# 2 Peter

## Knowledge to Combat False Teaching

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>God’s Election</th>
<th>Future Apostasy</th>
<th>Lord’s Return</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Chapter 1</strong></td>
<td><strong>Chapter 2</strong></td>
<td><strong>Chapter 3</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Salutation</strong></td>
<td><strong>False Teachers</strong></td>
<td><strong>End in Hell</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1:1-2</td>
<td>2:1-3a</td>
<td>2:3b-10a</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Foundation of Knowledge</strong></td>
<td><strong>Character Described</strong></td>
<td><strong>Scoffers Before Rapture</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1:3-11</td>
<td>2:10b-22</td>
<td>3:1-4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>False Teachers Coming</strong></td>
<td><strong>Destroys Heaven &amp; Earth</strong></td>
<td><strong>Motivates Holiness</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2:1-21</td>
<td>3:5-13</td>
<td>3:14-16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>False Teachers Coming</strong></td>
<td><strong>Scoffers Before Rapture</strong></td>
<td><strong>Protection/Growth Exhorted</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2:1-3a</td>
<td>3:1-4</td>
<td>3:17-18</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

- **Adequacy of Believers**
- **Inadequacy of Unbelievers**
- **Expectancy of Believers**

- **Holiness**
- **Heresy**
- **Hope**

- **Disciples of the Lord**
- **Diabolical Leaders**
- **Day of the Lord**

- **Rome to North Asia Minor**

**AD 64**

**Key Word:** Knowledge

**Key Verse:** “Therefore, dear friends, since you already know this, be on your guard so that you may not be carried away by the error of lawless men and fall from your secure position. But grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. To him be glory both now and forever! Amen” (2 Peter 3:17-18).

**Summary Statement:** To grow in grace instead of succumbing to false teaching, we need to know that Jesus chose us and that he will judge apostates at his return.

**Application:** Never stop being a student of the Scripture. If you do, you will stop growing in grace and you will eventually tolerate and/or promote heresy. What new things in His Word has God been teaching you lately?
2 Peter

Introduction

I. Title: The Greek title (Ἰλετρού ὁ, Second of Peter) follows the standard practice of naming the General Epistles after their authors.

II. Authorship

A. External Evidence: The early tradition divides whether Peter wrote this epistle, but most regarded it authentic. The views of the Church Fathers and early canons are summarized below by century (Hiebert, 3:134-37; cf. p. 36 of these notes).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Support 2 Peter as Authentic</th>
<th>Lack Mention of 2 Peter</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1st Shows parallels with Jude (1:5 and Jude 3; 1:12 and Jude 5; etc.; cf. Hiebert 3:138)</td>
<td>Muratorian Canon (ca. AD 170)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>—This point could be argued either way, depending upon one’s dating of Jude</td>
<td>Old Latin Version (ca. AD 170)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Possible allusions are in 1 Clement (AD 95) and Barnabas (AD 70-130)</td>
<td>Old Syriac Version (ca. AD 200)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2nd Vague Allusions:</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>—Ignatius (AD 110)</td>
<td>Origen (AD 185-253)—disputed</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>—Polycarp (ca. AD 110-150)</td>
<td>Tertullian</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>—Justin Martyr (AD 150-155)</td>
<td>Cyprian</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>—Irenaeus (ca. AD 185)</td>
<td>Dionysius of Alexandria</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Probable Allusions (Quotes)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>—Gospel of Truth (Gnostic)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>—Apocryphon of John (Gnostic)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>—Apocalypse of Peter (Spurious)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3rd Bodmer Papyrus (p 72)</td>
<td>Eusebius placed it among books widely</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Firmilian, Bishop of Caesarea (AD 256)</td>
<td>accepted but disputed by some since:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Methodius, Bishop of Lycis (quotes 3:8)</td>
<td>1) Writers whose opinion he respected</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>regarded it as noncanonical</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4th Athanasius of Alexandria (AD 367)</td>
<td>2) Few earlier sources quoted it</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Basil the Great</td>
<td>(However, he did not call it spurious)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Epiphanes, Bishop of Cyprus</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ambrose, Bishop of Milan</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cyril of Jerusalem</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hillary of Piotiers in Gaul</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gregory of Nazianzus</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Augustine</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Council of Laodicea (AD 363)</td>
<td>Chrysostom</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Third Council of Carthage (AD 397)</td>
<td>Theodore of Mopsuestia (rejected it)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jerome’s Vulgate (with doubt due to style)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6th Syrian Church</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note 2 Peter’s acceptance by the fourth century councils despite the objections raised.

B. Internal Evidence: The liberal scholar Kümmel rejects Petrine authorship but candidly admits, "the letter clearly and unambiguously makes the claim that it was written by the apostle Peter" (Kümmel, 430). Then he cites the following evidence:

1. It says Peter was the author: “Simon Peter, servant and apostle of Jesus Christ” (1:1).
2. The author speaks as an eyewitness of the transfiguration of Jesus (1:16f.).
3. He makes reference to the saying of Jesus concerning the martyrdom of Peter (1:14).
4. Reference to the “beloved brother Paul” places the author on the same level of apostolic authority as Paul (3:15f.).
5. It clearly refers to 1 Peter: “This is already the second letter I am writing to you” (3:1).

6. “Since Peter regards his death as near (1:13ff), 2 Peter is written in the form of a testament of Peter.”

After presenting irrefutable internal evidence for Peter as author, Kümmel’s very next statement denies the evidence by stating, “But this letter cannot have been written by Peter.” The following cites his six objections (Kümmel, 430-33) and rebuttals to each:

1. **Objection**: The literary dependence on Jude rules this out.
   **Response**: The unconfirmed assumptions are that Jude is post-apostolic and that 2 Peter quotes Jude, but the opposite is true since Peter wrote first (AD 64 for 2 Peter and ca. AD 70-80 for Jude). Jude 17-18 quotes 2 Peter 3:3 as written by an apostle.

2. **Objection**: The language and style show a Hellenistic flavor that not only rules out Peter, but his disciples as well.
   **Response**: Stylistic differences between 1 and 2 Peter can be explained in that Silas helped write 1 Peter (5:12), whereas Peter wrote 2 Peter by himself. Also, the letters deal with different subjects so the vocabulary should differ.

3. **Objection**: It argues against Gnostics who deny Christ's soon coming (1:12f; 3:3).
   **Response**: The unproven assumption is that the writing refers to second century Gnostics. There exists no reason that Peter couldn't have faced doubters in AD 64.

4. **Objection**: The author calls Paul's collected letters Scripture (3:16), whose interpretation is reserved for the ecclesiastical teaching office (1:20f.). This dates the letter “without doubt far beyond the time of Peter and into the epoch of 'early Catholicism'” (Kümmel, 432).
   **Response**: The “interpretation” of 1:20 refers not to a teaching office in the church. It says that prophecy did not come by any prophet's interpretation. Further, reference to Paul's letters as Scripture only shows that they were regarded as authoritative very early.

5. **Objection**: “The pseudonymity in 2 Peter is carried through consistently by means of heavy stress on the Petrine authorship” (Kümmel, 433).
   **Response**: Kümmel denies the evidence that he has listed. If the letter did not emphasize Petrine authorship it would be spurious, and even if does, it is suspect! This “logic” exalts preconceived speculations over textual fact.

6. **Objection**: Second Peter is nowhere mentioned in the second century in spite of its heavy stress on Petrine authorship.
   **Response**: The lack of mention by early individuals, councils, and canons proves only that while most accepted it, some disputed it. The epistle was never rejected, so internal evidence must take priority over arguments from silence.

**Conclusion**: While some disputed the authenticity of 2 Peter, the evidence (especially internal) shows that Peter did in fact write this letter bearing his name. The book is markedly superior to the spurious books attributed to Peter—Gospel of Peter, Preaching of Peter, Acts of Peter, and Apocalypse of Peter (Guthrie, 845). The authenticity of the epistle is also confirmed in its language that is similar to Peter’s speeches in Acts (Guthrie, 844).
III. Circumstances

A. Date: Peter was martyred in the spring AD 64 (Hoehner, 381-84). Second Peter was likely written in this same year as it was shortly before his death (2 Pet. 1:13-15).

B. Origin: Both conservatives and critics agree that the evidence for the origin of 1 Peter in Rome undoubtedly applies to 2 Peter as well (1 Pet. 5:13; cf. 1 Peter notes).

C. Recipients: In 1 Peter the apostle addresses “God's elect, strangers in the world, scattered throughout Pontus, Galatia, Cappadocia, Asia and Bithynia” (1 Pet. 1:1b). The readers were likely both Jews (the minority) and Gentiles (the majority) which Peter himself had nurtured (cf. 1 Peter notes). In 2 Peter he addresses the same group (2 Pet. 3:1).

D. Occasion: Peter referred to his readers as “strangers in the world” (1 Pet 1:1b), reminding himself and them that this earth is not their home. Such a truth was especially needed since Nero ruled Rome! In his letter Peter does not specifically refer to his imprisonment, unlike Paul, who calls himself as a “prisoner of Christ Jesus” in his Prison Epistles. However, it is clear that Peter expected the persecutions to take his life (1:14-15a), which in fact did take place, according to tradition. Within a few months after recording this letter, Rome burned (16 July 64) and Nero used the Christians as his scapegoat. Believers suffered the most horrible kinds of deaths in the ensuing four years. Peter wrote this epistle before his soon death as a reminder of truths his readers already knew (1:12, 15b; 3:17a) to stimulate them to wholesome thinking (3:1b)—both knowledge of error (3:17) as well as truth (3:18). Interestingly, he cared about orthodoxy in the midst of this suffering.

IV. Characteristics

A. Contrasts Between Peter's Two Letters

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>First Peter</th>
<th>Second Peter</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Nature of Problem</td>
<td>Persecution (Hostility)</td>
<td>False Teaching (Heresy)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Source of Problem</td>
<td>External</td>
<td>Internal</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Theme</td>
<td>Hope</td>
<td>Knowledge</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Key Word (all forms)</td>
<td>“suffering” (16 times)</td>
<td>“knowledge” (16 times)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Date</td>
<td>early AD 64</td>
<td>early spring AD 64</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

B. “Peter’s scenario from the creation of the present heavens and earth to the dissolution of the universe and creation of the new heavens and earth is one of the most astonishing passages in all of Scripture (3:5-13)” (TTTB, 480).

C. This second letter of Peter has the most explicit teaching in Scripture on false teachers.

Argument

Second Peter emphasizes knowledge, shown in the 16 occurrences of words for “knowledge” (ἐπίγνωσις 1:2, 3, 8; 2:20; ἐπιγνώσκω 2:21a, 21b; προγνώσκω 3:17; γνωρίζω 1:16; γνώσις 1:5, 6; 3:18; γνώσκω 1:20; 3:3; οἶδα 1:12, 14; 2:9). Peter wanted his readers to know three areas: a knowledge of God and his choice of them (2 Pet 1), a knowledge of the characteristics and destruction of future false teachers (2 Pet 2), and a knowledge of Christ's return and the coming Day of the Lord (2 Pet. 3). However, the apostle was not content with knowledge alone, stored in a reader's head. This knowledge must work itself out in godly behavior (1:3-9; 3:11, 14, 18) and a cautiousness that protects them from being ensnared by heresies surrounding them (3:17). The last two verses of the epistle especially emphasize this dual purpose for knowledge: protection and maturity (3:17-18).
Synthesis

Knowledge to combat false teaching

1. God's election
   1:1-2 Salutation
   1:3-11 Provides all that believers need
   1:12-21 Foundation of knowledge

2. Future apostasy
   2:1-3a False teachers coming
   2:3b-10a End in hell
   2:10b-22 Character described

3. Lord's return
   3:1-4 Scoffers precede rapture
   3:5-13 Day of the Lord destroys heavens/earth
   3:14-16 Motivates holiness as Paul indicates
   3:17-18 Protection/growth encouraged

What’s Your View?

Please circle A (Agree), U (Unsure), or D (Disagree) before each of these statements:

1. A U D God chooses those who will go to heaven
2. A U D People on earth can know for sure whether they are going to heaven
3. A U D False teachers sometime teach in evangelical churches
4. A U D No one who has truly trusted Christ will stop trusting him until death
5. A U D Christians already have all they need for successful spiritual living

Outline

Summary Statement for the Book
To grow in grace instead of succumbing to false teaching, we need to know that Jesus chose us and that he will judge apostates at his return.

I. To grow in grace instead of succumbing to false teaching, know that Jesus chose you and gives you all you need for godliness (2 Pet 1).

   A. God has blessed Peter’s readers with knowledge by faith in Christ as a foretaste of the letter’s emphasis of knowing God amidst false teaching (1:1-2).

   1. Peter introduces himself as a slave and messenger (apostle) of Jesus Christ so that the readers may know his authority in writing (1:1a).

   2. Peter’s readers must know that their faith comes only through the righteousness of the Savior Jesus Christ, who is God (1:1b).

   3. Peter introduces his theme of knowledge in his blessing that notes that grace and peace come by knowing God the Father and Jesus our Lord (1:2).
B. Knowing God’s choice of us for salvation gives us everything we need for godliness (1:3-11).

1. God’s election of us gives us all we need to be like Christ (1:3-4).
   a) Every spiritual provision we need comes by knowing that God chose us for salvation (1:3).
   b) God shows his glory and goodness in promises that lead us to Christ-likeness (1:4).

2. The purpose spiritual qualities should grow sequentially by our efforts is so that we can become pure and Christ-like (1:5-7).
   - Love—agape, Christian concern and interest (1:7b; cf. 1 Pet. 4:8)
   - Brotherly Kindness—love that seeks the best for family members (1:7a; cf. 1 Pet. 1:22)
   - Godliness—good deeds like God (1:6c; cf. 2 Pet. 1:3)
   - Perseverance—lit. “bearing under,” patient endurance (1:6b; cf. Jas. 1:3)
   - Self-Control—opposite to the world’s lust and gluttony (1:6a; cf. Acts 24:25; Gal. 5:23)
   - Knowledge—insight and understanding from Scripture (1:5c; cf. 1 Pet. 3:7; 2 Pet. 3:18)
   - Goodness—morality, the opposite of evil (1:5b; cf. 2 Pet. 1:3; Phil. 4:8)
   - Faith—our foundation and means to salvation (1:5a; parentheses above = same word, different vv.)

3. We can affect our future by whether we grow in these qualities or not (1:8-9).
   a) One continually growing in these traits will be effective based on his knowledge (1:8).
   b) A believer who doesn’t show these spiritual qualities will be useless due to ignorance of his forgiven state (1:9).

4. We should live out our election in a continually growing spiritual life (1:10-11).
   a) Show the virtues of verses 5-7 to show that your calling and election are sure (1:10a).
   b) Assurance of salvation has at least two wonderful benefits (1:10b-11).
      (1) Assurance leads to a stable spiritual life now that prevents apostasy (1:10b).
      (2) Assurance leads to a more richly rewarded heavenly welcome later at death or the Lord’s return (1:11).

But how do you need to grow more like Christ? Luke 2:52 says Jesus grew four ways: in wisdom (intellectual), stature (physical), favor with God (spiritual), and favor with man (social).

See the worksheet on the next page to set goals for growth in these four dimensions.
**Worksheet for Establishing Goals and Priorities**
*by Rick Griffith*

"You always have enough time to do all of God's will"

**Biblical Perspectives: Verses to claim**
- **Ephesians 5:15-17** “Therefore, be careful how you walk, not as unwise men but as wise, making the most of your time, because the days are evil.”
- **Proverbs 3:6** “In all your ways acknowledge Him and He will direct your paths.”
- **James 4:17 (LB)** “Knowing what is right to do and not doing it is sin.”
- **2 Timothy 1:7** “For God has not given us a spirit of timidity, but of power and love and discipline.”
- **2 Corinthians 12:9** “And He said to me, ‘My grace is sufficient for you, for power is perfected in weakness.’ Most gladly, therefore, I will rather boast about my weaknesses, that the power of Christ may dwell in me.”
- **Luke 2:52** “…Jesus kept increasing in wisdom and stature, and in favor with God and man.”

**Specific Goals: Objectives to accomplish**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Wisdom (Intellectual/Applied Knowledge)</th>
<th>Stature (Physical/Health)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Secular Reading (newspapers, magazines, books...)</td>
<td>Exercise (sports, calisthenics, jogging, on which days?)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Christian Reading (number of books, which books?)</td>
<td>Sleep/Rest (hours nightly, time to rise &amp; retire, no naps?)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Development of Hobbies &amp; Talents (music, gifts...)</td>
<td>Eating Habits/Nutrition (foods to avoid, when to/not to eat)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Planning (schedule priorities each day/week/month)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Favor with God (Spiritual)</th>
<th>Favor with Man (Social/Relationships)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Quiet Time (time daily, where? when? notebook?)</td>
<td>Evangelism (times weekly, tracts to carry, with/to whom?)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bible Study (times weekly, topics, Biblical books)</td>
<td>Discipleship (whom to follow-up/disciple, time needed)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bible Reading (number of chapters/pages each day)</td>
<td>Family Commitments (time/letters to parents/children)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bible Memory (number of verses/chapters/books)</td>
<td>Correspondence (whom to write/send tapes to regularly)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Prayer (use of prayer list, time, prayer for whom?)</td>
<td>Church Involvement (ministries, attendance, use of gifts)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Stewardship (% to give, missions, savings, budgeting)</td>
<td>Social Activities (dating/time with spouse, fun, T.V. limits)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Integrity/Dependability/Self-Discipline (laziness)</td>
<td>Building Relationships (roommate, co-worker, neighbor)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Emotional/Psychological (changing thought patterns)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Remember that you will be what you are now becoming!**
Attacks Against Scripture Today

Which teachings do you hear today that seek to undermine the truthfulness of our faith?

- 
- 
- 
- 
- 
- 

Even as early as AD 64 when many apostles were still living, false teachers questioned what the believers had been taught. Peter cared that his readers had an accurate knowledge of the truth they had heard, so he responded in 2 Peter to these attacks.

C. Our knowledge of God has a firm foundation in apostolic witness and fulfillment of OT prophecy so we can confidently fight heresy (1:12-21).

1. Peter knew that Nero was about to execute him, so he reminded his readers of God’s election and provisions (1:12-15).

2. Two reliable sources (not false teachers) helped Peter remind his readers of these truths vital to their spiritual lives (1:16-21).
   a) He knew about Christ’s power not from cleaver second-hand tales but because he witnessed it at the Transfiguration (1:16-18).
   
   b) He knew about Christ’s power from OT prophets accurately predicting Christ in uninterpreted messages from God (1:19-21).

   (1) The apostles knew the OT prophets spoke truth, so readers should heed their messages until Jesus returned (1:19).

   (2) No true OT prophet ever misinterpreted a prophecy (1:20).

   (3) Every true prophet spoke truth since it came not from his own will but only as a willing instrument of the Spirit’s message (1:21).
Summary of Prophetic Views

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Grudem’s View</th>
<th>Biblical View</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Prophecy is declaring anything (true or false) that the Spirit brings to one’s mind</td>
<td>Prophecy is declaring God’s inspired and inerrant revelation to others</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The above definition was invented in 1988 by Wayne Grudem</td>
<td>The above definition has been the teaching of the church for 20 centuries</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>OT prophets are parallel to NT apostles</td>
<td>OT prophets are parallel to NT prophets</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>God changed the definition of prophecy from the OT to the NT</td>
<td>God kept the meaning of prophecy consistent between the two testaments</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>God gives some prophecies with errors</td>
<td>God gives all prophecies without errors (2 Pet. 1:20-21)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Any believer can prophesy</td>
<td>Only those with the gift of prophecy can prophesy (1 Cor. 12:29)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>There are two kinds of NT prophecy (fallible and infallible)</td>
<td>There’s one kind of NT prophecy (infallible)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fallible prophecy can be inspired</td>
<td>Fallible prophecy is false prophecy (Deut. 13:1-5; 18:14-20)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>God sometimes lies</td>
<td>God always tells the truth since He cannot lie (Heb. 6:18)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


Discussion Questions:

1. What should the church do today with a person who claims to be a true prophet of God but fails to fulfill any of these tests? For example, if one makes a prediction that proves false or the “prophet” falls into moral sin, should a local church stone him, rebuke him, remove him, or admit, “We all make mistakes”?

2. In light of this study, what do you think of this now popular definition of prophecy by Wayne Grudem: Prophecy is “telling something that God has spontaneously brought to mind”? Is this true prophecy even if it is erroneous? Why or why not?

3. Do you think Grudem’s teaching that all believers can prophesy has biblical support (cf. 1 Cor. 12:29 vs. 14:1)? Support your answer.

4. What would you say to someone who claimed that his prophecy is inspired but not equal in authority to Scripture? (In other words, he argues for different levels of inspiration and/or inerrancy.) Support your answer.

Time for Self-Evaluation:
Do you have secret doubts about whether the Bible has errors? What should you do about it?
II. To grow in grace instead of succumbing to false teaching, know how to spot future apostates to defeat them (2 Pet 2).

A. Heretics would exploit believers about ten years later in AD 75 with false stories so his readers should prepare to defend themselves (2:1-3a).

1. Israel had both true prophets in OT times (1:19-20) and false prophets, so false prophecy was not new among God’s people (2:1a).

2. Peter briefly describes the false teachers so his readers can identify them soon (2:1b-3a). What traits do these false teachers have in verses 1b-3a?

B. The destiny of all apostates in hell shows that believers will be protected as much as apostates will be condemned (2:3b-10a).

1. Even though these teachers had yet to deceive, God had already condemned them (2:3b).

2. God has a long history of judging the ungodly while protecting the righteous (2:4-8).
   a) Demons who sinned [probably by enticing rulers in Genesis 6 into immorality] have long been in Tartarus (hell) awaiting final judgment (2:4).
   b) Ungodly people died in the Flood while God spared the godly Noah’s family (2:5).
   c) Sodom and Gomorrah were burned alive while righteous Lot was delivered (2:6-8).

3. These three past examples of judgment and salvation show that God will do the same in the future (2:9-10a).
   a) God will rescue the godly but judge the ungodly in the future and the present (2:9).
   b) God especially judges heretics guilty of sexual sin and despising authority (2:10a).

The preceding, scathing denunciation of these teachers even boldly declares that they will go to hell. But although Peter gave their general characteristics in verse 1-3, we still we need a more thorough description of who these men are so we can recognize them and avoid their snares. The rest of the chapter does just that…
C. A lengthy depiction of the heretics shows how to recognize them when they come (2:10b-22).

1. The false teachers are rebellious (2:10b-12).
   a) They boldly slander demons but powerful angels do not even dare try this (2:10b-11).
      * Health and wealth teachers often curse “demons” of poverty, lust, gluttony, etc.!
   b) They blaspheme like brute beasts without thinking, so they likewise will be ruined (2:12).

2. The false teachers are immoral (2:13-16).
   a) The harm they have done others will befall them (2:13a).
   b) Their sexual sin is public (2:13b).
      * The popularity of many health and wealth “evangelists” has led to illicit sex.
   c) They eat with the saints but boast about their immorality (2:13c).
   d) They continually commit adultery (2:14a).
      * All women in The People’s Temple had to sleep with Jim Jones at least once.
   e) They seduce those without firm footing in the faith (2:14b).
      * Dan Brown’s The da Vinci Code seduces the naive to thinking that “Yah” was the feminine consort of the “male deity” resulting in “Jehovah” and illicit temple sex!
   f) They greedily get their way to their own curse (2:14c).
      * A US$1-2 million salary satiated Rev. Jim Bakker’s greed until his imprisonment.
   g) They entice others into immorality like Balaam did to Israel (Num. 25:1-9) though a donkey rebuked him (2:15-16; Num. 22:28).

3. The false teachers are depraved unbelievers who ensnare others, even though they may have tasted the blessings of a righteous life (2:17-22).
   a) Hell is reserved for them just like a dry spring or waterless storm (2:17).
   b) They entice others into “free” sex while they are slaves to sex (2:18-19).
   c) They reject the knowledge of righteousness they once held so that their final state is even worse—like animals that once again soil themselves in filth (2:20-22).
      * The end for Jim Jones was the death (suicide?) of nearly 1000 followers with him.

For brief evaluations of hundreds of current teachers, see http://faith.propadeutic.com/

For Life Change: Which teachers must you warn yourself and your family about? How?
Something to Think About...
What decision have you made differently due to knowing Christ could return at any moment?

III. To grow in grace instead of succumbing to false teaching, know how to live godly before Christ destroys everything in the Day of the Lord (2 Pet 3).

A. Apostates live godlessly and will scoff until Christ returns but this should stimulate us to live for Christ until his return (3:1-7).
   1. Both of Peters’ letters remind his readers that both the OT prophets and NT apostles stimulated wholesome thinking (3:1-2).

   2. Scoffers ridicule belief in creation and the Flood to create doubt that God will climatically judge in the future as well (3:3-7).
      a) Scoffers show that the Church Age comprises the “last days” before Christ returns (3:3; cf. 2:1; predicted by Jesus in Matt. 24:3-5, 11, 23-26).
      b) Scoffers doubt God by assuming that nothing catastrophic ever happens (3:4-6).
         (1) Scoffers ridicule Christ’s return (3:4a).
         (2) Scoffers teach uniformitarianism—the belief that the earth has continued in the same state since creation (3:4b).
         (3) Scoffers deny two catastrophic events both from water—Creation and the Great Flood (3:5-6).
      c) The same word of God that judged the world by Flood also will judge the world and unbelievers by fire (3:7).

B. Knowing that the Day of the Lord [Tribulation + Millennium] will replace the heavens and earth should motivate us to godliness (3:8-16).
   1. Although God can patiently wait 1000 years (cf. Ps. 90:4) for more to trust in Christ, he will still destroy the “heavens” (atmosphere and stars), elements, and earth (3:8-10).
      • Do not confuse the patience of God with the omnipotence of God.
   2. Knowing the temporary nature of the present heavens and earth should motivate three actions (3:11-16).
      a) Knowing that this creation is temporary motivates holy living separated from the world and used for God (3:11-12).
• How does our knowing that the earth is temporary lead to holy living?

b) Knowing that this creation is temporary helps us long for our eternal home (3:13).

c) Knowing that this creation is temporary brings peace with God (3:14).

d) Knowing that this creation is temporary helps us understand God’s patience despite Paul being misinterpreted (3:15-16).

(1) Paul’s letters show the same wisdom as Peter that God waits to bring more into his family (3:15).

(2) However, some unbelievers distorted Paul’s difficult teachings as they also did to the other Scriptures (3:16).

• Note that Peter considered Paul’s letters Scripture along with the Old Testament!

C. Knowing the ultimate destruction of false teachers and the grace of Jesus Christ will protect us and stimulate growth in godliness (3:17-18).

What does it mean that believing heresy could cause a Christian to “fall from his secure position”?

1. Some say this means a Christian could lose his salvation. However, many passages in the NT affirm that the believer’s position in Christ is permanent (e.g., John 3:16; 10:28-29; see also 1 John supplements on pages 296a-d in this NT Survey volume).

2. It is better to see this as referring to believers being led astray (1:10; Gal. 5:4).1

Applying 2 Peter as a Whole

Do you feel that you are progressively growing “in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ” (3:18) like you should? What new habit can you start to better assure your growth continues?

---

Do you want to be more regular in your Bible reading? The above plan has such variety in weekly reading that it brings you through seven sections of Scripture each week.