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# **The Second Book of Peter**

***A practical Bible Commentary by Terry Baxter***



More than any other book in the entire Bible, 2 Peter gives us a panoramic view of everything from eternity past to eternity future. He covers the whole spectrum of truth and reality as presented in the Bible. The book forces us into a crisis. It defines the Christian faith as a total package of believing the entire Bible. It forces us to wrestle with things like Creation vs. Evolution. It causes us to open up the full mystery of fallen angels and what precipitated the flood of Noah's day. This book also challenges the modern notion that God is all love with no balancing qualities of justice and eternal judgment. It questions the notion that human morality has no consequence. This book also predicts a coming cataclysmic event that will utterly destroy the present earth. But behind all of this is the premise that Satan is actively engaged in a conspiracy to deceive humanity with a very distorted view of history and reality with the goal of leading them away from the knowledge of the true God. Praise God the devil's schemes are no match for the power of Jesus Christ!



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Edited by Dan Jones

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# **The Second Book of Peter: A Practical Commentary by Terry Baxter**

*(Edited and occasional added comment by Dan Jones)*

<b>The Author of the Epistle: 2 Peter 1:1.....</b>	<b>4</b>
<b>Overview of the Book: 2 Peter 1:1 .....</b>	<b>5</b>
<b>The Multiplied Life: 2 Peter 1:2 .....</b>	<b>6</b>
<b>Divine Inner Work: 2 Peter 1:3-4 .....</b>	<b>7</b>
<b>Stepping Stones for Personal Growth: 2 Peter 1:5-11.....</b>	<b>8</b>
<b>Unimaginable Personal Fortitude and Fruitfulness: 2 Peter 1:8-11.....</b>	<b>10</b>
<b>Living With An Eternal Perspective: 2 Peter 1:12-15.....</b>	<b>11</b>
<b>The Doctrine of Diligence: 2 Peter Chapter One .....</b>	<b>12</b>
<b>God the Father Spoke: 2 Peter 1:16-18.....</b>	<b>14</b>
<b>The God of Truth and Prophecy: 2 Peter 1:19-21.....</b>	<b>15</b>
<b>A Coming Distorted Gospel: 2 Peter 2:1-3.....</b>	<b>16</b>
<b>An Overview of God's Judgement: 2 Peter 2:3-10.....</b>	<b>18</b>
<b>Fallen Angels and a Diabolical Conspiracy: 2 Peter 2:4.....</b>	<b>19</b>
<b>Noah and the World that Perished: 2 Peter 2:5.....</b>	<b>21</b>
<b>A Violent X-Rated Society: 2 Peter 2:6-7.....</b>	<b>22</b>
<b>Escape From Sodom: 2 Peter 2:6-9.....</b>	<b>23</b>
<b>The Attitude, Character And Temperament of the Wicked: 2 Peter 2:10-22.....</b>	<b>25</b>
<b>Resurgence of the Counsel of Balaam: 2 Peter 2:15-16.....</b>	<b>26</b>
<b>The True Nature of False Teachers: 2 Peter 2:17-22.....</b>	<b>27</b>
<b>Letting God Stir Your Sincere Mind: 2 Peter 3:1-2.....</b>	<b>28</b>
<b>Mockers in the Last Days: 2 Peter 3:3-4.....</b>	<b>29</b>
<b>The Window of Creation: 2 Peter 3:5.....</b>	<b>30</b>
<b>A Creation/Flood View of History: 2 Peter 3:5-7.....</b>	<b>31</b>
<b>Coming Judgement of Fire: 2 Peter 3:5-14.....</b>	<b>33</b>
<b>God's Timetable: 2 Peter 3:8-10.....</b>	<b>34</b>
<b>New Heavens and a New Earth: 2 Peter 3:13.....</b>	<b>35</b>
<b>A Positive Spin: 2 Peter 3:14.....</b>	<b>36</b>
<b>Peter Endorses The Writings of Paul. 2 Peter 3:15-16.....</b>	<b>37</b>
<b>Assume Responsibility for Your Own Growth: 2 Peter 3:17-18.....</b>	<b>38</b>
<b>Conclusion to the Books of 1 &amp; 2 Peter.....</b>	<b>39</b>

## **The Author of the Epistle: 2 Peter 1:1**

It must be noted that the book of 2 Peter took a long time to be accepted into the New Testament canon. It was not widely known and many were writing false letters and signing Peter's name to them. Eventually it gained acceptance and was viewed as genuine.

The author introduces himself as "Simon Peter, a bond servant and apostle of Jesus Christ, to those who have received a faith of the same kind as ours, by the righteousness of our God and Savior, Jesus Christ." (2 Peter 1:1) Let's see if we can unpack this verse and glean some valuable insights.

Notice the mention of being a "bondservant." Paul was the first to adopt the word "doulos" to describe his relationship with Jesus Christ. (See Romans 1:1, Philippians 1:1, Titus 1:1) It literally means "a slave", or "one who is in a permanent position of servitude to another." This may indicate the extent to which Peter was familiar with the writings of Paul. Three things in this epistle give credence to the view that Peter was indeed placing his seal of approval on the ministry of Paul.

First, we noticed at the close of 1 Peter 5:12 that Silvanus was present with Peter. He had been sent by Peter and the Jerusalem Council to carry the verdict of the council to the gentile churches. He went on to become Paul's close traveling companion and ministry partner. At the close of 1 Peter Chapter Five, we discovered that Silvanus was again with Peter and may have brought copies of Paul's writings to Peter.

Second, at the end of 2 Peter, the Apostle makes an astounding reference to the writings of Paul and compares them "to the rest of the Scriptures." (See 2 Peter 3:15-16) He duly noted the complex nature of Paul's writings, but totally affirms them as Scripture. I would argue Paul's writings had such an influence on Peter that he also started viewing himself as a "bondservant of Jesus Christ."

Third, Peter was beginning to adopt some of Paul's theological philosophy. It is with the introduction to this second epistle that Peter identifies himself as a "bondservant of Jesus Christ." This is a new admission for Peter. His inner battle was over. He had now totally surrendered to the Lordship of Jesus Christ as indicated by referring to himself as a "doulos" of Jesus Christ.

I know we are in a time when the word "slave" has negative ramifications, but there were slaves who loved and revered their masters to the point of making the position of servitude permanent. Such became the view of the early church related to Jesus Christ. The early believers willingly submitted themselves to the rule and Lordship of Jesus Christ. They viewed Jesus Christ as Sovereign Master.

The writer of this Epistle also calls himself an "apostle of Jesus Christ." This is an indication of official appointment to a place of high leadership. According to Matthew 10:2-5, Peter was the

first named of the twelve. Jesus placed Peter in this position. Peter did not seek it on his own accord.

Notice that Peter now accepted his role to give leadership, guidance, and protection to all believers and not merely the Jewish believers. Early in his ministry Peter viewed his apostleship more to the Jewish believers and did not readily enfold the Gentiles. (See Galatians 2:7-8) By the time of this second Epistle, those lines were erased.

I do not see this as Peter grabbing authority, rather I see the bonding nature of persecution. Nothing unites like suffering for the same cause. The persecution was now heavy against all believers and not merely the Jewish segment of the church. Blood is a powerful cleanser. The mutual blood of martyrdom spilled by all believers washed away the dividing lines in the early church. Peter now saw one flock made up of all who were saved by the work of Jesus Christ on the cross.

### **Overview of the Book: 2 Peter 1:1**

“Simon Peter, a bond-servant and apostle of Jesus Christ, to those who have received a faith of the same kind as ours, by the righteousness of our God and Savior, Jesus Christ:”

Buckle your seat belt; Peter is about to take us on a very thrilling adventure that might cause you to question many of your core beliefs. Be prepared to be confronted with a view of history, reality, and the future that directly contradicts and confronts modernism and the pillars of secular humanism.

So what does this have to do with you as a Christian? Notice that the book was written to “those who have received a faith of the same kind as ours.” It might be wise to ask, “what is included in the faith?” Is it only salvation and belief in Christ and His work on the cross? Or does being “in” the Christian faith include an entire Christian worldview? I believe the book of 2 Peter answers that question in a profound way.

More than any other book in the entire Bible, 2 Peter gives us a panoramic view of everything from eternity past to eternity future. He covers the whole spectrum of truth and reality as presented in the Bible. Let me make a brief list of some of the major themes covered in the three chapters of this small book:

1. The Existence of God and Divine Power. Vs 1:3
2. A Profound View of the Bible. Vs 1:3-4
3. The Power of Salvation. Vs 1:5-11
4. An Eye-witness Account of the Life of Christ. Vs 1:16-18
5. Biblical Prophecy and Inerrancy. 1:19-21
6. Fallen Angels and the Nephilim. 2:4
7. Noah and a Literal Flood. 2:5

8. Destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah. 2:6
9. Warning of False Philosophies. 2:1-3:4
10. Doctrine of Eternal Judgement. 2:7-22
11. A Literal View of Creation. 3:3-7
12. A View of Reality that Includes the Supernatural Realm. 3:8-9
13. A Coming Doomsday. 3:10-12
14. The Promise of a New Heaven and New Earth. 3:13
15. Affirmation of a Biblical Worldview. 3:14-16

The book of 2 Peter forces us into a crisis. It defines the Christian faith as a total package of believing the entire Bible. It forces us to wrestle with things like Creation vs. Evolution. It causes us to open up the full mystery of fallen angels and what precipitated the flood of Noah's day. This book also challenges the modern notion that God is all love with no balancing qualities of justice and eternal judgment. It questions the notion that human morality has no consequence.

This book also predicts a coming cataclysmic event or doomsday that will utterly destroy the present earth. But behind all of this is the premise that Satan is actively engaged in a conspiracy to deceive humanity with a very distorted view of history and reality with the goal of leading them away from the knowledge of the true God.

Caution: If you have Jesus and theology in a nice little box that allows you to function with a secular world view, avoid the book of 2 Peter at all cost! Studying this book will most likely shatter your box and cause you to question many things that you have been taught.

### **The Multiplied Life: 2 Peter 1:2**

"Grace and peace be multiplied to you in the knowledge of God and of Jesus our Lord;"

Peter opens with a blessing. At first glance it looks very simple. He says "grace and peace be multiplied to you in the knowledge of God and of Jesus our Lord." I believe Peter was talking about the multiplied life. As you grow in your relationship with Jesus Christ and your knowledge of God and His ways expand, many things begin to be multiplied in your life.

It starts with grace and peace. I look at grace as God's Divine enablement or God's power for daily living. Peace means the inner war is gone. The inner tension and anxiety are replaced with a calm knowing that God is for you and not against you.

The spillover of grace and peace begins to show up in other areas of life. God begins to shower you with His favor. Like Joseph or Daniel, you may experience difficult trials, but God will begin to bless and promote you even through the difficult times. Soon both Joseph and Daniel received multiplied wisdom. You cannot spend time with God without being multiplied. In both cases, favor with those in positions of authority was multiplied. Then God began to open

unusual doors for them because they were sold out to God and were serving others. It didn't take long and promotions came seeking them out. God was multiplying them.

This principle of being multiplied is seen throughout the Bible for those who seek God. In John 10:10 after talking about the thief, Jesus said, "but I came that you might have life and have it more abundantly." Those who belong to Satan have multiplied sorrows. Those who belong to Jesus have multiplied blessings. Old things pass away, all things become new. (2 Corinthians 5:17)

Satan is the divider. Jesus is the multiplier. Satan subtracts from those who follow him. Jesus adds to those who seek Him. This is seen throughout the Bible.

I believe in the multiplied life. I believe in the abundant life. But notice, these are directly tied to growing in your knowledge of God and of Jesus our Lord. No investment in this life pays dividends like knowing and honoring God. His blessings and favor on life have no comparison. They come in unusual ways, at unusual times, and with unusual abundance. Many of them relate to the fruit of the Spirit, but often they are more tangible.

They can include better relationships, a stronger marriage, a blessed family, favor in your career, timely insights into problems, the ability to enjoy the moment, a clear conscience and numerous supernatural provisions as you go through life. Stop limiting God. Though Peter was writing to the persecuted church, he was diligent to point out that God is the multiplier.

Jesus fed thousands with a few fish and a few loaves of bread. Why? Because He is the multiplier. God's math defies human logic. God can do things people cannot. The more you increase your knowledge and relationship with Jesus Christ, the more the hand of the multiplier begins to show up in your life.

#### **Divine Inner Work: 2 Peter 1:3-4**

"2) Grace and peace be multiplied to you in the knowledge of God and of Jesus our Lord; 3) seeing that His divine power has granted to us everything pertaining to life and godliness, through the true knowledge of Him who called us by His own glory and excellence. 4) For by these He has granted to us His precious and magnificent promises, so that by them you may become partakers of the divine nature, having escaped the corruption that is in the world by lust."

As God begins His work of multiplying grace and peace in our lives, it is in accordance with His divine power. The Holy Spirit actively works to produce godliness in our lives. This process is nothing short of miraculous and amazing to watch.

Do not take godliness lightly. This is what positions us to receive manifold blessings and favor in this life. This is the basis of the multiplied life we briefly looked at previously. Satan works to subtract and take away from us. Deception, rebellion, bitterness, sexual immorality, substance

abuse, addictions, pride, self indulgence, and involvement in demonic-based spiritism all steal from us. They subtract from us. They reduce us. They destroy us.

But when the Holy Spirit begins to transform a person from the inside, many things begin to be multiplied. It starts with the fruit of the Spirit. These are listed in Galatians 5:22-24. Agape love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control are radically different character qualities than sin, Satan, and the flesh produce.

The fruits of the Spirit are primary character multipliers. They move us toward godliness. These, coupled with the forgiveness Jesus Christ brings into our life at salvation, catapults us toward a clear conscience and inner freedom. Notice 2 Peter 1:4 talks about “become partakers of the divine nature.” Godliness helps us escape “the corruption that is in the world by lusts.” “Godliness” can be defined as “God-like-ness.” We do not become like God in attributes, but we can become like God in our attitudes and our character.

Notice, the entire above process is based on growing in the true knowledge of Jesus Christ. So the obvious question is; “Where do we get this true knowledge of Jesus Christ?” Peter answers that question in 2 Peter 1:4. God has given us His precious and magnificent promises and they become the avenue of the transformation process. There is no substitute for spending time in God’s Word. Read it. Study it. Memorize it. Meditate on it. Apply it to your life. Live it. Obey it. Share it. The Holy Spirit activates God’s Word in our life in such a way that amazing things begin to happen both in us and through us.

But there is a big catch that most people miss. God does not multiply us for our sake, He does it for His sake. The end of verse 3 says; “... Him who called us by His own glory and excellence.” God wants to raise up many men and women like Joseph, Daniel, Esther, Ruth, David, Peter, Paul, and Timothy for His glory. In each case God took ordinary people and multiplied their inner substance so He could entrust them with significant ministry.

You cannot do more for God until you become more like God. This is the call to godliness. This is becoming a partaker for the divine nature. Becoming a Christian places you at the beginning of an amazing journey of personal transformation. This is what Jesus was teaching in John 15:1-17. Jesus is the true vine and we are the branches. As we abide in Him and His word abides in us... amazing multiplying takes place. The end result is that we bear much fruit.

The greatest thing God wants to multiply in our life is influence. He wants to save us, transform us, add to us, multiply everything about us and then launch us into the world for His glory. He does not want us to consume the fruit of multiplying on ourselves. He wants us to share it for His glory. Welcome to the multiplied life.

### **Stepping Stones for Personal Growth: 2 Peter 1:5-11**

“5) Now for this very reason also, applying all diligence, in your faith supply moral excellence, and in your moral excellence, knowledge, 6) and in your knowledge, self-control, and in your



self-control, perseverance, and in your perseverance, godliness, 7) and in your godliness, brotherly kindness, and in your brotherly kindness, love. 8) For if these qualities are yours and are increasing, they render you neither useless nor unfruitful in the true knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ. 9) For he who lacks these qualities is blind or short-sighted, having forgotten his purification from his former sins. 10) Therefore, brethren, be all the more diligent to make certain about His calling and choosing you; for as long as you practice these things, you will never stumble; 11) for in this way the entrance into the eternal kingdom of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ will be abundantly supplied to you.”

God used this text to put me on a course of personal growth and development. Peter emphasizes the importance of daily diligence in building godly character. Certainly the Holy Spirit does His part, but He calls us to obedience and purposeful living.

This text may have been the early church's step-by-step disciple-making plan. Let's look at it briefly. First, notice that it starts with being in the faith. Salvation is the first and vital step to a new life. This not only places the Holy Spirit in your life, it means you are seeking God for personal change and growth.

Second, the New American Standard Version says we need to add “moral excellence.” I equate this with repentance and a conscious effort to turn from sinful living. This is where I place Ephesians 4:17-5:33. It relates to putting off the old self, taking a moral bath and then putting on the new self. In this text Paul tackles the seven basic strongholds of deception, rebellion, anger and bitterness, sexual immorality, substance abuse, pride and greed, and demonic channeling. I call this text in Ephesians, “The Steps to Freedom.” It is a deliberate process.

Third, after the personal clean up, Peter then adds knowledge. If these steps are not followed in this order it results in a carnal, compromising, smart sinner that justifies every personal compromise. God wants our submission to Him as Lord and to His Word as authoritative before He applies His hands to us on the potter's wheel. (See Isaiah 64:7-8) When we submit to God and obey His Word, amazing things start happening in our lives. It activates the power of the Holy Spirit within us.

Fourth, Peter says we need self-control. This not only assumes responsibility for personal actions, it also means we begin to rule over our emotions and feelings. We govern our lives by biblical absolutes and not by external circumstances or opinion polls. Proverbs 16:32 says; “He who is slow to anger is better than the mighty, and he who rules over his spirit, than he who captures a city.”

Fifth, Peter says we need to add perseverance. This means we are committed to obey God and do right no matter the personal consequences. We side with God no matter how long the trial lasts, how severe the opposition becomes, or how much opposition or ridicule we need to endure. Perseverance means we build our lives on convictions and not convenience.

Sixth, Peter says the next building block is godliness. With this step we begin to consistently show godly character. It doesn't mean we are perfect, but it does mean we have integrity and become more like Jesus. Our daily walk begins to line up with our claim of being a Christian.

Seventh, it is at this point that Peter points to brotherly kindness. The best way I can define this is that we begin to treat people the way Jesus did in His life. God wants us to treat all people with honor, respect, and dignity.

Finally, it's time for the big surprise. It is at this point that Peter says we begin to manifest genuine agape love. Becoming a Christian is an event, but becoming Christ-like is a journey. Christian maturity develops over time, but it comes more quickly for those who embrace the process.

In the next study we are going to look at the stunning benefits of godly maturity, but for now let's just focus on these eight steps. Do you have a daily plan for personal growth or are you drifting through life? Are you moving forward in your walk with God or are you stagnant or drifting backward? Are you applying "all diligence" in pursuing God or are you reckless and sloppy in your spiritual life?

I confess, these verses grab me and challenge me to the core. They have helped me make some radical changes with my daily priorities and the way I pursue God. They also help me conclude that there is no lid on personal spiritual potential once self is conquered. I confess, over the years I have been my own worst enemy.

### **Unimaginable Personal Fortitude and Fruitfulness: 2 Peter 1:8-11**

"8) For if these qualities are yours and are increasing, they render you neither useless nor unfruitful in the true knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ. 9) For he who lacks these qualities is blind or short-sighted, having forgotten his purification from his former sins. 10) Therefore, brethren, be all the more diligent to make certain about His calling and choosing you; for as long as you practice these things, you will never stumble; 11) for in this way the entrance into the eternal kingdom of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ will be abundantly supplied to you."

The person who pursues God in intentional personal growth and development and allows the Holy Spirit to work His miracle of inner transformation becomes useful for the Master and fruitful for the Kingdom of God. Keep the context in mind. 2 Peter 1:4-7 talked about an intentional journey through God's Word that climbs eight stepping stones toward maturity and godliness. (Please review those verses.)

This results in the phenomenon of exponential expansion of personal capacity for the glory of God. The disciple-making process transformed Peter from a rugged and impetuous fisherman to a leadership pillar in the early church. The early church followed the disciple-making model of Jesus and turned out faithful men and women of unshakable character and moral substance. It is no wonder that God worked through them to transform the Roman Empire.

I believe God wants to do the same thing today. He wants to raise up a new generation of faithful, godly, and capable men and women He can work through to impact our modern world. But there is no shortcut. Each Christian must personally and diligently ascend the crucial steps of growth, maturity, and godliness that Peter laid out in the previous four verses.

The Christian leader built in this fashion has personal substance in their character, compassion in dealing with people, an anointing that results in unimaginable fruitfulness, and steadfastness for the glory of God. Peter makes the statement that they not only grow, increase, and multiply effectiveness for the glory of God, but also that they will never ever stumble. In Greek, this is a double negative. This doesn't mean they are sinless, but it does mean they are reliable, faithful, and resilient. The end result is an abundant and glorious entrance into the eternal kingdom.

I have watched many Christian leaders come and go over the years. Some have burned out while others have been exposed as secretly living in shameful sin and compromise. The common denominator in all of them was that they skipped over one or more of the stepping stones Peter outlined in verse 4-7.

The Christian life was not intended to be a random, carefree, or haphazard drift through life. It was designed to be transformational, abundant, and radically fruitful and influential. God delights in taking common and ordinary men and women and turning them into World Changers. He works deeply in them so He can work mightily through them.

When a church steps up and embraces the disciple-making calling of Matthew 28:16-20 and then follows the disciple-making pathway laid out in 2 Peter 1:2-11, the potential is incomprehensible. But don't make the excuse that your church is not on task. Any individual Christian can embrace the 2 Peter 1:2-11 journey in diligently pursuing God.

Today can be the day you embark on a courageous new journey in life. If you have strayed off the path or skipped some stepping stones in your life, retrace your steps and rebuild your foundation. I would encourage you to make this text your GPS for life.

### **Living With An Eternal Perspective: 2 Peter 1:12-15**

"12) Therefore, I will always be ready to remind you of these things, even though you already know them, and have been established in the truth which is present with you. 13) And I consider it right, as long as I am in this earthly dwelling, to stir you up by way of reminder, 14) knowing that the laying aside of my earthly dwelling is imminent, as also our Lord Jesus Christ has made clear to me. 15) And I will also be diligent that at any time after my departure you will be able to call these things to mind."

Peter devoted time to the basics. He returned to them over and over again. He was investing his last days on this earth reminding the believers of the essentials of the Christian faith and of truth. He was stirring them up by way of reminder.

In John 21:18-23, shortly after His resurrection, Jesus foretold to Peter that a cross awaited him if he decided to follow Jesus. He then bid him to follow without reservation. Peter wrestled with that conversation, but shortly resolved to follow Jesus with no thought of turning back

At this writing, the time for Peter's departure was imminent. He was setting his house in order and preparing to die for his faith. Church history tells us that he finished well. He was martyred for his faith by choosing to be crucified upside down, not seeing himself worthy to die as His Master.

In a sense, Peter signed this letter with his own blood. Having a cause worth dying for gave him a purpose worth living for. He was diligent, intentional, and focused on building the faith of others right up to his last days. He was devoted to Jesus and the task of shepherding His sheep and building up His kingdom right to his last breath.

This is one of the texts of Scripture that challenges me to invest my life for an eternal purpose much greater than myself. God wants us to live with eternity in mind, and when the time comes... He wants us to die with eternity in mind.

The early Christians left us an extraordinary example of what God can do through common people with an uncommon devotion to God. They lived with an eternal perspective and they died with an eternal perspective.

### **The Doctrine of Diligence: 2 Peter Chapter One**

“5) Now for this very reason also, applying all diligence, in your faith supply moral excellence, and in your moral excellence, knowledge,” 2 Peter 1:5

“10) Therefore, brethren, be all the more diligent to make certain about His calling and choosing you; for as long as you practice these things, you will never stumble;” 2 Peter 1:10

“15) And I will also be diligent that at any time after my departure you will be able to call these things to mind.” 2 Peter 1:15

3:14 “Therefore, beloved, since you look for these things, be diligent to be found by Him in peace, spotless and blameless,” 2 Peter 3:14

I want to talk about diligence. It is a rare subject today. Notice that Peter used the word three times in chapter one and again in chapter three. The word means to make haste, to work hard at, to apply yourself, to be careful, persistent and thorough. It is the idea of doing your best or putting forth your best effort with great care to details. The opposite character quality is to be lazy, slothful, shoddy, half-hearted, or negligent.

Diligence is not automatic. For most people it needs to be learned. This is especially true in modern times when ease and comfort are stressed as a virtue. For example, a common farewell today is: "Take it easy." Ironically, that is the opposite of the early Christians. Peter's farewell included; "Be diligent."

This has been a lifelong journey for me. It has included learning organizational skills, time management, and attention to details. My biggest challenge has been learning follow-through to complete tasks. I have made it an intentional part of my personal growth and development focus. At least for me, it involves self-discipline and redeeming the time rather than wasting time.

The book of Proverbs talks at length about the benefits of diligence. For a number of years, I avoided the book of Proverbs because it exposed my slothful and lazy spirit. Over time, I came to realize biblically that I could not reach my potential without embracing self-discipline and diligence no matter the size of God's anointing.

This has been a challenging journey for me. I loved the Scriptures on "resting in the Lord", but shunned the notion that God calls us to diligence. Over time, I have come to the realization that diligence delivers big in every area of life. It is true in our spiritual life, physical fitness, and health, marriage and family relations, living environment, finances, career and life accomplishments, and delivers more spare time and resources for hobbies and recreation.

Over time a big light bulb turned on and I realized it is more economical and time efficient to be diligent rather than negligent. Putting tools away after a task, taking a few minutes to clean up and organize at the end of a day and developing consistent positive habits over time yields huge blessings and benefits. In fact, I soon made the connection that God blesses human diligence in extraordinary ways.

I still have a long way to go in adopting the joy and blessings of diligence to every area of my life, but I am beginning to reap a much bigger harvest. The compounded personal fruitfulness, completed tasks, and list of accomplishments have given me a huge boost to my emotional health. In many ways, the last decade of my life has eclipsed the previous five decades combined and some of this has to do with working on personal diligence.

Lest you think I am on a soap box or staying into some kind of self-help psychology, let me conclude with an expanded list of the word "diligence" in the New Testament.

Expanded list of diligence in the New Testament:

Romans 12:8 ... Be a diligent leader.

Romans 12:11 ... Be diligent in relational skills.

2 Corinthians 8:22 ... Be diligent in ministry duties.

Ephesians 4:3 Be diligent to preserve unity among Christians.

1 Thessalonians 5:12 ... appreciate diligent Christian workers.

2 Timothy 2:15 ... Be diligent in your study and application of Scripture.  
Titus 3:13 ... Be diligent to support missionaries.  
Hebrews 4:11 ... Be diligent to enter God's rest.  
Hebrews 6:11 ... Be diligent to embrace assurance of salvation.  
2 Peter 1:5 ... Be diligent in building your personal Christian life.  
2 Peter 1:10 ... Be diligent to confirm your calling and choosing.  
2 Peter 1:15 ... Be appreciative of the diligence of Christians leaders.  
2 Peter 3:14 ... Be diligent with personal holiness.

### **God the Father Spoke: 2 Peter 1:16-18**

"16) For we did not follow cleverly devised tales 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, such an utterance as this was made to Him by the Majestic Glory, "This is My beloved Son with whom I am well-pleased"— 18) and we ourselves heard this utterance made from heaven when we were with Him on the holy mountain."

Peter was combating any criticism that his message or testimony about Jesus Christ was fictitious or fabricated. In these three verses he points back to the Mount of Transfiguration as recorded in Matthew 17:1-13, Mark 9:2-8, and Luke 9:28-36. In all three gospels, the experience on the Mount happened after His time in Caesarea Philippi where Jesus questioned His disciples about His identity.

Six days later, Jesus took with Him Peter, James, and John for a time of prayer. Luke records that while He was praying, the appearance of His face became different, and His clothing became white and gleaming. It was at that moment that Moses and Elijah appeared to Him and were speaking of His departure.

As the disciples were stirred from their sleep, Peter spoke of making three tabernacles, one for Jesus, one for Moses, one for Elijah. Suddenly, a cloud overshadowed them and the Father spoke from the cloud and said, "This is my Son, My Chosen One, listen to Him." (Luke 9:35) Matthew adds the words, "with whom I am well pleased."

The cloud and the voice of the Father were so glorious that the disciples fell to their faces, being much afraid. There was no question that Moses and Elijah were servants of God, but Jesus was the Son of God. He was in a totally different category. The opening chapter of the book of Hebrews also goes to great lengths to establish the Sonship and Deity of Jesus Christ. He is not a religious leader or just a good man or teacher; Jesus Christ is God!

In 2 Peter 1:16-18, Peter was looking back at this event to undergird his admonition earlier in this chapter that growing in the true knowledge of Jesus Christ is both the launching pad and the sustained orbit of an extraordinary walk with God. Peter was distancing himself and Jesus

Christ from any and all man-made religions. He was arguing the case that the Gospel of Jesus Christ was the work of God Himself to reach lost humanity.

The common factor of all false teachers and false religions is demoting Jesus Christ from His Deity and Glory. Peter was making it clear that he was not starting a new religion or religious experience. He and the apostles were merely pointing to the fulfillment of everything Moses, Elijah, and the Old Testament foretold. He was pointing people to a dynamic relationship with God through a personal and life-changing encounter with Jesus Christ.

These verses fall like a hammer to drive home the nail Peter was pounding in 2 Peter 1:1-15. Being born again and becoming a Christian is based solely on the true knowledge of Jesus Christ and developing a deepening walk with Him.

Christianity is not a religion, it is a powerful and transforming relationship with God. It is truth and not fiction. It is God-made and not humanly fabricated. The Gospel message is God reaching down to mankind in truth and self-revelation through His Son, Jesus Christ. It is not mankind inventing gods or devising his own religious rituals. Christianity is the work of the Holy Spirit and not deceptive spirits or the false god of this fallen world. The gospel is truth and not error as confirmed over and over again by God Himself through divine encounters like at the Baptism of Christ or the Mount of Transfiguration.

### **The God of Truth and Prophecy: 2 Peter 1:19-21**

“19) So we have the prophetic word made more sure, to which you do well to pay attention as to a lamp shining in a dark place, until the day dawns and the morning star arises in your hearts.  
20) But know this first of all, that no prophecy of Scripture is a matter of one’s own interpretation,  
21) for no prophecy was ever made by an act of human will, but men moved by the Holy Spirit spoke from God.”

One of the unique characteristics of the Bible that separates it from all other writings, both secular and sacred, is prophecy. The Bible foretells events in great detail before they happen. Some events like the end of the famine and the death of the royal official in the days of Elisha happened quickly. (See 2 Kings 7:1-20) Other events in prophecy like the coming of the Messiah made in the Garden of Eden to the serpent took thousands of years. But they all happened exactly as foretold. Note: days and millenniums are alike to God. (See 2 Peter 3:8)

There are hundreds of examples of prophecy made and fulfilled in the Old Testament. There were over 300 detailed prophecies about the coming Messiah. His birth, life, death and resurrection were all foretold. So also was His future reign on earth and the restoration of the kingdom to Israel.

In these three verses, Peter was still reflecting on the transfiguration of Christ on the mountain and His conversation with Moses and Elijah. That experience punctuated for Peter the detailed truth and accuracy of the Bible. Notice that Luke adds a significant detail about the conversation

between Jesus and Moses and Elijah. Luke 9:31 says they were “speaking of His departure, which He was about to accomplish at Jerusalem.”

Though the details of that conversation are not recorded, it made a deep impression on Peter. I suspect it unfolded exactly as he had overheard. It prompted him to say that we need to pay attention to biblical prophecy like a light shining in dark places. (2 Peter 1:19) Please note that analogy. It is very crucial for us today.

These may be dark times, but a new day is dawning according to biblical prophecy. The “end times” that so many fear are merely the dawning of a marvelous new age. Something more glorious than you or I can imagine is about to unfold and arise. However, the timing remains a mystery.

In the meanwhile, we need to pay heed to 2 Peter 1:20-21. We need to avoid making definitive speculations or predictions about when or how things will unfold. It is not a matter of personal interpretation. We need to stand in faith on what is revealed, focus on the Masters work for the here and now and study the Word of God with great confidence. The big picture is clear and discernible even though the small details are blurred and cloaked with the Mysteries of God. This is especially true with figuring out timing.

One of the things Peter does in his second Epistle is connect the big dots of God’s working throughout human history with coming future events. For example, he connects the dots of creation, fallen angels, and their devious work, the flood of Noah’s day, Old Testament History, the work of Christ and human redemption, false religions, the future return of Christ, a coming judgement, a cataclysmic event that results in massive destruction, and new heavens and a new earth.

This is profound. In this Epistle Peter stands back and looks at the big picture. He takes a panoramic view of all of biblical history. He also warns that in the end times there will be an attempt to mock, blur, and even rewrite past history. (See 2 Peter 3:3-4) Welcome to our day.

Satan hates truth in history because over and over again it proclaims the victory of good over evil and the power and sovereignty of God over his own devious plans. Today there is a concerted attempt to rewrite modern history because the truth points to God and the fulfillment of His promises made in the Bible. It screams that “God’s Word is True and He is Faithful to keep His Word!”

### **A Coming Distorted Gospel: 2 Peter 2:1-3**

“1) But false prophets also arose among the people, just as there will also be false teachers among you, who will secretly introduce destructive heresies, even denying the Master who bought them, bringing swift destruction upon themselves. 2) And many will follow their sensuality, and because of them the way of the truth will be maligned; 3) and in their greed they



will exploit you with false words; their judgment from long ago is not idle, and their destruction is not asleep.”

As Peter opens chapter two, he warns about coming false prophets and false teachers. Paul said something similar to the church at Ephesus as recorded in Acts 20:28-29. Satan always targets the seeking fringe. One of the jobs of godly shepherds is to guard the church against these wolves.

Notice, Peter said this is what happened in the Old Testament times to Israel. Time and again Israel fell away from God and embraced foreign gods and false religions because of false and devious teachers.

What Peter says next is very sobering in the Greek. He says they will “secretly introduce destructive heresies.” The meaning of this is that they will subvert and change the message of the gospel to the point that it will not result in salvation, but instead will lead people to eternal destruction.

They will retain lip service to Christianity, but change the core teaching. They will hold to a form of godliness, but deny its power. (2 Timothy 3:5) The “power” may be a reference to the ministry of the Holy Spirit. (See Acts 1:8) I am shy of any church or Christian movement that minimizes, demotes, or distorts the promised ministry of the Holy Spirit. (Acts 2:39)

Peter goes on to say they will end up denying the Master who bought them, bringing swift destruction upon themselves. They will hang on to Christian religion but essentially gloss over the born-again experience with a religious cloak. They will talk about Jesus but He will not be the Master for daily living. They will scratch the religious itch, but leave people lost and without biblical salvation.

In the next two verses Peter gives three more characteristics of these false teachers. Notice the beginning of verse 2 says; “many will follow their sensuality.” They will condone and promote sensuality. This is granting permission for all kinds of wanton sexual pleasure and activity without moral boundaries or restraint. A fuller list is given in 1 Corinthians 6:9-11. These are things Jesus wants to save people from and not forms of sexuality endorsed by the Bible.

Next, Peter says, “because of them, the way of the truth will be maligned.” The formation of this distorted false Christian religious expression will begin to persecute the real thing. Truth will be blurred. This literally means “to blaspheme, rail against, talk down, seek to hurt, or revile.” They will become intolerant of the real thing and seek to destroy and replace it with their deceptive religious substitute.

Finally, Peter says, “in greed they will exploit you with false words.” The movement will be motivated by money and they will exploit people to gain wealth. They will play on the benevolent message of the Bible, but will skim off the proceeds or use them to promote unrighteous causes.

Let me say that these false prophets and teachers will be very persuasive and effective. They will deceive many as they provide a counterfeit that leaves people religious but lost.

This may help explain the urgent words of Peter back in 2 Peter 1:10; “Therefore, brethren, be all the more diligent to make certain about His calling and choosing you...” Don’t blindly follow any teacher, preacher, church denomination, or movement. Be diligent to go back to the Bible and test the message. Read and study the Bible for yourself. You are responsible to get it right. Take 2 Timothy 2:15 seriously.

### **An Overview of God's Judgement: 2 Peter 2:3-10**

“3) and in their greed they will exploit you with false words; their judgment from long ago is not idle, and their destruction is not asleep. 4) For if God did not spare angels when they sinned, but cast them into hell and committed them to pits of darkness, reserved for judgment; 5) and did not spare the ancient world, but preserved Noah, a preacher of righteousness, with seven others, when He brought a flood upon the world of the ungodly; 6) and if He condemned the cities of Sodom and Gomorrah to destruction by reducing them to ashes, having made them an example to those who would live ungodly lives thereafter; 7) and if He rescued righteous Lot, oppressed by the sensual conduct of unprincipled men 8) (for by what he saw and heard that righteous man, while living among them, felt his righteous soul tormented day after day by their lawless deeds), 9) then the Lord knows how to rescue the godly from temptation, and to keep the unrighteous under punishment for the day of judgment,”

In these seven verses, Peter makes the case that God has severe judgment for false prophets and teachers. Notice the statement that closes verse 3; “their judgment from long ago is not idle, and their destruction is not asleep.”

I do not have a good explanation for this, but the Bible indicates there will be varying degrees of judgment for the ungodly. Jesus talked about the severe judgment that awaits those who exploit children or makes them stumble. (See Matthew 18:6) James 3:1 also notes that deceptive teachers will receive a “stricter judgement.” In this text, Peter is focusing on the severe judgment false prophets and teachers will receive.

It may be helpful to bring a point of clarification at this point. There are two kinds of judgment talked about in the Bible. The first is immediate in this life and is seen as God’s discipline or intervention on wickedness in the present world. The second is eternal and deals with future judgment.

In a general sense in this text, Peter is establishing the fact that God will judge sin and lost people. I recognize that this does not fit some peoples theology or view of God. They believe God is all-loving and will forgive everyone. But that is not what the Bible teaches. It presents God as both a loving Savior and as a coming future Judge who is absolutely just.

Though some of this is beyond the scope of this study, Jesus taught there is conscious existence after death and immediate punishment for the ungodly. (See Luke 16:19-31) But the Bible also teaches the Great White Throne Judgement is coming and those who do not know Jesus will stand before him as Judge and will be thrown into the lake of fire. (See Revelation 20:7-15) I encourage you to read and study those texts on your own.

However, in 2 Peter Chapter Two, Peter seems to be establishing the fact that God can and does intervene to bring swift and immediate judgment on wickedness and evil people in this present world. He then very factually sites three historical examples of God's intervention. 1) In 2 Peter 2:4 he talked about angels that sinned. 2) In 2 Peter 2:5 he talked about the ancient world and the flood of Noah's day. 3) And in 2 Peter 2:6 he talked about the destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah.

We will look at each of these in the next few sections of this study, but for now notice that Peter is not talking about eternal judgment in these three examples. Rather he is establishing the fact that God can bring sudden judgement to cut off wicked people or evil from society at any time.

This is a very sobering and also loving thought. God can and does step up and intervene in the affairs of mankind. He can and does deal with vile, oppressive, and violent people. Peter points out in the next chapter that God is patient and wants people to come to repentance, but He has ways of dealing with sinful and wicked people who despise Him. It may be through the legal system, severe trials, other people, or even sudden death. Peter is emphasizing the fact that vengeance belongs to God and He will deal with wicked people.

As an extension of this same thought, Hebrews 12 points out that God will also discipline His own people. He is there to love, protect, and guide His people and He is there to bump them back on course when they stray. At times His discipline can be strong if needed to get our attention. His goal is always restoration.

The bottom line is that God has not checked out or gone on vacation. Society is not out of control. Peter points out that God was conscious, active, and engaged throughout human history and He remains on duty in the present. The bottom line is that God is in control and all people are accountable to Him. He controls the next breath and the next heartbeat of everyone.

### **Fallen Angels and a Diabolical Conspiracy: 2 Peter 2:4**

"For if God did not spare angels when they sinned, but cast them into hell and committed them to pits of darkness, reserved for judgment;"

It is now time to look at Peter's history lessons. You are about to discover that biblical history is very different from secular history. Let's start with 2 Peter 2:4.

In this verse, Peter mentions the group of angels that sinned. Many biblical scholars see this specific group of angels as being very different from the one-third of the angels that fell with

Satan. (See Revelation 12:3-9) There is one key distinction that separates them, this group of fallen angels are now “cast into hell and committed to pits of darkness, reserved for judgment.” However the vast majority of fallen angels make up the principalities and powers under Satan’s control today. (See Ephesians 6:12) They are the demons at work in the world.

So what did this group of fallen angels do that was so bad? Why did God take such drastic measures against them?

Well, Jude 1:6-7 adds three crucial details to what Peter said about these angels. First, these angels did not keep their own domain. Second, they abandoned their proper abode. And third, they went after strange flesh. Many see this as a commentary on Genesis 6:1-8. The reference to the sons of God cohabiting with the daughters of men may indicate that these angels had sexual relations with human women and produced an offspring called the Nephilim.

It should be noted that the book of Job is the oldest book in the Bible and Job most likely lived prior to the flood of Noah. In Job 1:6-7 and Job 2:1, Job uses the sons of God to refer to angelic beings. The context of both of these references makes it clear that Job was not talking about the descendants of Seth as opposed to the descendants of Cain.

But the big question remains; what was the purpose of the diabolical conspiracy? What were these angels trying to accomplish?” Many scholars agree that it was to pervert or pollute the human lineage from Adam and Eve in an attempt to prevent the Messiah from being born in fulfillment of the prophecy God made to Satan in Genesis 3:15.

Note that Genesis 6:9 says that Noah was “blameless in his time”, or his generation. In other words, the conspiracy spread to the point that nearly all of humanity was corrupted in Noah’s time. God intervened with the flood as an act of love to preserve the possibility of human redemption.

I admit that this sounds bizarre to many people today, but it is the only explanation for the remains of so many giant human skeletons and some very unique geological phenomenon in Peru and other places around the world. The remains of many huge lithographic stones in ancient buildings would challenge modern engineering and equipment. They were cut with great precision and weighed many tons. There are in fact many ancient lost arts that we cannot reproduce.

In Jude 1:14-15, Jude quotes from Enoch. Though the modern book of Enoch has some textual problems and was not accepted as biblical canon by the early church, it does expand at length about this historical event mentioned by both Peter and Jude. Some of the early church fathers also wrote in detail about the Genesis Six conspiracy.

The bottom line is that something very diabolical happened in the past according to biblical history that resulted in the “mightily men of old” or the Nephilim. The Bible talks at length about giants such as Goliath who was killed by David.

But wait, could it be that something like this is about to happen again? This begs the question of how the antiChrist is going to be conceived and where he gets his unusual powers. I am amazed at the resurgence of these themes in Hollywood today in many movies like “Lord of the Rings”, “The Avengers”, and even the Harry Potter series. Something very unusual is happening. Is Satan setting the stage to again subvert humanity?

In no uncertain terms, the concept of biblical Creation and a diabolical and catastrophic view of the past is very different from the secular and humanistic spin of evolution. By the time Peter concludes writing this epistle, you will discover that the two cannot be reconciled. Naturalism and Supernaturalism are very different.

### **Noah and the World that Perished: 2 Peter 2:5**

“5) and did not spare the ancient world, but preserved Noah, a preacher of righteousness, with seven others, when He brought a flood upon the world of the ungodly;”

The second historical fact Peter cites relates to Noah and the universal flood to support his argument that God will judge sin. Notice I used the phrase “historical fact.”

Two thousand years ago, Peter factually looked back at an event that happened two thousand years earlier. It wasn’t challenged, questioned, or discredited. It was common knowledge. That was true up until about two hundred years ago. That’s when momentum began in earnest to remove the true knowledge of God from human consciousness.

Today, the story of Noah and the flood which brought the destruction of ancient human civilization is scorned by modern secular historians as a religious hoax. Yet, nearly every people group on earth has a story of a universal flood and the geological record backs up that claim. You would be wise to investigate the real hoax in your search for truth.

I would encourage you to read the book “The World that Perished” by Dr John Whitcomb and “Genesis Record” by Henry Morris. Take several months to study the manifold evidence set forth by the Institute for Creation Research and visit “The Ark Encounter” and walk through a life-size replica of the ark. One day at the ark exhibit will impact your world view and catapult you forward in your view of God and the Bible.

Why is this important? Because Satan is working overtime to erase truth in history. He is bent on deception and wants to eradicate anything in the historical record that points to the God of Creation. His goal is to lead millions of people into a Christless eternity.

God has given four primary foundation stones for truth and knowledge. Creation and the Flood of Noah’s day are the two great foundation stones in the historical record that God left about Himself from ancient times. (See Romans 1:18-32, 2 Peter 3:5-6) The completed Biblical text of the Old and New Testament and the life and work of Jesus Christ are the two greatest

foundation stones from the past two millennia. Peter welcomed and equally embraced all of them.

I am not going to spend time looking at the manifold evidence for Creation or the flood of Noah's day in this post. I invite you to do your own diligent research by checking out the resources I mentioned above. These were not readily available when I began my Christian walk. Amazing resources are abundant today.

However, I do want to go back and underline Peter's main argument. He is arguing the fact that God is just and He will judge sin in two ways. First, He will hold both individual people and society accountable for their actions in this life. And second, all people will face an eternal judgment that will determine where they spend eternity.

This is significant because the modern theory of evolution, secular humanism and man-made religions are working in earnest to leave people void of truth. There is a concerted effort to distort, confuse and dim any witness of God in history and in the realm of human knowledge. I challenge you to use the book of 2 Peter and his systematic arguments as a guide in your search for truth. They will lead you to the foot of the cross and to the truth of salvation.

#### **A Violent X-Rated Society: 2 Peter 2:6-7**

"6) and if He condemned the cities of Sodom and Gomorrah to destruction by reducing them to ashes, having made them an example to those who would live ungodly lives thereafter; 8) and if He rescued righteous Lot, oppressed by the sensual conduct of unprincipled men"

The third historical lesson Peter uses to illustrate God's immediate judgement was the destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah. Some believe these two cities had merely crossed a line into homosexuality and that brought their destruction. But the actual picture was far worse.

These two cities became totally exploitive with no restraint and no boundaries. They practiced government sanctioned and promoted human trafficking, gang rape, child molestation, fornication, adultery, orgies, bisexuality, homosexuality, sexual violence and most likely open bestiality.

Sodom and Gomorrah had no moral boundaries and no remorse. There were no moral restraints or shame. There was no sanctity of marriage. They had hit the bottom of the spiral Paul described in Ephesians 4:17-19 and had totally seared their collective societal conscience. They were totally and utterly "unprincipled." (2 Peter 2:8)

As a side note, much of the same and even worse was practiced in the ancient world that was destroyed by the flood, but God had promised never to destroy the whole world again with a flood. (See Genesis 9:15) According to biblical chronology, Noah lived for 350 years after the flood. (Genesis 9:28) Things went bad again very quickly. Human depravity is universal. The biblical record includes the story of the Tower of Babel and the ancient Babylonian religions.

God called Abraham out from the immoral environment around Ur of the Chaldeans to set aside a moral seed for Himself. Some scholars believe that Abraham was 56 years old when Noah died. That's how quickly human society eroded and slipped back into total moral depravity.

The story of Sodom and Gomorrah punctuates the fact that God will intervene and judge sexual immorality. There are severe personal and societal consequences for immorality. (See 1 Corinthians 6:18, Romans 1:18-32) God will defend the marriage covenant. (See 1 Thessalonians 4:6) God avenges sexual exploitation and sexual abuse.

But biblical history screams another message. There is only one cure for human depravity and sexual bondage and it is the Gospel of Jesus Christ. Because of what Jesus did on the cross, God not only has a basis to forgive sinful and broken people, but He also fills them with the Holy Spirit at the moment of salvation and begins to cleanse and purify formerly defiled people. (Read 1 Corinthians 6:9-11)

This is the thrust of Peter's Epistle. God does not delight in judging people. He is in the business of saving and changing people. He wants to forgive, cleanse, set free, and transform sinners into becoming His pure Bride. Jesus joins them to His church. Look at the climax of Peter's message in 2 Peter 3:8-9. God is patient in judgment, wanting people to come to repentance.

This is part of the mission of the church. It becomes a moral compass and ray of hope to lost humanity. Jesus wants His church to become to this era what Abraham was to his generation, with the exception that we are armed with the Gospel of grace.

We have a radically different message and method of dealing with immoral humanity. Our mission is to lead lost people to God through the Gospel. We are to be in the world but not of the world. We are light and hope for a morally dark society. We bring the consciousness of sin to society and thereby become a restraining force to unchecked immorality.

One day God is going to remove His church with the rapture. The restraint will be gone. Satan and sin will rule for a short period of time without boundaries or accountability. The absence of Christians and the Bible will not result in moral freedom, rather it will be a chaotic, destructive, abusive, and violent society. There will be hell on earth for a short period of time until Jesus comes back. This always happens when God is suppressed.

### **Escape From Sodom: 2 Peter 2:6-9**

"6) and if He condemned the cities of Sodom and Gomorrah to destruction by reducing them to ashes, having made them an example to those who would live ungodly lives thereafter; 7) and if He rescued righteous Lot, oppressed by the sensual conduct of unprincipled men 8) (for by what he saw and heard that righteous man, while living among them, felt his righteous soul tormented day after day by their lawless deeds), 9) then the Lord knows how to rescue the godly from temptation, and to keep the unrighteous under punishment for the day of judgment,"

Peter was making two very important observations about God. First, God will punish the wicked and keep them for the day of judgment. Verse 6 actually says that Sodom and Gomorrah serve as an example for those who would live ungodly in future generations. Those who reject God and choose a life of sin, rebellion, indulgence, and corruption are on very shaky ground. Hebrews 10:31 says, "It is a terrifying thing to fall into the hands of the living God." The context is talking about God's wrath and judgment.

On July 8th, 1741 the puritan preacher, Jonathan Edwards preached his renowned message; "Sinners in the Hands of an Angry God." It was soon put in written form and was arguably a catalyst to spark the First Great Awakening. It reminded people of the justice and coming judgment of God. It was a graphic warning to wicked people and compromising believers alike that God can and will judge sin. The Holy Spirit used that message and many more like it to awaken a consciousness of God's justice and holiness.

The conviction of sin was so strong in both the first and second awakenings, that droves of people turned to God. A tragic moral drift in Western society was checked and thousands turned to Christ. It was an unparalleled time in the history of Christianity. Many are praying for a similar revival today.

But one of the problems with the modern church is that there is limited preaching against sin or warnings about God's wrath and judgment. The warning of Sodom and Gomorrah has been swept under the rug and hidden from the pulpit. This message has been replaced in modern evangelicalism by an all-loving, all accepting, picture of God. I would argue that the modern watered-down message is a deception and distortion of the true character and nature of God. It has no teeth and imparts no reverence for God.

Second, Peter emphasizes the point that God can and does rescue the righteous. There are blessings in this life for walking with God and unspeakable rewards in eternity. Peter used Lot as an example of how God can rescue the righteous. In one sense, Lot was a poor example because his life was filled with compromise. Yet God rescued him and gave him a chance to leave his surroundings. God is not looking for perfection, but He does require a genuine and sincere heart of eventual obedience.

However, Lot paid a dear price for his sin and compromise. He lost everything because he embraced the world. He lost his possessions, his servants, his wife, and his reputation. He died in disrepute. Peter said, by what he saw and heard around him daily, his righteous soul was tormented day after day. The King James version uses the phrase, "vexed with the filthy conversation of the wicked." I beg you not to follow Lot's example. How much better to be like Abraham and walk with God. I do not like filling my soul with filth. It is so exasperating and defeatist.

You have a choice to make. You can live in the immoral sewer of Sodom and Gomorrah like Lot, or you can be like Abraham and separate yourself. You can let your soul and family be



tormented and vexed by Hollywood, pornography, fantasy novels, humanism, new age spiritism, and addictions, or you can seek God and walk with Him. You cannot embrace Sodom and salvation at the same time. Lot's wife wanted both and it cost her everything. The price of revival and awakening is repentance and radically turning to God.

### **The Attitude, Character And Temperament of the Wicked: 2 Peter 2:10-22**

"10) and especially those who indulge the flesh in its corrupt desires and despise authority. Daring, self-willed, they do not tremble when they revile angelic majesties, 11) whereas angels who are greater in might and power do not bring a reviling judgment against them before the Lord. 12) But these, like unreasoning animals, born as creatures of instinct to be captured and killed, reviling where they have no knowledge, will in the destruction of those creatures also be destroyed, 13) suffering wrong as the wages of doing wrong. They count it a pleasure to revel in the daytime. They are stains and blemishes, reveling in their deceptions, as they carouse with you, 14) having eyes full of adultery that never cease from sin, enticing unstable souls, having a heart trained in greed, accursed children; 15) forsaking the right way, they have gone astray, having followed the way of Balaam, the son of Beor, who loved the wages of unrighteousness; 16) but he received a rebuke for his own transgression, for a mute donkey, speaking with a voice of a man, restrained the madness of the prophet."

In this context, Peter takes up the pen to describe the attitude, character, and temperament of the wicked. It is an exhausting passage to read. This is the spirit of the antiChrist. They are arrogant, threatening, vile, evil, and in-your-face. His description actually extends all the way through the end of the chapter. I will not give any commentary on what Peter says in this context. It is very clear and blunt. There is no question that these are deserving of God's judgment. Unfortunately, this is the spirit behind many movements today.

Jesus made it clear that you can know people by looking at their fruit. A good tree produces good fruit and a bad tree produces bad fruit. (See Matthew 7:16-20) It is relatively easy to pick out the fruit of the wicked.

But in the surrounding context, Jesus also warned that there are good and even very religious people who are lost. They will argue with Him; 22) "... Lord, Lord, did we not prophesy in your name, and in your name cast out demons, and in your name perform miracles? 23) And I will declare to them, "I never knew you; depart from me, you who practice lawlessness." This is a very sobering message from Jesus.

The previous words of Jesus are equally as important. In Matthew 7:13-14, Jesus urged His listeners to "enter by the narrow gate." He pointed out that "the gate is wide and the way is broad that leads to destruction, and many are those who enter by it." He then went on to say, "the gate is small and the way is narrow that leads to life and few are those who find it."

Why is this warning from Jesus so crucial? It is easy for many people to compare themselves to the overtly wicked and conclude, "I'm not that bad; certainly God will accept me!" But salvation is

not measured by degrees of good or bad, it is based on a personal relationship with Jesus Christ. Of course, those who are born-again will be transformed by the Holy Spirit into new people, but their salvation is not measured by their own goodness. Salvation is based on faith in Jesus Christ and His work on the cross to redeem lost and sinful humanity.

This brings up another point that needs to be stressed in Peter's Epistle: No human is so evil or bad that God cannot save them. Only Satan and his fallen angels have no access to the gospel and the work of grace. As long as a person is alive in this life they can repent and put faith in Jesus Christ to forgive and save them. Hebrews 9:27 says, "it is appointed unto man once to die, and then comes judgement." Physical death seals a person's eternal destiny.

It is tempting to look at the temperament of the wicked as described by Peter in this passage and write them off or pass judgment on them. But the early church looked at them through the eyes of the gospel and agape love and concluded, "there goes my mission field." There is nothing more precious than a church filled with people with tattoos, pierced body parts or scars from a former life of addictions or abuse singing praise to Jesus who saved and redeemed them. There are many trophies of grace.

### **Resurgence of the Counsel of Balaam: 2 Peter 2:15-16**

"15) forsaking the right way, they have gone astray, having followed the way of Balaam, the son of Beor, who loved the wages of unrighteousness; 16) but he received a rebuke for his own transgression, for a mute donkey, speaking with a voice of a man, restrained the madness of the prophet."

The end times will be accompanied by a resurgence of the counsel of Balaam among God's people. His story is recorded in Numbers 22-25. He was a prophet of God that was hired by Balak to curse Israel so he could defeat them in battle.

As the story goes, God prevented Balaam from cursing but rather caused him to bless Israel three times. In frustration, Balak was infuriated with Balaam. To rectify the situation, Balaam gave very devious counsel to Balak. He told him how to defeat Israel without meeting them on the battlefield. The Bible refers to it as the "Counsel or the Teaching of Balaam." (See Revelation 2:14)

In essence he told Balak that the God of Israel was a holy God and that He called His people to be holy as well. If they disobeyed God and indulged in open sexual immorality and turned to idols, God Himself would rise up and judge His people. Rather than fight against Israel, Balaam counseled Balak to throw a big party, provide open sexual pleasure, and introduce the people of Israel to the immoral gods of Moab.

The results were tragic for Israel. God sent a plague among His people and 24,000 of Israel died. (See Numbers 25:9) It was the single biggest defeat of Israel by any nation under the leadership of Moses. It was devastating.

The problem with the counsel of Balaam was that it is rooted in truth. God is holy and He calls his people to holiness. (1 Peter 1:15-16) Paul issued a call to sexual purity for the church in 1 Thessalonians 4:1-8. He also warned that God is an avenger in these matters. Both Paul and Peter knew that false teachers were coming that would unleash the counsel of Balaam against the church in the later times.

It does not surprise me that pornography and sexual bondage is the number one struggle among Christians today. Fewer Christian young people are opting for marriage today, but instead are living in open fornication. Divorce and remarriage has reached unprecedented levels in the church. This is what Jesus exposed and actively combated in Matthew 19:1-12. It also comes as no surprise that many denominations have moved to endorse sexual activities and lifestyles that the Bible forbids for God's people. There is now a growing voice to embrace polygamy in some evangelical circles.

It is time to courageously ask, "What is happening in the church today?" The answer is that we are seeing the end time resurgence of the counsel of Balaam against God's people. This is the root scheme Satan is using to suck the vibrance and spiritual life out of the western church today. We need to take the words of Jesus to the church at Pergamum very seriously and call God's people to repentance and holiness. (See Revelation 2:12-17)

If you are a Christian and are living in the very broad category of sexual bondage mentioned above, it is time to acknowledge the depth of your battle. Satan is targeting you for defeat, shame, and self-condemnation with the end game being spiritual apathy and defeat.

Open repentance is the only biblical remedy for sexual bondage followed by a radical pursuit of God and a fresh filling of the Holy Spirit. Jesus wants to breathe new life into you and clothe you with grace, forgiveness, freedom, holiness, and unprecedented fruitfulness. You do not need to live another day in slavery to sin. You *can* be free!

### **The True Nature of False Teachers: 2 Peter 2:17-22**

"17) These are springs without water and mists driven by a storm, for whom the black darkness has been reserved. 18) For speaking out arrogant words of vanity they entice by fleshly desires, by sensuality, those who barely escape from the ones who live in error, 18) promising them freedom while they themselves are slaves of corruption; for by what a man is overcome, by this he is enslaved."

As we continue our Bible study of 2 Peter, we discover that false teachers are like springs of water to a thirsty soul, but upon arrival at the spring we discover they have no water. They are like clouds that promise rain during a drought, but then it barely sprinkles. This is a double disappointment. They promise help but never deliver. Peter says that "black darkness is reserved for them."

Peter goes on to say that they speak arrogant words of vanity, but never deliver salvation or freedom. In fact, they merely exploit and entice people into deeper sinful bondage and sensuality. They promise freedom to others, but they themselves are slaves to corruption. They are a dead-end street on the path they promise leads to eternal life.

Beware who you listen to when it comes to your eternal destiny. If they don't point to Jesus and a verse-by-verse study of the Bible, they most likely have no clue what they are talking about. Peter warns that they are lost themselves and those who follow them will arrive at the same destination.

That's why it is so important to open your Bible daily and study verse-by-verse through every book and chapter. God's Word is a true foundation that you can trust and that you can build your life on. By contrast, false teachers talk about Jesus, season it with some psycho babble religious jargon, make excuses for sinful living, and then shift gears into the liberal social gospel.

Peter concludes this chapter with two word pictures of false teachers. He says false teachers are like dogs that return to their own vomit or like pigs washed for a show that return to wallowing in the mud.

### **Letting God Stir Your Sincere Mind: 2 Peter 3:1-2**

"1) This is now, beloved, the second letter I am writing to you in which I am stirring up your sincere mind by way of reminder, 2) that you should remember the words spoken beforehand by the holy prophets and the commandment of the Lord and Savior spoken by your apostles."

As Peter opens the third chapter, he reminds the recipients that they are beloved. This points to the tender kinship of the early believers. Peter loved those under his charge. Christians should be known by their love for one another. (See John 13:34-35)

His next word picture is very beautiful. He tells his audience that he is stirring them up by way of reminder. God's people need a constant stirring to remain vibrant, fervent, biblically sound, and focused. God provided the manna daily for His people in the wilderness. God's mercies are new every day. I believe we need spiritual feeding and stirring every day. After a few days without stirring it is easy to simmer and cool off.

But notice he refers to their "sincere minds." He was referring to the human intellect. The word sincere means it can pass the test of examination in the bright sun with no blemish being found. Some scholars point out that the same word was used in the Greek language for quality furniture. To be marked as a "sincere piece of furniture" meant it was "without wax or patchwork." The heat of the sun would not reveal gouges that were wax-filled or covered up.

A sincere mind has no hidden agenda, preconceived notion, or false premise. A sincere mind studies the word of God at face value and does not superimpose its own thoughts, meaning, or values on the text. It lets the passage of Scripture speak for itself. It seeks to find the meaning in

the text without forcing an outside meaning on the text. A sincere mind asks the question, “What is God saying in these verses?”

2 Peter 3:2 implies that a sincere mind is willing to study hard to make sure it has the right interpretation of a passage of Scripture. It understands the principle of “Biblical Unity and Harmony” and will go back and compare its interpretation with the writings of the prophets in the Old Testament and the words of Jesus in the New Testament. That seems to be the thrust of 2 Peter 3:2. Unlike the false teachers Peter exposed in Chapter Two, a sincere mind works hard at arriving at truth and the clear meaning of every passage of Scripture.

Peter was stirring very hard in this short epistle. He touched on everything from the call to godly living, the amazing promises of Scripture, God’s judgment on the wicked, the world that perished, the flood of Noah’s day, the destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah, exposure of false teachers, coming mockers, Creation, God’s love for people, and desire to see them saved to a future catastrophe and eternity. He was reviewing a complete biblical worldview.

God’s Word can and does stir people up. It exposes false philosophies, clearly points out sin and compromise, establishes truth, and points people to Jesus Christ and salvation. I challenge you to have a sincere mind and seek to discover the true meaning of every Bible text whether you agree with it or not. That’s the point at which the Holy Spirit begins to wrestle with the human soul. Invite the stirring. Eternity is at stake!

### **Mockers in the Last Days: 2 Peter 3:3-4**

“3) Know this first of all, that in the last days mockers will come with their mocking, following after their own lusts, 4) and saying, “Where is the promise of His coming? For ever since the fathers fell asleep, all continues just as it was from the beginning of creation.””

In these two verses, Peter makes the very important prophecy that the last days will be accompanied by the rise of mockers. They will mock the biblical notion of God and origins. They will establish a new world view never previously known by mankind. Instead of viewing the universe and the world through the lens of God, they will view reality through the lens of naturalism. In other words, they will look for a natural explanation behind everything.

Their basic premise will be built on a philosophy known as “uniformitarianism.” It is the notion that all things have always happened as they have always happened. Since the beginning, all things have functioned according to natural laws with no intervention from a Supreme Being.

The word “creation” at the end of verse two is more the idea of “established” rather than “Divinely Created.” It could easily apply to the “Big Bang” theory of origins. It accommodates the idea that once it started it kept going by natural processes.

They will use this line of reasoning to mock the notion of the promised return of Christ. Notice how Peter emphasizes the phrase; “Where is the promise of His coming?” Because the return of

the Messiah is a unique doctrine in Judaism and Christianity, it can be argued that the end time mockers will target Israel and Christians and not religion in general. It is the biblical worldview that will not be tolerated in the end times.

But there is more to the story. We must ask about the motive behind this attack? The end of verse three gives a huge clue; they will be “following after their own lusts.” They will target Judaism and Christianity because they talk about a holy God, truth, moral boundaries, human accountability and a future judgement. To accommodate their own sinful ways, the mockers will simply get rid of the notion of God as presented in the Bible. Instead of focusing on God, they will focus on man.

Welcome to the modern secular age of humanism. This movement began in earnest about two hundred years ago and has totally taken over academia and modern society. The mockers have prevailed. We now live in a post-Christian era. Peter was writing about our times.

These two verses and the concept Peter introduced about the mockers is the bridge between chapter two and the remaining portion of his Epistle. Peter is about to argue that history screams of Divine Intervention from a Supreme Being.

The only way for the mockers to combat Peter’s reasoning in the book of 2 Peter was to devise a new theory for origins. Please understand this point: The theory of evolution is not a scientific imperative, it is a philosophical imperative. It is the only platform the mockers have to stand on as they systematically attack the Bible. They will defend it to their last breath and close their eyes to any and all evidence that discredits their needed theory. Evolution is the skeletal support for the modern day mockers.

### **The Window of Creation: 2 Peter 3:5**

“5) For when they maintain this, it escapes their notice that by the word of God the heavens existed long ago and the earth was formed out of water and by water, 6) through which the world at that time was destroyed, being flooded with water. 7) But by His word the present heavens and earth are being reserved for fire, kept for the day of judgment and destruction of ungodly men.”

Peter has strong words for the mockers and naturalists. Creation happened just as the Bible records. God spoke and physical matter came into existence. Hebrews 11:3 communicates the idea that God created everything from nothing.

There are three huge hurdles the evolutionists have to overcome. First, where did physical matter come from? Second, where did life come from? Third, how do you explain order, design and beauty in a random world of chance? Peter would conclude that these were all the result of an intelligent designer and they point to the existence of God.

Notice he says “it escapes their notice.” Romans 1:19-20 tells us that God left a witness of Himself in what He created. Psalms 19:1-3 tells us that the heavens declare God’s handiwork. As you study creation you can glean amazing insights about the Creator. The mockers by willful choice are blind to the volumes of revelation about God waiting to be discovered in every branch of science and physics.

The created realm can be a window through which you see God or a wall behind which you try to hide from God. Immediately after the fall, Adam and Eve tried to hide from God among the trees of the Garden. What was intended to be an inspirational meeting place with God became a hiding place from God. Sin created a wall of separation between them and God.

The same thing is happening today. When a person comes to faith in Christ, the created realm begins to testify of God’s power, goodness, creativity, and glory. But the people who are in bondage to sin and Satan are blind to the witness of God right in front of them. Instead of worshiping the Creator, they begin to worship the environment.

Stop! Put your evolutionary presuppositions on hold and put on a new pair of glasses. Take a fresh look at the world around you and ask, “What can I learn about God from looking at this flower, tree, insect, animal, or the entire biosphere?” Then look up into the night sky and ask, “What is it trying to tell me about the size of God?” Don’t let the witness that is all around you escape your notice. Take a fresh look. Don’t let Satan blind your eyes or close your mind.

### **A Creation/Flood View of History: 2 Peter 3:5-7**

“5) For when they maintain this, it escapes their notice that by the word of God the heavens existed long ago and the earth was formed out of water and by water, 6) through which the world at that time was destroyed, being flooded with water. 7) But by His word the present heavens and earth are being reserved for fire, kept for the day of judgment and destruction of ungodly men.”

In answering the mockers, Peter moves from a look at Creation to a serious look at the flood of Noah’s day. Peter viewed both historical events as monumental accounts of Divine Intervention in the past.

In verse six, his account of the flood was both catastrophic and universal. It resulted in the world being destroyed. His view was very consistent with the account recorded in Genesis 6-8. The Greek word for “destroyed” in this verse has the idea of a temporary destruction rather than total destruction.

The way these two verses link Creation and the flood of Noah’s day gives two historical lenses into the past that make up a significant part of a Christian worldview. Keep in mind, Peter’s basic premise is that God has always been active in history.

These two events have given me a keen interest in studying the scientific evidence for both creation and the flood. It is at this point that Christianity becomes vulnerable: "If the biblical record is true, then the evidence for both creation and the flood should show up in the geological record." There is no escaping this premise.

Fortunately, the earth is full of evidence that points to both creation and a catastrophic flood that evolution cannot explain. Everything from massive oil and coal deposits to tropical plant fossils on both polar regions is an enigma to the evolutionist. Several regions of the earth have mass graves of 200 feet of non-decomposed trees, plants, and vegetation encountered by oil drilling rigs around 2,000 feet under the earth's crust. I have seen some of the tree branches recovered deep under the earth's crust from drilling rigs on the north slope of Alaska.

There are also numerous fossils of trees extending through several layers of rock strata. In one case, a whale is fossilized through several layers of strata. The problem is that according to uniformitarianism, those rock strata were laid down over millions of years. These fossils scream a different story but are ignored by the text books because they do not fit the narrative of evolution.

The work done by the Institute for Creation Research and many other scientists has documented thousands of fossil records and enigma's that cannot be explained by evolution, but are predicted by the creation/flood model. The bottom line is that God has left ample witness of Himself.

Some archeologists say that the Bible is the most accurate record of history known to mankind. If the Bible says something happened in the past at a certain location, the archeologists often confirm it with their digs. The past 100 years have brought manifold support for the historical accuracy of the Bible through archeological digs.

I point you in this direction so you can begin your own research. There are literally hundreds of books, articles, fossils, and documented scientific evidence available today from every branch of science that lends support to a biblical view of history.

These are very exciting days to be a Christian. The evidence is mounting so fast and piling so high in support of a biblical view of history, that only very biased mockers can ignore what is happening. Peter nailed it when he talked about the coming of mockers in the end times. We are living in days of academic censorship rather than a bold search for truth. Many students are denied advanced degrees from major universities if they hold to a Divine view of origins or a catastrophic view of History.

Let me conclude with a bold statement that I made previously, but that may have slipped past you; "The theory of evolution is a philosophical imperative today and not a scientific necessity." Evolution is the theory behind the "God is dead" movement. Many people will defend it to their last breath because getting rid of God is the only way to excuse their immoral values. They



refuse to be accountable for their actions. I simply ask you to be open-minded and do your own unbiased research.

### **Coming Judgement of Fire: 2 Peter 3:5-14**

“7) But by His word the present heavens and earth are being reserved for fire, kept for the day of judgment and destruction of ungodly men.

10) But the day of the Lord will come like a thief, in which the heavens will pass away with a roar and the elements will be destroyed with intense heat, and the earth and its works will be burned up.

12) looking for and hastening the coming of the day of God, because of which the heavens will be destroyed by burning, and the elements will melt with intense heat! 13) But according to His promise we are looking for new heavens and a new earth, in which righteousness dwells.”

After looking back at creation and the judgment of the flood in the days of Noah, Peter looks forward at two future events. He talks about a judgement of fire followed by a new heavens and a new earth. Looking back is relatively easy compared to looking forward. History is easier to comprehend than prophecy.

The coming judgment of fire has mystery attached to it. John the Baptist alluded to a judgment of fire in Matthew 3:11-12. Jesus talked about a judgment of fire that awaits the ungodly. (See Mark 9:43-50) Paul referred to going through a testing and cleansing with fire. (1 Corinthians 3:10-15) The Apostle John also warned about the lake of fire prepared for the devil and his angels. (See Revelation 20:10-15) The next thing on John's calendar was also a new heaven and a new earth in the very next chapter of Revelation. Are these all the same event or a few different events? That is part of the mystery.

As we return to 2 Peter 3:10 and 12, we discover that all the elements will melt with intense heat. This looks like the utter destruction of the physical realm by fire. Peter mentioned that the earth was formed out of water in verse 5. Water is made up of hydrogen and oxygen. When blended in gas form they have the potential of being extremely flammable and even explosive. I point this out just to observe that the potential is there for the earth to burn with intense heat based on the elements abundantly present.

Let me avoid speculation. It is sufficient to note that the early Christians were warned about a coming judgment of fire. Hebrews 12:29 pictures God as a “consuming fire.” Could it be that the glory of His presence will consume all things carnal and physical?

You and I are now in the sandals of Noah. We are called to prepare for a future catastrophe of judgement that has never been witnessed by mankind. A flood is one thing, because you can build an ark; but how do you prepare for a judgment of fire? The notable thing about Noah is

that when he was warned of coming judgement he took action and prepared according to the instructions God gave him.

A judgement of fire calls for a different kind of preparation. It requires moving from the physical realm into the spiritual realm. It bids us to enter the ark of Christ through the door of salvation. Conventional logic of disaster preparation fails at the point of a judgement by fire. You can build a bunker, store food, hoard guns and ammunition, and have water and air purifiers, but according to the Bible, it's all going to melt with intense heat. The only preparation is to be born again through faith in Christ.

So, have you prepared? I would encourage you to go back and read the instruction manual. You better open your Bible and review the doctrine of salvation. (John 3:1-18) You better get born again into the Spirit. At the present moment the door of salvation through faith in Christ is still open. Why not walk through it?

### **God's Timetable: 2 Peter 3:8-10**

"8) But do not let this one fact escape your notice, beloved, that with the Lord one day is like a thousand years, and a thousand years like one day. 9) The Lord is not slow about His promise, as some count slowness, but is patient toward you, not wishing for any to perish but for all to come to repentance. 10) But the day of the Lord will come like a thief, in which the heavens will pass away with a roar and the elements will be destroyed with intense heat, and the earth and its works will be burned up."

The critics had a valid point; "What is taking so long?" From our vantage point it's been nearly 2,000 years: "Where is the promise of His coming?"

Peter answers that question by stepping out of the realm of time and space. He notes that God's timetable is totally different from ours. From His vantage point in eternity, one day and a thousand years are alike. Heaven and earth have very different clocks.

Peter also notes that God is not in a hurry. He is patient. He wants people to come to repentance and salvation. He does not want any to perish and yet He honors human free will. God is the perfect gentleman. He forces no one.

If you are stubborn and rebellious against God and living as if God doesn't exist, I would warn you to change your attitude for two reasons. First, your life could end with your next heartbeat. Second, Jesus will come back like a thief in the night when people least expect Him. In a moment, in the twinkling of an eye on God's eternal clock you and I will be standing before Him to give an account for our life.

God is not slow about His promise. Jesus is coming back. There are two very different eternal destinies talked about in the Bible. The present is the only time you and I are assured to affect

our eternal destiny. You may have all kinds of excuses to reject Jesus now, but when you step through death's door you will not want Jesus to reject you.

I saw a sign being carried by a woman at a recent "peaceful demonstration." It said; "Going to Hell and Proud of It!" I have one response; "You Fool!"

### **New Heavens and a New Earth: 2 Peter 3:13**

"But according to His promise we are looking for new heavens and a new earth, in which righteousness dwells."

The promise of new heavens and a new earth was not original with Peter. He was echoing a theme taught in the Old Testament and colored in by Jesus Himself.

In Isaiah 65:17 the prophet said, "For behold, I create new heavens and a new earth; and the former things shall not be remembered or come to mind." Isaiah had a picture of new things to come.

John 14:1-6 might be the most cherished words of Jesus to His disciples of the new dwelling place He promised to go and prepare for his own. According to this text, Jesus is now at work building that new dwelling place for His bride.

Paul touched on something mind boggling in 1 Corinthians 2:9. He combines Isaiah 64:4 and 65:17 to say, "but just as it is written, Things which eye has not seen and ear has not heard, and which have not entered the heart of man, all that God has prepared for those who love Him." We cannot begin to imagine what awaits those who love God!

Possibly the best picture of what is to come is painted in Revelation 21-22. I will not spoil it for you. You need to read this on your own. Something amazing is coming.

Even with these pictures, much of Heaven remains a mystery. We know from verses like Psalm 115:16 that the heavens are the heavens of the Lord, but the earth He has given to the sons of men." This place called earth is a unique environment designed for our current habitation. The way it supports physical life and regenerates itself is astounding and marvelous.

In 2 Corinthians 12 Paul talked about being caught up to the third heaven. What he saw and heard were inexpressible. He could not describe them and he could not shake them from his future expectancy.

In Isaiah 66:1-2 it says, "1) Thus says the LORD, "Heaven is My throne and the earth is My footstool. Where then is a house you could build for Me? And where is a place that I may rest? 2) For My hand made all these things, Thus all these things came into being," declares the LORD. "But to this one I will look, To him who is humble and contrite of spirit, and who trembles at My word." That presents an amazing perspective of biblical reality.

We as people have a small handle on planet earth. This is where we live, and exist and have our being. Humans and scientists have studied it for a long time. We can at least wrap our minds around “earth” with some sense of experiential knowledge. But Heaven is used several different ways in the Bible. It is used for the atmosphere around planet earth, the stars and constellations, the universe, the spiritual realm, and the place where God dwells.

In 2 Peter 3, the Apostle seems to focus more on the future cataclysmic destruction of planet earth. The big question is, how are we to interpret the word “heavens” in his writings? Is he saying the whole physical universe will be destroyed or merely planet earth, our atmosphere and possibly our solar system? Obviously, if Jesus is preparing a new future dwelling for us, that is not going to be destroyed. God’s throne room in heaven is not going to be destroyed.

Possibly now you can appreciate the dilemma of interpretation surrounding Peter’s description. I am content to acknowledge that the future is shrouded in mystery. God might be preparing a new inhabitable planet for us elsewhere in the universe. Looking up from that location would result in totally new constellations, thus new heavens.

Yet, when we consider our new heavenly and glorified bodies described in 1 Corinthians 15, Jesus may be preparing something in the spiritual realm totally beyond the current physical universe and laws of physics. The future is marvelous to imagine but difficult to comprehend. The Bible leaves it as a briefly described mystery.

The one detail we have skipped over at this point, is that the future dwelling of God’s people will be in God’s very own presence. Revelation 21-22 emphasizes this point. That is undoubtedly why it is a place where “righteousness dwells.” Every character quality and attribute of God will dwell there.

I cannot begin to imagine! The Bible gives us just enough details to have eternal hope and expectancy. As a side note, those who are born again and sealed with the Holy Spirit have already been seated with Christ in heavenly places. (See Ephesians 1:3 and 2:6) Don’t wait until you get there to start enjoying your heavenly benefits!

### **A Positive Spin: 2 Peter 3:14**

“14) Therefore, beloved, since you look for these things, be diligent to be found by Him in peace, spotless and blameless,”

This is an interesting verse. After his dire warning of the end times, coming judgement and destruction of all things physical; you would think the early Christians would have reason to fear. But Peter mentioned they should have peace. That seems contradictory.

But remember Peter’s audience. His recipients were the early Christians. They were the persecuted church. Many were being martyred by Rome. They were suffering greatly. Peter’s

letter was screaming that God and not Rome was in control. It was also saying that God was going to judge Rome and hold it accountable for all evil and injustice.

This letter was both a basis of comfort and assurance of eternal life. It gave hope. It promised something better was coming. Peter was encouraging them to be and do their best for the glory of God. They had cause to be filled with peace while being spotless and blameless in the face of death. Giving up the temporal is a small sacrifice compared to gaining the eternal.

This letter is not an attempt to bully, scare, or intimidate people. This letter does just the opposite. It offers hope, assurance, and confidence. It presents God as loving, patient, and in control. It was written to encourage the persecuted and not to save the unjust lost. Peter was reminding the sheep that the Shepherd is many times greater than the wolf.

I look at the book of Revelation in the same light. It produces hope and not fear within me. It causes me to love, revere, and honor God. It motivates me to look up and anticipate what is coming. My King is coming and I will welcome Him with open arms!

### **Peter Endorses The Writings of Paul. 2 Peter 3:15-16**

“15) and regard the patience of our Lord to be salvation; just as also our beloved brother Paul, according to the wisdom given him, wrote to you, 16) as also in all his letters, speaking in them of these things, in which are some things hard to understand, which the untaught and unstable distort, as they do also the rest of the Scriptures, to their own destruction.”

These verses may not be the most significant for devotional application, but they are vital for establishing the canon of New Testament writings. In one sweep of the pen, the Apostle Peter affirmed all of the writings of Paul as being authoritative Scripture. He accepts the revelation of the gospel as given through Paul as being inspired and God-breathed Scripture.

This includes the doctrine of Justification by faith, the sealing and filling of the Holy Spirit, the mystery of the body of Christ being comprised of both Jews and Gentiles, and much more. It encompasses the books of the New Testament from Romans through Philemon and possibly the book of Hebrews. These two verses are profound.

One of the key components to establish the authority and authenticity of the Word of God is called “internal evidence.” This looks at what the Bible says about itself. As you can imagine, these verses by Peter carry huge weight in affirming and endorsing the writings of Paul. I confess, scholars and Bible geeks get pumped over these verses much more than the average Christian, but their significance cannot be understated.

But notice, Peter mentioned there was a movement to distort and inject false teachings into the writings of the early church fathers. That’s why the early Christians took great caution as to which writings were included in the makeup of the New Testament. They established a very

comprehensive grid to determine which books were authoritative. One test related to which letters the early Christians were willing to die to protect.

When I hold a Bible in my hand, I recognize the amazing treasure I am holding. I make no apology for being a lifelong student of the Word of God and hold it as my highest authority for truth, life, and daily living. I also recognize that I have barely begun to scratch the surface of biblical comprehension.

It is rich in knowledge, wisdom, history, prophecy and philosophy for living. It is indeed God's Word and is more relevant than any other writings both sacred or secular, ancient or modern. To quote the old children's song, "The B I B L E, yes that's the book for me!"

### **Assume Responsibility for Your Own Growth: 2 Peter 3:17-18**

"17) You therefore, beloved, knowing this beforehand, be on your guard so that you are not carried away by the error of unprincipled men and fall from your own steadfastness, 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."

Peter concludes his second Epistle with a warning to be on guard against false teachers and those who distort the clear teaching of Scripture. He says they are unprincipled men and that they fall from their own steadfastness.

The greatest safeguard is to study the Bible for yourself and in the process grow in the grace and knowledge of Jesus Christ. Every Christian should become a Bible student. I welcome books and commentaries, but they are not a substitute for spending personal time reading the Bible or listening to the Bible in audio form.

I boil these verses down to an admonition to take responsibility for your own spiritual growth. Roll up your sleeves, open your bible, and start a systematic daily plan of Bible reading. A cup of coffee is optional, and sitting by a wood stove in the winter months is not a necessity, but establishing a daily routine is helpful. Develop a system that works for you.

There is no greater joy in this life than spending daily time with Jesus in His Word. This is when the Holy Spirit enters His role as teacher and over time more and more insights come to light. Growing in the grace and knowledge of Jesus Christ is an accumulative process. It builds over time and it takes time to build. According to John 15, being rooted in God's Word is the key to personal fruitfulness. Take it seriously.

### **Conclusion to the Books of 1 & 2 Peter**

"17) You therefore, beloved, knowing this beforehand, be on your guard so that you are not carried away by the error of unprincipled men and fall from your own steadfastness, 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.”

As we close the writings of Peter, we conclude a study that had unique Jewish seasoning. As the Apostle to the Jews, Peter was preparing for his own departure. He covered many practical subjects in his attempt to stir up the church and remind them of their calling as a holy priesthood.

Peter was writing to persecuted and suffering believers. He begged them to avoid false teachers and grow in the grace and knowledge of Jesus Christ. His primary admonishment was to grow in the grace and knowledge of Jesus Christ. He wanted the believers to study the Word of God and base their faith and character on the solid foundation of salvation and the Word of God.

He warned about the tendency to drift into sinful living and presented Satan as a real opponent seeking to devour unsuspecting people. He also promised that Jesus would Shepherd His own and that amazing blessings and fruitfulness awaited those who chose to be faithful to Christ.

He presented God as both a loving Savior and a coming Judge. He was very blunt and sober in His warning of coming judgement and the rise of mockers in the end times. Peter was both an historian of the past and a prophet of things to come. He summarized a biblical worldview.

His greatest desire was to glorify Jesus Christ and encourage every believer to grow in Christ with holy abandon. He was determined to end well, which history tells us that he did. Peter had a unique perspective having been one of the twelve original disciples. He personally walked with Jesus through His early ministry.