

The Second Epistle of Peter and the Epistle of Jude

The Second Epistle of Peter

I. The Christian's Growth (2 Peter 1:1–21)

A. The Knowledge of God and His Great Provision (2 Peter 1:1–4)

Simon Peter, a servant and apostle of Jesus Christ, To those who through the righteousness of our God and Savior Jesus Christ have received a faith as precious as ours: 2 Grace and peace be yours in abundance through the knowledge of God and of Jesus our Lord.

His divine power has granted to us all things that pertain to life and godliness, through the knowledge of him who called us to³ his own glory and excellence, ⁴ by which he has granted to us his precious and very great promises, so that through them you may become partakers of the divine nature, having escaped from the corruption that is in the world because of sinful desire.

In the second letter Peter uses his full name, "Simon Peter," whereas in 1 Peter he called himself "Peter." This difference causes many critics to theorize that these letters were written by different men. However, this difference can also be used as a strong argument for the authenticity of the epistle. If 2 Peter were the product of a forger, he certainly would not have departed from the recognized Petrine introduction. The apostle Peter, however, would have been under no compulsion to use the same introduction for each letter.

Peter not only used his Hebrew name, Simon in the opening of his second letter, but he also referred to himself as a "servant and apostle of Jesus Christ." Peter regarded himself as a servant, a bond slave, of Christ. The Greek word for servant is *doulos*, indicating one who is in bondage to another. Peter did not feel ashamed of the fact that Christ was his master and that Peter was nothing more than a slave. But Peter did have authority, for he was also an apostle, a "sent one."

Simon Peter, the fisherman of Galilee, called to apostleship by Jesus Christ, continues here to write to strengthen and encourage the believers in Christ who were experiencing temptation, conflict, and trial in circumstances unfriendly to Christianity. The great value of this writing will be that of comfort to those who find that the ungodly of the world will persecute, mock, and suppress those who love the Lord. This letter deals with the fact that maturing as Christians in inward faith and outward character, through knowledge of the Word and a deepening of faith and faithfulness, as well as discipline in conduct, is the result of our growing in Christ.

Peter talks in the epistle to those “have received a faith as precious as ours,” the faith of the Lord Jesus Christ. Through the knowledge of Him, we know God in all of His fullness and experience the grace and peace given to us by a gracious, righteous God. Having the grace and peace of God, we are prepared to live in the world. Godliness and virtue are the practical results of grace in the life of the believer. Divine power, which is able to act and to give us victory, must be secured by faith. The safeguard against the efforts of the enemy is this divine power acting on our behalf in grace.

Through the knowledge of God and by His divine power we are not only called to life and godliness but to glory and virtue, the object and strength of the spiritual life. The wonderful provision of God is that through His divine power He gives us all we need. Added to this, we have exceeding great and precious promises through which we are made partakers of the divine nature. By the same power promised to us, we escape and are delivered from the corruption that is in the world through lust. Here lies the real victorious life of the believer. We must always keep in mind the glory by which we are called, our hearts must be occupied with Jesus Christ; the Holy Spirit acts and gives us victory over sin!

Believers who have this “faith as precious as ours” implanted in their experience as a living grace, by the operation of the Spirit, obtain and also maintain a holy relationship with God in all the Persons and perfections of the Trinity. This faith and experience must be based on the truth of the Word of God.

“Life and godliness” are fruits of the divine power and stamp on the believer the divine image or nature. “Life” reveals that inward source of Christ-likeness; and “godliness” is a manifestation of outward conduct and character of Christ-likeness.

B. The Believer’s Progress and the Knowledge of God (2 Peter 1:5–11)

5For this very reason, make every effort to add to your faith goodness; and to goodness, knowledge; 6and to knowledge, self-control; and to self-control, perseverance; and to perseverance, godliness; 7and to godliness, mutual affection; and to mutual affection, love. 8For if you possess these qualities in increasing measure, they will keep you from being ineffective and unproductive in your knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ. 9But if any of you do not have them, you are nearsighted and blind, and you have forgotten that you have been cleansed from your past sins.

10Therefore, my brothers and sisters, make every effort to confirm your calling and election. For if you do these things, you will never stumble, 11and you will receive a rich welcome into the eternal kingdom of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.

Worldly life apart from God and opposed to God is moral and spiritual death. Ungodliness and godliness repel each other; the two natures have no attraction. Being partakers of the divine nature, claiming the promises of God which He has given to us, having escaped the corruption that is in the world, we are active in multiplying to faith and virtue “by giving all diligence.”

Watchfulness, prayerfulness, study, and love of the will of God should all be ours. The divine nature that abhors the corruption of the world requires care and diligence if it is to grow and develop. God’s will consists of both subtraction, a “putting off of the old man and his deeds” and addition, “putting on the new man,” (Ephesians 4:22–24) the divine nature God gives us. To this we are to add, through diligence, the seven things given here in this first chapter of Second Peter. How foolish for people to profess having a new nature, being born again, being saved by grace, and continue to live enjoying the world and its sinful pleasures according to the old nature!

Believers have the previous promises of God, but Peter here stresses we also have obligations in this life. God has provided believers with the necessary power to live the Christian life, but we should not sit back and relax.

The Christian life begins, of course, with faith. The initial acceptance of God’s love, which was demonstrated by the substitutionary death of Christ Jesus, is the foundation of our Christianity. To this foundation, Peter says believers are to “add” certain things. Peter implies that Christians ought willingly and actively to cooperate with God in order to produce the Christian life. So what qualities are to be added?

“Goodness” implies the idea of moral excellence. Since believers are privileged to share the moral excellence of the Lord, we ought to demonstrate these qualities in our daily lives.

“Knowledge” is an important element of the Christian faith. Peter is probably referring to practical wisdom. Although wisdom was one of the catch words of the false teachers, note that Peter was not afraid to make use of it. Since God is the source of all truth, Christians should never fear the truth. The cure for false knowledge is not less knowledge, or a drawing back from knowledge, but more knowledge. Faith is never achieved through the mental ascent alone, but is founded upon knowledge.

“Self-control” is not a common word in the New Testament but was used in Greek moral philosophy. It meant to control one’s passions rather than be controlled by them. The Christian’s key to achieving self-control is submission to the Spirit (Ephesians 5:18).

Self-control will result in “perseverance”, patience. This word means to voluntarily and continually endure trials and hardships for the sake of honor. If believers have cast their

anxieties on Him (1 Peter 5:7), we will not panic over difficulties and distress. Patience grows as Christians believe the promises of God and experience His power in our lives.

Godliness (reverence or piety) results when we carefully observe the requirements of God on our lives. This quality relates to and implies that there is peace between the believer and God.

Godliness does not exist in a vacuum. Believers who are right with God will demonstrate our “mutual affection”, or “brotherly kindness”, through acts of righteousness. 1 John 4:20 declares that “if anyone says, ‘I love God,’ yet hates his brother, he is a liar. For anyone who does not love his brother, whom he has seen, cannot love God, whom he has not seen.” One of the distinctive marks of the believer is love for fellow believers, which should be demonstrated continually.

Peter teaches that the crown of the Christian’s progress is love. This is agape love, which is defined as the deliberate desire for the highest good in the one loved. Such love is essential to the Christian community.

This is the list of virtues that should be developing in the life of the believer. We should remember that there is a cooperative effort between believers and God to produce these qualities. The important question for us as believers to ask is “Are all these qualities growing in my life?”

Endure reproach, wrongs inflicted by others; endure sufferings in patience. Faith looks to Christ who endured much more than we are ever called upon to endure. If we walk with God and have communion and fellowship with Him in trust and obedience, godliness will not be lacking.

Can you imagine what would happen in the body of Christ today if all who profess to be believers would through faith show moral courage, practice self-restraint, know God, endure suffering with patience, live a godly life, show kindness and concern for fellow-believers in Christian love, while growing and maturing in the knowledge of God and the Lord Jesus Christ? Our Christian community would turn the world upside down!

This is what the knowledge God teaches. Divine love is the very nature of God Himself, and if this new nature, this divine love, governs our lives we will be all we need to be before God and in relationship to our fellow-believers. Having God in the proper place in our lives, we will have proper concerns for other believers and will be able to reach out to those who need to know Jesus Christ.

Christians who possess a true knowledge of Jesus Christ and allow these qualities to be manifest in our lives will find that we continue to grow. There is no room for spiritual pride, for

no believer ever “arrives” spiritually. Christians who cease to grow begin to regress, but Christians continuing to grow in their Christian lives will discover that we continue to produce spiritual fruit (John 15:1–8). However, we must realize that Peter sees this entire process of growth centered in the knowledge of Jesus Christ.

Peter declares that those who fail to make this progress in their lives are blind, lacking spiritual insight. They fail to see the struggle going on between themselves and the forces of evil, and therefore are not equipped for the battle. Paul declares in 2 Corinthians 4:4 that Satan blinds the minds of unbelievers to keep them from believing on Christ. Peter’s implication here is that some believers are blind in failing to recognize the need for growth in their lives.

Peter adds that such people are “nearsighted and blind.” Peter may be implying that Christians who fail to grow are blind because they have deliberately shut their eyes to the light. The next phrase (v 9), declares that such a person “has forgotten that he has been cleansed from his past sins.” This verb implies that the individual had deliberately forgotten the fact that his old sins have been removed. The “past sins” undoubtedly refer to sins committed before conversion. Such a person makes no effort to grow in grace. The consequences of this could be most severe.

By his entire argument, Peter urges his readers to exert themselves and to make certain of their calling and election. Peter again states clearly the need for cooperation of the human will with God’s Sovereign call. Election originates with God, but a person’s behavior proves that election. Christian calling and Christian living must not be separated. Believers whose lives confirm their callings will be aware of two results. The first result, stated in v 10, relates to our lives here and now, namely, that we will never fall or stumble. Christians who progressively develop these virtues in our lives will grow steadily. This growth will be obvious proof that we have been elected by God.

The second result is explained in v 11 and relates to the future -- believers will reach the end of our lifelong journey and will “receive a rich welcome into the eternal kingdom of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.” Believers who follow the Lord’s program for growth will be abundantly blessed in the future. We will share in that everlasting Kingdom of Jesus Christ which will one day be manifest upon the earth.

C. Our Abiding Commitment and the Knowledge of God (2 Peter 1:12–21)

Therefore I intend always to remind you of these qualities, though you know them and are established in the truth that you have. 13 I think it right, as long as I am in this body, to stir you up by way of reminder, 14 since I know that the putting off of my body will be soon, as

our Lord Jesus Christ made clear to me. **15 And I will make every effort so that after my departure you may be able at any time to recall these things.**

16 For we did not follow cleverly devised myths when we made known to you the power and coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, but we were eyewitnesses of his majesty. 17 For when he received honor and glory from God the Father, and the voice was borne to him by the Majestic Glory, "This is my beloved Son, with whom I am well pleased," 18 we ourselves heard this very voice borne from heaven, for we were with him on the holy mountain. 19 And we have something more sure, the prophetic word, to which you will do well to pay attention has to a lamp shining in a dark place, until the day dawns and the morning star rises in your hearts, 20 knowing this first of all, that no prophecy of Scripture comes from someone's own interpretation. 21 For no prophecy was ever produced by the will of man, but men spoke from God as they were carried along by the Holy Spirit.

Peter now writes about the manifestation of the kingdom as God had revealed it through prophecy and by the Transfiguration of which Peter was an eyewitness. Before his departure from this life, Peter was anxious to give instructions to those who would teach, so that they might remember what they had been taught by those who had personally walked and talked with the Lord Jesus Christ.

Christ had been his teacher; writing down truth learned from Him would be a constant reminder. Peter and the other apostles hadn't followed deceitful stories about the power of Christ and of His second coming. They had been eyewitnesses of the majesty of the Lord Jesus Christ.

Peter recalls the scene when the Lord Jesus Christ was transfigured before them on the Mount, clothed with the glory of the Father, with Moses and Elijah. This foreshadowed Christ's coming glory and the fulfillment of the promise which Christ Himself gave in the gospel of Matthew. As Christ stood upon that mountain, he will come again to earth in glory when He brings His saints with Him. Peter refers to this visible and glorious appearing.

The "more sure" word of prophecy Peter talks about is based on the Transfiguration as confirming what the prophets said in the Old Testament. The scene on the Mount of Transfiguration made the Word of prophecy "more sure" regarding the Son of Man coming from heaven in power and glory.

On the basis of the covenant God made with Abraham, the Old Testament prophets foretold of the coming One who would redeem Israel and be a Savior to the world, God's anointed, the Messiah-King. Isaiah refers to Him as the suffering One who would be despised and rejected by

men. The Old Testament prophecy had been fulfilled concerning His first advent, and now Peter was affirming that He would come the second time in power and glory.

Peter and the other apostles had witnessed the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the grave; they knew He was alive; they witnessed His ascension and His parting words to them that He would return. Until the time of His second advent, they were told to go forth and witness to all nations the gospel, then after a while He would return.

The apostles were witness to the fact that God does not lie, and that this message be continued through word of mouth and in writing until Christ comes. This is the reason it is so important that we know what the Word says and that the Bible be preached and taught, for it is our primary source of knowledge as to God's provision through the Lord Jesus Christ for our present life and for life in the future.

The Word was the authority of the apostles and the early Christians. The prophets spoke for God under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit. Human authorities are weak and passing, as they are only human, but God's Word stands forever. We may not like it, we may not agree with it, we may argue with it, we may deny it, but it still stands and will forever stand either to bless us with a beautiful life in obedience to it, or in judgment if we reject it. Either way, we will be judged by it!

II. The Knowledge of God and False Teachers (2 Peter 2:1–22)

A. The Source of Evil (2 Peter 2:1–3)

But false prophets also arose among the people, just as there will be false teachers among you, who will secretly bring in destructive heresies, even denying the Master who bought them, bringing upon themselves swift destruction. 2 And many will follow their sensuality, and because of them the way of truth will be blasphemed. 3 And in their greed they will exploit you with false words. Their condemnation from long ago is not idle, and their destruction is not asleep.

False teaching leads to false practices. Gnosticism was the popular philosophy in Peter's day and is moving into and controlling the attitude of multitudes today. It is a philosophy contrary to the teaching of the Word of God and is in opposition to the Christian worldview. Those who believe in Gnosticism, because of the complexities of our world with its frustrations and anxieties, are looking for another world to which they believe their spirits belong, the world of original source of life and light, the world of true spirits. They believe the present world is false and imprisons our spirits. They have tried to devise ways of escaping this dilemma, some by asceticism, and others by indulging in sensual experiences without regard to law or discipline.

These ideas Peter refers to as damnable heresies. False teaching is moving in because there has been so little teaching of the truth of God's Word! Denial of the virgin birth of Jesus Christ and denial of His deity are false teachings. Casting doubt on the inerrant Word of God brings people to abandon faith in the Bible as the Word of God. Peter says that many will follow these false teachers, bringing swift destruction on themselves. These teachers speak of making the world better and pose as teachers of morality and righteousness, but their conduct is unrestrained. They seek gratification in money and in all the natural heart desires. Worst of all is that the people of God are their prey.

B. Peter Illustrates God's Judgment on Sin from the Past (2 Peter 2:4–10)

For if God did not spare angels when they sinned, but cast them into hell and committed them to chains of gloomy darkness to be kept until the judgment; 5 if he did not spare the ancient world, but preserved Noah, a herald of righteousness, with seven others, when he brought a flood upon the world of the ungodly; 6 if by turning the cities of Sodom and Gomorrah to ashes he condemned them to extinction, making them an example of what is going to happen to the ungodly; 7 and if he rescued righteous Lot, greatly distressed by the sensual conduct of the wicked 8 (for as that righteous man lived among them day after day, he was tormenting his righteous soul over their lawless deeds that he saw and heard); 9 then the Lord knows how to rescue the godly from trials, and to keep the unrighteous under punishment until the day of judgment, 10 and especially those who indulge in the lust of defiling passion and despise authority.

The angels that sinned are Peter's first example. God did not spare these angels when they sinned but banished them to a place called "Tartarus" (in Greek), where they will remain until the day of their final judgment. Bible scholars disagree as to which group of angels Peter is referring. One interpretation is that Peter is writing about those angels who followed Satan in his original rebellion against God (Ezekiel 28:15; Isaiah 14:12–15; Revelation 12:3–4). However, if Satan and the sinning angels were confined until the day of their judgment, Satan and his demons would not be free today to roam the world, influencing people to sin. A second interpretation is that Peter is referring to a terrible sin mentioned in Genesis 6 in which some of the wicked angels who followed Satan in the fall cohabited with the women of the earth (see also Jude 6). This sin was so terrible in the eyes of God that He confined those demons to Tartarus where they await their final judgment. The context in 2 Peter, which includes the flood and the cities of Sodom and Gomorrah, seems to support the second interpretation. Whichever interpretation one follows, the point regarding the false teachers is the same. Just as God judged the angelic realm, so He will judge these false teachers.

Peter's second example of God's judgment is Noah and the flood. The sinfulness of the entire world was so severe that God's judgment had to come. But His loving care for His children is evident in that He spared righteous Noah and seven others. Peter refers to Noah as a "preacher of righteousness." 1 Peter 3:19–20 implies that Noah preached to the men of his day. The Old Testament does not call Noah a preacher of righteousness, but it does declare that he was a just man who walked with God. His way of life was different from the wicked men around him. Peter's point is that the way of righteousness is the way of life; the way of wickedness is the way of death. The just man Noah lived through the flood; the ungodly people perished in the flood.

The cities of Sodom and Gomorrah are the third example of God's judgment. Peter says that God condemned these cities "by burning them to ashes, and made them an example of what is going to happen to the ungodly." Condemned by God, the cities of Sodom and Gomorrah are a classic illustration of the ultimate ruin of unrighteousness. False teaching ultimately results in destruction. The concern of God for His people was evident even in the destruction of those two wicked cities, for the Lord delivered Lot from the city. According to Peter, Lot was "tormenting his righteous soul over their lawless deeds that he saw and heard." Lot was greatly distressed by the wicked behavior he saw in the city of Sodom, but he did not move out. It is possible for Christians to live close to sin, but they may barely escape with their lives.

God did not spare any of His creatures who sinned – neither fallen angels, nor the ancient world, nor Sodom and Gomorrah. All were condemned to wait in punishment until the last judgment. However, God preserved the righteous. This does not mean that Christians will escape suffering and physical death, for God doesn't promise immunity to these. All flesh is subject to these, but God's promises have to do with spiritual life and eternal life. All the temporal blessings of love and care God gives to us are incidental to a Christian who has a better hope than this world has to offer. This hope outweighs any earthly circumstance.

C. The Apostates Described (2 Peter 2:11–22)

Bold and willful, they do not tremble as they blaspheme the glorious ones, 11 whereas angels, though greater in might and power, do not pronounce a blasphemous judgment against them before the Lord. 12 But these, like irrational animals, creatures of instinct, born to be caught and destroyed, blaspheming about matters of which they are ignorant, will also be destroyed in their destruction, 13 suffering wrong as the wage for their wrongdoing. They count it pleasure to revel in the daytime. They are blots and blemishes, reveling in their deceptions, while they feast with you. 14 They have eyes full of adultery, insatiable for sin. They entice unsteady souls. They have hearts trained in greed. Accursed children! 15 Forsaking the right way, they have gone astray. They have followed the way of Balaam, the

son of Beor, who loved gain from wrongdoing, 16 but was rebuked for his own transgression; a speechless donkey spoke with human voice and restrained the prophet's madness.

17 These are waterless springs and mists driven by a storm. For them the gloom of utter darkness has been reserved. **18** For, speaking loud boasts of folly, they entice by sensual passions of the flesh those who are barely escaping from those who live in error. **19** They promise them freedom, but they themselves are slaves of corruption. For whatever overcomes a person, to that he is enslaved. **20** For if, after they have escaped the defilements of the world through the knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ, they are again entangled in them and overcome, the last state has become worse for them than the first. **21** For it would have been better for them never to have known the way of righteousness than after knowing it to turn back from the holy commandment delivered to them. **22** What the true proverb says has happened to them: "The dog returns to its own vomit, and the sow, after washing herself, returns to wallow in the mire."

In this part of our passage there is a description of the false teachers and what will characterize them in the last days. Bold, self-willed, they are not afraid to speak evil and are unbridled in their talk and in their conduct. They are bold enough that they break down every part of the truth of God. They call His revelation a myth, the virgin birth a legend, and minimize or despise the atoning work of the Lord Jesus Christ on the cross.

Peter compares them to beasts, as those who are void of the knowledge of the truth and without the capacity of grasping it so they speak evil of that which they do not know. Under the pretext of learning and culture, they are people not born again but who follow after the flesh and teach others to do so. The Bible teaches that they shall perish in their own corruption.

What is even more sad is that they claim a Christian profession by attending the love-feasts of believers, bringing dishonor by their presence as spots and blemishes. They are deceivers and deny Christ by their conduct. Peter says that their eyes are full of adultery; they entice unstable souls, leading them to be participants of their sins.

Balaam was rebuked for his sin by the speaking of his donkey, and we are told that these men follow in this way. The love of money controls them as it did the pagan prophet. These false teachers are described as springs without water. People look to them for refreshing water because they profess to be teachers. The hungry look up to them and are not fed. They are driven by their natural hearts. They speak great words that are actually worthless and empty.

Rather than bringing souls to Christ and the knowledge of redemption, they lure them through the lusts of the flesh. They promise liberty to others while they themselves are slaves to

corruption. Peter says their last state is worse than the first. Hebrews tells us that they crucify Christ all over again.

III. The Christian's Hope and the Knowledge of God (2 Peter 3:1–18)

A. Scoffers and the Coming of the Lord (2 Peter 3:1–7)

This is now the second letter that I am writing to you, beloved. In both of them I am stirring up your sincere mind by way of reminder, 2 that you should remember the predictions of the holy prophets and the commandment of the Lord and Savior through your apostles, 3 knowing this first of all, that scoffers will come in the last days with scoffing, following their own sinful desires. 4 They will say, "Where is the promise of his coming? For ever since the fathers fell asleep, all things are continuing as they were from the beginning of creation." 5 For they deliberately overlook this fact, that the heavens existed long ago, and the earth was formed out of water and through water by the word of God, 6 and that by means of these the world that then existed was deluged with water and perished. 7 But by the same word the heavens and earth that now exist are stored up for fire, being kept until the day of judgment and destruction of the ungodly.

Peter's reason for writing the second epistle is given here. Not that he had something new to impart but that their pure minds might be stirred up by way of remembrance. He charges the believers to use the Word of God in the coming days of apostasy, remembering especially the prophetic words. There is no need of ignorance about what will happen in the last days because of the warning and instructions given by Christ and His apostles through His Word. Paul's letters are full of instructions and warnings so no Christian should be caught by surprise. The coming of the Lord Jesus Christ is one of the most crucial issues of the Christian faith. We are to give heed to the instructions so that we might be kept in the dangerous times.

Peter believed it was very important for him to warn the believers concerning scoffers who would come. The phrase "first of all," also used in 2 Peter 1:20, means that what he is about to say is very important. In the last days scoffers will come who will pursue their own evil desires. Since Peter believed he was living in the last days, believers today may surely consider that we are living in the last days. One characteristic of the last days is that those who live evil lives will doubt the coming of the Lord, finding it to be a ridiculous idea.

The scoffers argue that "ever since the fathers fell asleep, all things are continuing as they were from the beginning of creation" (v 4). Some scholars believe that the expression "our fathers" refers to the first Church Fathers, such as Stephen and James the son of Zebedee. However, since this phrase is used in connection with the beginning of the creation, more likely it refers to the earliest Old Testament fathers.

The scoffers reject the promise of His coming because, they say, things do not change. The universe is a stable, unchanging system, and God does not interfere with the course of history. The day in which we live seems to be characterized by a denial of the Lord's return. Many people hardly ever think about it, and their lifestyle reflects their disbelief.

Peter makes use of history to counter the scoffer's argument that God does not intervene in history. Peter says this argument has overlooked one very important event—the flood, which shows that God does indeed intervene in human history. But the scoffers have overlooked it willingly. The earth was created by the word of God, for He spoke and it was accomplished.

Obviously Peter did not hold an evolutionary concept of creation taking place over millions or billions of years. By God's word the earth was separated from heaven and was formed "out of water and through water" (v 5). Some believe that this implies that a water canopy surrounded the earth in the early days of its existence, protecting it from the harmful effects of the sun. Some even cite this canopy as the reason for the longevity of man as described in the early chapters of Genesis.

But the flood brought about a great change in the earth's climate and topography. The world as it existed in the days before the flood perished because the earth was flooded. This was obviously a direct intervention by God in the course of history.

There are many who believe the judgment of the earth by fire refers to the day when God will come to judge the earth and destroy all evil. (This is called the Day of the Lord in the Old Testament.) Following this interpretation, Peter envisions the great and final judgment of the earth. After the judgment of the wicked, the new heavens and earth will be created. God changed the course of history in the past by sending the flood, and He will again change history by refining the earth with fire.

Others, Preterists, disagree with this interpretation. Since apocalyptic language spoke of earthly governmental changes as changes in the sun, moon, and stars, they felt that this refers to the end of the Old Covenant age and the beginning of the New, which occurred from AD 66-70 during the Jewish revolt against the Romans when the Temple was destroyed.

B. Future of the Earth (2 Peter 3:8–10)

8 But do not overlook this one fact, beloved, that with the Lord one day is as a thousand years, and a thousand years as one day. 9 The Lord is not slow to fulfill his promise as some count slowness, but is patient toward you, not wishing that any should perish, but that all should reach repentance. 10 But the day of the Lord will come like a thief, and then the

heavens will pass away with a roar, and the heavenly bodies will be burned up and dissolved, and the earth and the works that are done on it will be exposed.

Peter admonishes believers not to forget that “with the Lord a day is like a thousand years, and a thousand years are like a day” (see Psalm 90:4). That which we regard as “a long time” is as one day to the eternal God, for God’s perspective is different from ours. While humans may think that the long silence of the heavens indicates that God is not going to act, God views the time as though it were a moment. Even though God delays, He does not forget.

Peter reminds us that “the Lord is not slow concerning his promise.” God does not lack the strength to accomplish His goals, for He is omnipotent. Hence God does not delay His coming because He is weak. Rather, it is His patience toward humanity that keeps Him from returning. God does not desire that any person perish, either in the days before the flood or today.

C. Exhortation and Conclusion (2 Peter 3:11–18)

11 Since all these things are thus to be dissolved, what sort of people ought you to be in lives of holiness and godliness, 12 waiting for and hastening the coming of the day of God, because of which the heavens will be set on fire and dissolved, and the heavenly bodies will melt as they burn! 13 But according to his promise we are waiting for new heavens and a new earth in which righteousness dwells.

14 Therefore, beloved, since you are waiting for these, be diligent to be found by him without spot or blemish, and at peace. 15 And count the patience of our Lord as salvation, just as our beloved brother Paul also wrote to you according to the wisdom given him, 16 as he does in all his letters when he speaks in them of these matters. There are some things in them that are hard to understand, which the ignorant and unstable twist to their own destruction, as they do the other Scriptures. 17 You therefore, beloved, knowing this beforehand, take care that you are not carried away with the error of lawless people and lose your own stability. 18 But grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. To him be the glory both now and to the day of eternity. Amen.

In 2 Peter 3:11, Peter transitions, making a very practical application. Peter, together with all of the writers of Scripture, sees a direct link between doctrine and life. All of these events will take place just as Peter has described, and this truth should have a direct effect on believers.

Because of God’s promises, we ought to live in keeping with His perfect holiness. Believers are to work and watch (v 12). At the beginning of this second letter (2 Peter 1:4) Peter talked about the precious promises for the believer. As believers, “we are looking forward to a new heaven and a new earth, the home of righteousness.” Righteousness is not at home in the world today,

for today's society is anything but righteous. In that future day, God's perfect righteousness will dwell, and believers will share in that glorious experience.

The anticipation of such a glorious state drives Peter to the personal application for believers. Since only righteousness will survive this world, it is imperative that believers lead righteous lives. Peter urges his readers to "make every effort", be zealous, for righteousness. Diligence should produce evidence of certain traits—believers should to be found "spotless or blemish, and at peace" (v 14).

True peace does not come through external circumstances. A person may have everything from a worldly standpoint and yet be without peace. Peace comes through knowledge of God's plans and a perfect reliance upon Him. Even in the very center of great disaster, the Christian may have peace that passes worldly understanding.

The idea of being without spot stands in contrast to the false teachers whom Peter called blots and blemishes (2 Peter 2:13). The Christian is not to be like the false teachers but conformed to the image of the spotless One, Jesus Christ. In order to be blameless in the sight of God, one must be in Christ. The Christian who is conformed to the spotless One will undoubtedly be considered blameless.

The blameless state of a believer comes through the work of regeneration. In Colossians 1:21–22, Paul declares, "Once you were alienated from God and were enemies in your minds because of your evil behavior. But now he has reconciled you by Christ's physical body through death to present you holy in his sight, without blemish and free from accusation." The apostle Peter has set a high standard for believers, but we are able to reach it through the power of the Spirit working in our lives.

Peter adds one final thought concerning the patience of the Lord. It was noted earlier in v 9 that the patience of God was for the benefit of humanity, to bring people to salvation. It is still God's patience that keeps Him from sending His Son back to the world in the second coming. That event will mark the end of God's patience. God is still giving the world sufficient time to repent.

It is interesting to note that Peter refers to Paul as "our beloved brother." Peter and Paul had not always been on the friendliest of terms. They had disagreements during their ministries, as Paul describes in Galatians 2:11–14. On that occasion Paul withstood Peter to his face because he was guilty of causing problems between the Jewish and Gentile believers. But at the end of his life, Peter is able to call Paul "a beloved brother." Peter clearly points out that he believed Paul had communicated the revelation of God in his letters, which he considered as Scripture. This reference demonstrates that Paul's letters had been circulated among the believers.

Peter believed that Paul had received wisdom from God, and many of the things that Paul had written were difficult to understand. While he did not always understand Paul's writings, Peter was convinced that they were to be considered on the same level as Old Testament Scripture. Peter used the word for "Scripture" which was always used in referring to the sacred writings of the Old Testament. This is an extremely early testimony to the authenticity of the writings of Paul. Peter undoubtedly recognized in the writings of Paul the same working of the Spirit which he had experienced in his own life.

Peter's second letter concludes with a warning and an admonition to believers. In v 17 Peter implies that his readers are now without excuse for being led astray by false teachers. They already knew the doctrine but they were not living up to it. Peter was warning them again, and he expected them to be able to withstand error. The readers were now responsible to watch and guard themselves.

Christians must never allow themselves to become content, since error has many attractive faces which can deceive even the most mature believer. Christians who fall from the truth destroy their lives.

Peter admonishes believers to "grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ" (v 18). Peter ends his letter as he began it, with the subject of Christian growth. The Christian life is either a life of growth or it is a life of deterioration. The growth must be both in grace and in knowledge.

Peter's final statement forms a fitting close to this epistle. To Jesus Christ alone belongs the glory Peter's words emphasize our wonderful Savior and the eternal glory which will be His. "To him be glory both now and to the day of eternity! Amen" (v 18).

The Epistle of Jude

This book precedes the book of Revelation, as it reveals the conditions both religiously and morally before the great coming event which is given in detail in the book of Revelation. The author of this epistle is no doubt Jude, the brother of James. He makes no claims of being an apostle, but addresses himself as a servant of the Lord Jesus Christ. He is mentioned in Matthew 13:55, and apart from this writing we know nothing of him. The epistle was written about 65 AD. The theme of this small epistle is never popular in a comfortable church, yet it is a divine message relevant to the church today.

The letter of Jude warns against those who, having gained admission to the church, were perverting the grace of God, denying "our only Master and Lord, Jesus Christ" (v 4). Jude used

Old Testament examples to warn of these “blemishes” on the church. He wrote multiple denunciations of these ungodly people who “defile the flesh” and “reject authority” (v 8). He urged Christians to continue in godliness and love toward such people, in some cases reasoning with them, in other cases “snatching them out of the fire” (v 23). Jude closes with one of the most beautiful doxologies in all of Scripture (vv 24–25).

I. Greeting and Purpose of the Epistle (Verses 1–4)

Jude, a servant of Jesus Christ and brother of James, To those who are called, beloved in God the Father and kept for Jesus Christ: 2 May mercy, peace, and love be multiplied to you.

3 Beloved, although I was very eager to write to you about our common salvation, I found it necessary to write appealing to you to contend for the faith that was once for all delivered to the saints. 4 For certain people have crept in unnoticed who long ago were designated for this condemnation, ungodly people, who pervert the grace of our God into sensuality and deny our only Master and Lord, Jesus Christ.

It seems that Jude intended to write about certain things to Christians whom he knew, and then, due to serious developments within the church, he changed his mind and decided to write to them about putting up a real fight for the faith. Faith was being corrupted, and it was necessary that Christians have the exhortation to contend for the faith once delivered unto the saints.

People had taken on the profession of faith without possessing the reality of it, and in doing this they turned the grace of God into lasciviousness and denied the right of Christ to be Lord and Master. They professed to believe in grace, but they abused it so that they might indulge in their own lusts.

II. Examples from the Past (Verses 5–10)

Now I want to remind you, although you once fully knew it, that Jesus, who saved a people out of the land of Egypt, afterward destroyed those who did not believe. 6 And the angels who did not stay within their own position of authority, but left their proper dwelling, he has kept in eternal chains under gloomy darkness until the judgment of the great day— 7 just as Sodom and Gomorrah and the surrounding cities, which likewise indulged in sexual immorality and pursued unnatural desire, serve as an example by undergoing a punishment of eternal fire.

8 Yet in like manner these people also, relying on their dreams, defile the flesh, reject authority, and blaspheme the glorious ones. 9 But when the archangel Michael, contending

with the devil, was disputing about the body of Moses, he did not presume to pronounce a blasphemous judgment, but said, “The Lord rebuke you.” 10 But these people blaspheme all that they do not understand, and they are destroyed by all that they, like unreasoning animals, understand instinctively.

Jude issues a warning to the evil men who were perverting the belief and conduct of the church. He tells them that he is, in fact, doing nothing other than remind them of things of which they are perfectly well aware. The evil men who were corrupting the church did not regard themselves as enemies of the church and of Christianity; they regarded themselves as the advanced thinkers, a cut above the ordinary Christian, the spiritual elite. Jude chooses his examples to make clear that, even if a person has received the greatest privileges, one may still fall away into disaster, and even those who have received the greatest privileges from God cannot consider that they are safe but must be on constant watch against the mistaken things.

The first example is from the history of Israel. Jude goes to Numbers 13 and 14. The mighty hand of God had delivered the people from slavery in Egypt. The guidance of God had brought the people safely across the desert to the borders of the Promised Land. So, at the very borders of the Promised Land, at Kadesh-Barnea, spies were sent out to spy out the land before the final invasion took place. With the exception of Caleb and Joshua, the spies came back with the opinion that the dangers ahead were so terrible and the people so strong, that they could never win their way into the Promised Land. The people rejected the report of Caleb and Joshua, and accepted the report of those who insisted that the case was hopeless. This was a clear act of disobedience to God and of complete lack of faith in Him. The consequence was that God sentenced these people, with the exception of Joshua and Caleb, and that all over twenty would never enter the Promised Land but would wander in the wilderness until they were dead (Numbers 14:32, 33; 32:10–13).

The second example which Jude takes is the fallen angels. Jude finds the scriptural story in Genesis 6:1–4. The angels, attracted by the beauty of mortal women, left heaven to seduce them and so sinned. He says that the angels left their own rank; namely, they aimed at an office which was not for them. He also says that they left their own proper habitation; namely, they came to earth to live with the daughters of men.

But Jude’s warning is clear. Two things brought ruin to the angels—pride and lust. Even although they were angels and heaven had been their dwelling-place, they none the less sinned and for their sin were reserved for judgment. Jude was speaking to his people in terms that they could well understand and telling them that, if pride and lust ruined the angels in spite of all their privileges, pride and lust could ruin them.

The evil men within the church were proud enough to think that they knew better than the church's teaching and lustful enough to pervert the grace of God into a justification for blatant immorality. Jude's warning is still valid. The pride which knows better than God and the desire for forbidden things are the way to ruin.

The third example Jude chose is the destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah. Notorious for their sins, these cities were obliterated by the fire of God. The story of the wickedness of Sodom and Gomorrah is told in Genesis 19:1–11, and that of their destruction in the passage immediately following (Genesis 19:12–28).

Two angelic visitors had come to Lot. At his pressing invitation they came into his house to be his guests. When they were there, the inhabitants of Sodom surrounded the house, demanding that Lot should bring out his visitors that they should know them, namely, have sexual intercourse with them. What the men of Sodom wanted were homosexual relations with Lot's two visitors.

It was after this that Sodom and Gomorrah were obliterated from the face of the earth. The neighboring cities were Zoar, Admah, and Zeboim (Deuteronomy 29:23). This disaster was localized in the desert in the region of the Dead Sea.

This is then followed by an incident about Michael contending with the devil over the body of Moses. The arrangement is given to teach us the starting point and the goal of apostasy. Unbelief leads to rebellion against God and then follows lawlessness which is the goal of apostasy. The incident regarding the body of Moses is said to have been recorded in a Jewish apocryphal book called "the assumption of Moses."

III. Further Description of the Apostates (Verses 11–13)

Woe to them! For they walked in the way of Cain and abandoned themselves for the sake of gain to Balaam's error and perished in Korah's rebellion. 12 These are hidden reefs at your love feasts, as they feast with you without fear, shepherds feeding themselves; waterless clouds, swept along by winds; fruitless trees in late autumn, twice dead, uprooted; 13 wild waves of the sea, casting up the foam of their own shame; wandering stars, for whom the gloom of utter darkness has been reserved forever.

A woe is pronounced on the apostate. The way of Cain was the way of unbelief. He did not believe what God had spoken, while his brother Abel did. Here the evil men are likened to Cain; they go in the same way of self-will and in that way they reject the record of God concerning

His Son. They have no use for the blood of redemption; the salvation they preach is the salvation of “works”.

They also rush after the fault of Balaam; money is their chief object. They teach error for reward, knowing that what they teach is not according to the revealed Word of God. Money, honor, and glory from men, self-exaltation, and self-gratification are the leading motives of these men. There is open rebellion against the authority of the Word of God.

They are condemned in the strongest language. They are dead in their fallen nature by turning their ears from the truth and going into apostasy. They are like trees which give promise of fruit, but they are fruitless and wither away and are plucked up by the roots. They are like the wild waves of the sea foaming out their own shame. They are like wandering stars to who is reserved the blackness of darkness forever. Wandering stars detached from some great solar system which begin to wander.

IV. The Testimony of Enoch (Verses 14–16)

It was also about these that Enoch, the seventh from Adam, prophesied, saying, “Behold, the Lord comes with ten thousands of his holy ones, 15 to execute judgment on all and to convict all the ungodly of all their deeds of ungodliness that they have committed in such an ungodly way, and of all the harsh things that ungodly sinners have spoken against him.” 16 These are grumblers, malcontents, following their own sinful desires; they are loud-mouthed boasters, showing favoritism to gain advantage.

Jude now confirms all this with a prophecy; but the prophecy is again taken from the book of Enoch. The actual passage says, “And behold! He cometh with ten thousands of his holy ones to execute judgment upon all, and to destroy all the ungodly; and to convict all flesh of all works of their ungodliness which they have ungodly committed, and of all the hard things which ungodly sinners have spoken against him” (Enoch 1:9).

Enoch lived in an age about to close. Jude sets down three last characteristics of the evil men. They are grumblers, forever discontented with the life which God has allotted to them. The evil men are chronically discontented with life and with the place in life that God has given to them. There are few people more unpopular than chronic grumblers and such grumbling is in its own way an insult to God.

Their conduct is governed by their desires. To them self-discipline and self-control are nothing; moral law is only a burden; honor and duty have no claim upon them; and they have no desire to serve and no sense of responsibility. Their only goal is pleasure based solely on desire.

They speak with pride and arrogance, yet at the same time they are ready to flatter the great, if they think that they can get anything out of it. Jude's opponents are glorifiers of themselves and flatterers of others, as they think the occasion demands.

Universal violence, corruption, and wickedness had come, yet Enoch walked with God and remained faithful until God took him.

V. Final Exhortations (Verses 16–25)

But you must remember, beloved, the predictions of the apostles of our Lord Jesus Christ. 18 They said to you, "In the last time there will be scoffers, following their own ungodly passions." 19 It is these who cause divisions, worldly people, devoid of the Spirit. 20 But you, beloved, building yourselves up in your most holy faith and praying in the Holy Spirit, 21 keep yourselves in the love of God, waiting for the mercy of our Lord Jesus Christ that leads to eternal life. 22 And have mercy on those who doubt; 23 save others by snatching them out of the fire; to others show mercy with fear, hating even the garment stained by the flesh.

24 Now to him who is able to keep you from stumbling and to present you blameless before the presence of his glory with great joy, 25 to the only God, our Savior, through Jesus Christ our Lord, be glory, majesty, dominion, and authority, before all time and now and forever. Amen.

The closing exhortations are for the people of God. Believers are to remember and to hold fast the words of Christ and the apostles, as they will be needed as we live in these last days of apostasy. We must build ourselves up in the most holy faith if we are to stand. Prayer is needed in the Spirit.

We are exhorted to "Keep yourselves in the love of God." We are to keep in the consciousness of fellowship with the Father and with the Lord Jesus Christ. We are to be looking for the coming of Christ. We are to be ever mindful of reaching out to those who have been led away, searching ways of winning them from the error of their way.

What a comforting ending to this epistle, "Now to him who is able to keep you from stumbling and to present you blameless before the presence of his glory with great joy."

Soli Deo Gloria!