come (See 2 Co 4:18). This is precisely Peter's point in this context. We look forward to the passing of the things that are seen in order to enter the glory of that which is presently not seen. Christians who are spiritually detached from what will pass away will be anxiously hastening the coming of that glory which is without end. That which is without end will arrive only when that which is temporary is dissolved. There-

fore, the Christian seeks the termination of this world in order to encounter and partake of the heavenly world to come.

3:13 *His promise:* The promise refers to the new place of dwelling. In the Old Testament era, Isaiah looked forward to a “new heavens and a new earth” (Is 65:17; 66:22). The fulfillment of this prophecy was realized in the establishment of a spiritual kingdom reign of Jesus that is manifested within the hearts of people on earth who have submitted to His lordship (Lk 17:20,21). When the will of the Father is done on earth as it is done in heaven, then kingdom reign is established in the hearts of men and manifested on earth as the church (See comments Mt 6:9,10; At 2:36-38). Those who submit to the kingdom reign of Jesus have their names enrolled in heaven (Ph 4:3). Their citizenship is in heaven (Ph 3:20). ***New heavens and a new earth:*** As opposed to the kingdom relationship that national Israel had with the Father, Christians now enjoy a “new heavens and earth” in their covenant relationship with the Father as members of the body of Christ. The church is a spiritual dwelling. It is a spiritual environment on earth where the kingdom reign of Jesus is seen in the hearts of faithful disciples by their godly living. Peter, however, is directing our minds to another dwelling. He is directing our attention to another “new heavens and earth” that is beyond the church, and yet in the future. ***In which righteousness dwells:*** It is an environment “in which righteousness dwells.” Isaiah contrasted the kingdom relationship of Israel with the Father to the coming kingdom relationship of the church (the spiritual Israel) with Jesus. Peter seems to be using the same figure (new heavens and new earth) to compare the present kingdom relationship of the church with Jesus to another new kingdom relationship that is yet to come. The physical earth is not here under consideration in reference to the new heavens and new earth that

is to come. As Isaiah did not bring into consideration the physical world when discussing the new heavens and new earth in the church, so Peter is not considering the physical world when comparing the present “new heavens and new earth” (the church) of Isaiah’s prophecy with the future new heavens and new earth in eternal glory. Peter is pointing us to a new heavenly environment as opposed to this one of persecution, ridicule, mockery and scoffing by unbelievers. The one to come will be a dwelling place of righteousness. The resurrected Christian will not be a “floating spirit” in an environment of space. In the context, Peter is possibly emphasizing the “location” wherein dwells “the righteous saints.” This interpretation would be affirmed by viewing the new heavens and new earth in contrast to the present heaven and earth that is being “kept in store” by the word of God (vs 7; Hb 1:3). It could be that as the world and heavens were changed by the global flood of Noah’s day, so this present structure of the world will be “restructured” by fire that will destroy this world as we now know it. As the world that then existed perished (vs 6), so this present world that now exists will perish by “fire.” The world certainly did not disintegrate after the flood. It was only drastically changed. Some Bible students believe that this will be the case at the end of time. We must keep in mind that the flood is the best illustration of destruction of this present world the Holy Spirit has to use to metaphorically help us understand that which is to come. However, simply because the world was not completely destroyed in the flood does not necessarily mean that it will not be at the end of time. Whatever the case, we look forward to a new heavens and earth wherein only the righteous will exist. Therefore, we are looking for and hastening the coming of the Lord (vs 12). What this new environment will be for the righteous we do not know. We simply believe that our changed bodies will dwell in an environment that is suit-

able for a body that has put on incorruption and immortality (Compare comments 1 Co 15:35-58).

3:14,15 *Look for these things:* Peter's reference to "these things" refers to the events he has just explained. Christians look forward to the occurrence of these things in order to pass into the new environment. The delay in the occurrence of these things, however, does give Christians more time to reach the lost. Christians are in the business of populating the new heavens and new earth by the preaching of the gospel (Mt 28:19,20; Mk 16:15,16). The more God delays the destruction of this present heavens and earth, the more opportunity we have to enroll citizens in the world to come. Therefore, the longsuffering of the Lord leads to the salvation of more people. But the delay of His coming also leads to the condemnation of more people than are saved simply because more people of the world's population reject the gospel than obey the gospel. ***The wisdom given to him:*** Peter is speaking of the inspiration of Paul (See comments 1 Co 2:10-14; 2 Tm 3:16,17). These things about which Peter is writing were also revealed to Paul.

3:16 *Hard to understand:* Because the future events have no parallel in either present or past experiences, there are some things that are hard to understand. However, there are those who presume to understand all things, and thus, they twist the Scriptures. They do so because they are untaught and unstable. Peter says that these things are hard to understand, but not impossible to understand (See Ep 3:4). Peter was Christ-sent apostle. The Holy Spirit, however, did not inspire him to understand these statements that were made by Paul. It was the work of the Holy Spirit to inspire the material to be written. It was not His work to inspire men to understand what was written (See comments 1 Pt 1:10-12). Our difficulty in understanding is often the result of our lack of study. It may also be our carnal thinking (1 Co 3:1,2). Whatever the case, God did not reveal those

things that are fundamental to our salvation in a manner that is difficult to understand. It is only when revelation is made of those things that are beyond the experience of our lives that we have difficulty in understanding what is revealed. Since we do not understand all that which is to come, then we must trust in God who has all things in control. Therefore, we must not frustrate ourselves in thinking that we must understand all that which is to come. Neither should we twist the things we do not understand to contradict those things that are clearly revealed. **Untaught:** These are those who are ignorant of the word of God. They do not have a spirit to study or be taught, and thus, twist the Scriptures to conform to their own imaginations or a lifestyle that is patterned after this world. Those who do not study their Bibles will always twist those things they do not understand. They do so because they do not have a biblical foundation upon which to determine that which is false. **Unstable:** They are unstable in the sense of being tossed to and fro with every wind of doctrine (See comments Ep 4:11-16; 2 Tm 4:3,4). **To their own destruction:** If reference here is primarily to those mockers who refused to listen to the prophecy of Matthew 24, then they would be destroyed in the fire of Jerusalem's destruction. The same is true if reference is to the end of time. Those who refuse to listen to the warnings of Scripture concerning the coming of Jesus will be destroyed from the presence of the Lord (See comments 2 Th 1:7-9). **Other Scriptures:** The term "Scriptures" was used by the Jews to refer to those writings by godly men that were proven to be inspired by the Holy Spirit. The Scriptures thus referred to the thirty-nine Old Testament books that composed the canon of inspired Old Testament Scriptures. It is significant to note here that Peter classifies Paul's writings as a part of the Scriptures. He thus considers Paul's writings to be inspired by the Holy Spirit and a part of the canon of writings that

should be accepted by the church as the word of God. All the twenty-seven books of the New Testament were accepted as inspired Scripture, and thus, accepted by the church to be the final word of God for all men (Jd 3; Rv 22:18,19).

3:17,18 Beware: Peter concludes by warning Christians not to be led astray by the immoral conduct of those who have given themselves over to the lusts of the flesh (2:18; Ep 4:14). Therefore, we should seriously take to heart his warning, lest we be overcome with a sense of false security in our own minds (See comments 1 Co 10:12). The faithful can be led into sin, and thus lose their souls.

Grow: It is the responsibility of each Christian to grow spiritually. The realm for growth is within the grace and knowledge of Jesus. One's realization of God's grace and knowledge that Jesus is the manifestation of the sacrificial Lamb who took away our sins, should stimulate us to spiritually grow. God has provided the motivation for spiritual growth through the revelation of His grace on the cross (Ti 2:11). It is the responsibility of Christians to grow in response to God's grace and the knowledge that God poured out His love for mankind through the sacrifice of Jesus our our salvation (See Rm 15:4; 1 Co 10:11).

ABBREVIATIONS

OLD TESTAMENT

Genesis - **Gn**, Exodus - **Ex**, Leviticus - **Lv**, Numbers - **Nm**, Deuteronomy - **Dt**, Joshua - **Ja**, Judges - **Jg**, Ruth - **Rt**, 1 Samuel - **1 Sm**, 2 Samuel - **2 Sm**, 1 Kings - **1 Kg**, 2 Kings - **2 Kg**, 1 Chronicles - **1 Ch**, 2 Chronicles - **2 Ch**, Ezra - **Er**, Nehemiah - **Ne**, Esther - **Et**, Job - **Jb**, Psalms - **Ps**, Proverbs - **Pv**, Ecclesiastes - **Ec**, Song of Solomon - **Ss**, Isaiah - **Is**, Jeremiah - **Jr**, Lamentations - **Lm**, Ezekiel - **Ez**, Daniel - **Dn**, Hosea - **Hs**, Joel - **Jl**, Amos - **Am**, Obadiah - **Ob**, Jonah - **Jh**, Micah - **Mc**, Nahum - **Nh**, Habakkuk - **Hk**, Zephaniah - **Zp**, Haggai - **Hg**, Zechariah - **Zc**, Malachi - **Ml**

NEW TESTAMENT

Matthew - **Mt**, Mark - **Mk**, Luke - **Lk**, John - **Jn**, Acts - **At**, Romans - **Rm**, 1 Corinthians - **1 Co**, 2 Corinthians - **2 Co**, Galatians - **Gl**, Ephesians - **Ep**, Philippians - **Ph**, Colossians - **Cl**, 1 Thessalonians - **1 Th**, 2 Thessalonians - **2 Th**, 1 Timothy - **1 Tm**, 2 Timothy - **2 Tm**, Titus - **Ti**, Philemon - **Pl**, Hebrews - **Hb**, James - **Js**, 1 Peter - **1 Pt**, 2 Peter - **2 Pt**, 1 John - **1 Jn**, 2 John - **2 Jn**, 3 John - **3 Jn**, Jude - **Jd**, Revelation - **Rv**