



THE BOOK OF 2 PETER



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INTRODUCTION

In Peter's first letter, we read time and time again that he wanted the saints who were dispersed to keep on going growing, especially during times of suffering, and in this second letter, we find Peter encouraging those same saints to keep on growing, but watch out for false teachers.

AUTHOR

The letter itself was written by Peter, who describes himself as a servant and apostle of Jesus Christ, **2 Peter 1:1**. It was written to those who received his first letter, **2 Peter 3:1**.

DATE

As the letter was written very shortly before Peter's death, **2 Peter 1:12-15**, most commentators suggest that Peter wrote this second letter between A.D. 65 and A.D. 68.

OUTLINE

Introduction. **2 Peter 1:1-2**
 Grow in grace and knowledge. **2 Peter 1:3-21**
 Beware of false teachers. **2 Peter 2:1-22**
 Look for the Lord's return. **2 Peter 3:1-18**

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

"Simon Peter, a servant and apostle of Jesus Christ, to those who have obtained a like precious faith with us in the righteousness of our God and Saviour, Jesus Christ. Grace to you and peace be multiplied in the knowledge of God and of Jesus our Lord." **2 Peter 1:1-2**

Peter was the name that Jesus gave him, and it is the Greek form of the Aramaic name meaning 'stone' or 'pebble.' Peter introduces himself as a servant first and then as an apostle of Christ, **2 Peter 1:1**, one who was sent out directly by Christ to preach the Gospel, one who met the qualifications to become an apostle, **Acts 1:21-22**. Peter begins by reminding the saints of four blessings that have come from God, and the first blessing is their precious faith, **2 Peter 1:1**. For anyone to obtain this precious faith, they must first hear the Gospel; in other words, if God hadn't given His Word, saving faith would not be possible, **Romans 10:17**.

Peter tells us in his first letter that it is through Christ we believe in God, **1 Peter 1:20-21**. And if God hadn't sent Jesus Christ into the world, many of us would still be idol worshippers and in our sin, and so, it's because of Jesus' divine sacrifice that makes saving faith possible. Peter is saying we need to be willing to receive the blessing of faith, which God gives us through His Word, **Hebrews 4:2**.

Why is this faith so precious? Not only because of the object of our faith in Jesus Christ, the Son of God, but also because 'Abraham believed God, and it was accounted to him for righteousness', **Romans 4:3**.

In other words, Abraham was totally convinced that God was real and that what God said was true. He understood that his faith was precious not only to him but also to God.

Another blessing is found in the words, 'grace' and 'peace', **2 Peter 1:2**, which were common forms of greetings in Biblical times. If we were to speak to someone and say, 'grace be upon you', this would mean that we would want God's unmerited favour to rest upon that person. We would want nothing but the best for them.

And if we were to speak to someone and say, 'peace be with you', this means that we would want the natural result of having God's grace upon them, which is peace. But notice what Peter does here: he says, 'Grace to you and peace be multiplied,' where? 'In the knowledge of God and of Jesus Christ', **2 Peter 1:2**.

Every single person on this planet experiences God's grace to some degree, whether people choose to believe that God exists or not; He is blessing everyone, **Matthew 5:45**.

The difference between a Christian and a non-Christian is that the Christian recognises where those blessings come from and says, 'thank you, Father'. But the biggest difference between a Christian and a non-Christian is in the amount of blessings the Christian receives.

Paul says it's only those who are in Christ who can experience every spiritual blessing, which includes His grace, **Ephesians 1:3**. Paul says it's only those who are in Christ who can experience the peace of God which surpasses all understanding, **Philippians 4:6-7**. Peter says that all those blessings come in the knowledge of God and of Jesus Christ, **2 Peter 2:2**.

Moorehead, in his commentary, says the following.

'This is the knowledge that rests on fact, that comes to the believer as something supernatural, as being communicated by the Spirit of God, and therefore is true and complete.'

The word 'knowledge' is a word that Peter is going to use throughout his letter, **2 Peter 1:3**. He reminds us what growing in the knowledge of Jesus Christ involves, **2 Peter 1:5-6**.

He reminds us that our knowledge of Jesus Christ is far more than just intellectual knowledge, **2 Peter 1:8**. Later he is going to warn us what will happen to Christians who fall away after receiving knowledge of Jesus Christ, **2 Peter 2:20**. And finally, at end his letter he is going to encourage us to grow in that knowledge, **2 Peter 3:18**.

CONFIRMING ONE'S CALLING AND ELECTION

"Seeing that his divine power has granted to us all things that pertain to life and godliness, through the knowledge of him who called us by his own glory and virtue. By which he has granted to us his precious and exceedingly great promises; that through these you may become partakers of the divine nature, having escaped from the corruption that is in the world by lust." **2 Peter 1:3-4**

After reminding the saints that their faith is a precious blessing from God, grace and peace are a precious blessing from God, Peter says that all things that pertain to life and godliness are a precious blessing from God, **2 Peter 1:3**. When he talks about 'life', he is referring to our spiritual life and our spiritual well-being, and when he talks about 'godliness', he is referring to the conduct of our behaviour which comes from our devotion to God.

In other words, Peter says we have everything we need for our spiritual lives in order to help us serve our God in a way that pleases Him. He says we have everything we need because God has given it to us by divine power, **2 Peter 1:3**. We have everything we need in the Scriptures to know what the gospel is, **Romans 1:16**.

We have everything we need through the knowledge of Him as Peter just told us, **2 Peter 1:2**. People can only experience true life and true godliness through the knowledge of the One who has called us by glory and virtue, **2 Peter 1:3**.

If God through His Word has given us everything we need for our spiritual lives, then we don't need prophesying today for God to reveal something to us which He has already revealed to us in His Word, **1 Corinthians 13:8-10 / Jude 3**.

If God through His Word has given us everything we need for our spiritual lives, then we don't need tongue speaking today for God to reveal something to us which He has already revealed to us in His Word, **1 Corinthians 13:8-10 / Jude 3**.

If God, through His Word, has given us everything we need for our spiritual lives, then we don't need supernatural knowledge today for God to reveal something to us which He has already revealed to us in His Word, **1 Corinthians 13:8-10 / Jude 3**.

God used to speak to mankind using a whole host of methods from dreams, visions and miraculous signs and wonders, but now today, He speaks to us through His Son, **Hebrews 1:1-2**.

Please don't misunderstand what Peter means here when he uses the word 'knowledge', **2 Peter 1:3**; he is talking about a lot more than intellectual knowledge.

He is talking about knowledge that comes not only from knowing Jesus Christ but also from developing and experiencing Jesus Christ in our lives. In other words, there is no point in having a load of knowledge about the Bible if our lives aren't reflecting what we know.

The final precious blessing which Peter reminds us about is found throughout the pages of the entire Bible. He says we have the precious blessing of God's promises, **2 Peter 1:4**.

A promise from God is a statement that we can depend on with absolute confidence, hence why Peter describes those promises as exceedingly great and precious promises.

Peter understood why they are so precious, and that's why he reminds his readers that through those promises of God we may be partakers of the divine nature, **2 Peter 1:4**. In other words, as Christians, we may share in the things which are related to the nature of God.

We would still be in our sins today and helpless to do anything about our sin if it weren't for the promise of God to send the Redeemer to save us. We would have no hope of heaven or anything beyond this life if Jesus didn't die on the cross like God promised He would.

We would be just as corrupt as most of the world still is today, but because God promised His Son would die for you and me, we have now escaped the corruption that is in the world through lust, but Peter says through these great and precious promises from God, we have escaped. God's promises are trustworthy because He is trustworthy, **Hebrews 10:23**.

“Yes, and for this very cause, adding on your part all diligence, in your faith supply moral excellence; and in moral excellence, knowledge; and in knowledge, self-control; and in self-control patience; and in patience godliness; and in godliness, brotherly affection; and in brotherly affection, love. For if these things are yours and abound, they make you to be not idle nor unfruitful to the knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ.” **2 Peter 1:5-8**

Peter now goes on to tell us that growing in the knowledge of Jesus Christ involves the development of eight graces. Peter says we need to abound in these eight graces if we want to continue to grow in the knowledge of Jesus Christ, **2 Peter 1:8**.

He is talking about something which is more than simply increasing our intellectual knowledge of Jesus Christ; he is talking about growing in full and personal knowledge of Jesus Christ.

Peter doesn't want us just to know about Jesus, he wants us to look like Jesus, he wants us to sound like Jesus, he wants us to speak like Jesus, and he wants us to think like Jesus, **Romans 8:29 / 2 Corinthians 3:18 / Ephesians 4:11-15**.

He wants us to be like Jesus, have faith like Jesus had, have the virtue like Jesus had, have the knowledge that Jesus had, have the self-control like Jesus had, and have the patience like Jesus had. Have the godliness, brotherly affection and love as Jesus had.

In other words, these will help us be Christ-like. The more we grow in these graces as Christians, the more we will really know Jesus because Jesus Christ is the perfect personification of these graces.

Up until now, Peter has used the word 'knowledge' five times already, and he uses the word fourteen times throughout his second letter. The word 'knowledge' is the Greek word 'epignosis', which means to become thoroughly acquainted with, to know thoroughly, to know accurately, to know well, and Peter says this knowledge can only come about when we demonstrate these eight graces in our lives.

And make no mistake about it, this takes effort on our part, hence why he uses the words 'make every effort', or 'all diligence', KJV, which means we need to have a zeal about growing in the knowledge of Jesus Christ. We need to earnestly strive to grow, **2 Peter 1:5**.

For us to grow in our knowledge of Jesus Christ, we need to 'make every effort', **2 Peter 1:5**; we need to understand that all these eight graces need to be working together.

Peter is saying that when each grace is working in harmony with the others, this will produce the overall effect. He is saying that each grace is to blend with and make perfect the grace that goes before it.

He mentions faith, moral excellence or virtue as some translations have it, **2 Peter 1:5 / 1 Peter 2:9**. He mentions knowledge, **2 Peter 1:5**, self-control and patience, **2 Peter 1:6**, or perseverance as some translations have it, and he mentions godliness, brotherly affection and love, **2 Peter 1:7 / 1 Peter 1:22 / 1 Peter 3:8**.

Peter says, to knowledge add self-control, **2 Peter 1:5-6**. In other words, the grace of self-control enables us to apply properly the knowledge we have. When he says to self-control, add perseverance, **2 Peter 1:6**, he says self-control in turn needs the quality of perseverance to be consistent day after day.

In other words, we can't just work on our brotherly affection one day and then work on our love the next. Each grace must be developed in conjunction with the other.

Moorehead, in his commentary, says the following.

'Paul began his list of the fruits of the Spirit with love, **Galatians 5:22**; Peter ends his with love. It is like a chain; each link holds fast to its fellow and is a part of the whole. It matters little at which end of the chain we begin; to touch one is to touch all. We are to add all diligence to supply these richly.'

We're given the gift of the Holy Spirit at our baptism, **Acts 2:38**, and one of His roles is to help us become more Christ-like, but growing is not going to happen on its own.

We have to work with the Spirit to help us grow because if we don't put any effort into our growth, then we can't grow into the fully mature Christian that God wants us to become.

When these graces work together and increase, Peter says they will keep us from becoming ineffective and unproductive in our knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ, **2 Peter 1:8**. In other words, they will help us grow into the likeness of Christ.

Just in case we're wondering if all that effort is worth it, Peter goes on to give us three reasons as to why we should continue to grow in the knowledge of Jesus Christ.

“For he who lacks these things is blind, seeing only what is near, having forgotten the cleansing from his old sins. So then, my brothers, be all the more eager to make your calling and election certain, for if you keep on doing this, you will never fail. For in this way you will be generously granted entry into the eternal kingdom of our Lord and Saviour Jesus, the Messiah.” 2 Peter 1:9-11

Most people became Christians because they knew they had a sin problem that needed to be dealt with, and so we come to the waters of baptism to have those sins forgiven, **Acts 2:38**.

However, from that point forward, we're supposed to grow into the likeness of Jesus Christ. And Peter is telling his readers that unless they grow in their knowledge of Jesus Christ and so become more Christ-like, they could end up with spiritual amnesia. Peter says if we're not growing, we're blind and short-sighted, **2 Peter 1:9**.

Paul says the goal and ultimate aim for you being a Christian is to become like Jesus Christ Himself, **Romans 8:29**. Paul says the reason we're a Christian is to demonstrate in your life that you have changed and are changing daily into the likeness of Jesus Christ Himself, **Colossians 3:9-11**.

This is exactly what Peter means when he says we need to grow in the knowledge of Christ. When we don't grow, we forget, we forget why we were redeemed by the blood of Christ in the first place, **2 Peter 1:9**.

Barclay, in his commentary, says the following.

‘Failure to climb the ladder of virtue is to forget that the sins of the old way of life have been cleansed away. Peter is thinking of baptism. At that time baptism was adult baptism, a deliberate act of decision to leave the old way and to enter upon the new.’

Not only will we end up with spiritual amnesia if we don't grow in the knowledge of Christ, but we could end up losing our salvation if we don't grow in our knowledge of Jesus Christ, **2 Peter 1:10**.

Please don't misunderstand what Peter is saying here; he is not saying that Christians will never fall in terms of sinning because we will sin and do sin, **1 John 1:8-10**.

The word ‘fall’ **2 Peter 1:10**, or ‘stumble as’ some translations have it, means to fall into misery or loss of salvation. Peter is saying, if we are continuing to grow in our knowledge of Jesus Christ, the less chance there will be of us falling from grace and losing our salvation.

And for us to do that, we need to ‘make every effort to confirm’, or ‘be diligent’, KJV, we need to be earnestly trying to grow, **2 Peter 1:10**, or as Paul says, we need to continually ‘work out our salvation’, **Philippians 2:12**.

When we're growing, we don't forget, when we're growing, we won't lose our salvation. When we possess those eight graces, when we grow in them and develop them into our lives, we will be able to live victoriously in this life and with great joy look forward to what lies ahead, **2 Peter 1:11 / 2 Timothy 4:6-8**.

PROPHECY OF SCRIPTURE

“For this reason, I will be ready at all times to keep your memory of these things awake, though you have the knowledge of them now and are well based in your present faith. And it seems right to me, as long as I am in this tent of flesh, to keep your minds awake by working on your memory.” 2 Peter 1:12-13

Peter says he needs to remind them of something, and it wouldn't be right if he didn't remind them of this, **2 Peter 1:12**. In fact, Peter says, after he dies, he's going to remind them of something, **2 Peter 1:15**.

What is on his mind which is so important that they should never forget? He is going to answer those questions later, but for now, he wants his readers to be awake, **2 Peter 1:12**.

He says to keep your minds awake, despite the fact that they have the knowledge of them now and are well based in your present faith, **2 Peter 1:12**. In other words, he is reminding them that they need to be careful that they don't become too casual with their service to God.

We can very easily walk away from God if we're not constantly reminded about how we're supposed to walk with our God. It's important as Christians that we pray, and we must be reminded that we need to pray daily because our God longs to hear from us every day. The more time we spend in prayer with our minds on God, the less time thinking about worldly things.

Another way we can prevent drifting away from God is by meeting together regularly for worship, **Hebrews 10:24-25**. We pray and sing songs, we hear a sermon, and we give; we also partake of the Lord's Supper, why? Do this in remembrance of me, **Mark 14:22-25 / Luke 22:18-20 / 1 Corinthians 11:23-25**.

If we read our Bibles daily, we will be constantly reminded of what's important and this, too, will help us from drifting away from God. We're all prone to forget what's important in this life, and that's why it's important to pray, study and worship together as much as possible. Peter says never forget what he's about to tell them, but he hasn't told them what is on his mind yet.

“And it seems right to me, as long as I am in this tent of flesh, to keep your minds awake by working on your memory; For I am conscious that in a short time I will have to put off this tent of flesh, as our Lord Jesus Christ has made clear to me. And I will take every care so that you may have a clear memory of these things after my death.” **2 Peter 1:13-15**

Remember, Peter is a dying man, and he is looking at himself and doing a lot of thinking and at the moment, he is thinking about his body and his death, **2 Peter 1:13**.

Coffman, in his commentary, says the following.

‘These words flow out of the heart of a man who stood in full contemplation of impending death. The Lord Jesus himself had foretold Peter's death at the hands of others, **John 21:18-19**; and in the hostile climate of Nero's Rome, coupled with the fact of his then being an old man, and remembering that Jesus had said this would occur ‘when thou art old,’ Peter considered his own death to be something he could expect at any time swiftly.’

Peter sees his body as a tent, **2 Peter 1:13**, and he saw it as a temporary housing arrangement for his soul, which continues after death, **Matthew 10:28 / 2 Corinthians 5:1-8**.

We're living in a world where people think that death is tragic, and I guess it is, if you're outside of Christ, but the way a Christian looks at death is filled with hope; it's not a fearful event but a natural one.

Peter says death is just like putting off that tent, **2 Peter 1:14**, it's of no use anymore, and he says, he really doesn't have any choice if he wants to go to Jesus. He says he will have to put off this tent.

Caffin, in his commentary, says the following.

‘Peter was soon to die, but he viewed the destruction of his body as the same as ‘putting off’ clothes, or pulling down a tent. ‘The word for ‘putting off’ here is also in **1 Peter 3:21**, another link between the two epistles.’

And notice how he describes the difference between our soul and our body. When he is referring to his soul, he uses the word ‘I’, and when he's talking about his body, he uses the words ‘my tent’, **2 Peter 1:13-14**.

Notice also how he describes his death. When Peter uses the word ‘death’ in this verse, some translations use the word ‘departure’, it's the Greek word ‘exodus’, **2 Peter 1:15**. It is the same word used to describe Israel's exodus from Egyptian bondage.

In other words, Peter sees his death not as the end but as an exit from one world to another. He's going to heaven, he's going to the Promised Land, **John 14:1-3**. Our fear of dying would be much less worrying when we finally understand that we're just leaving this temporary world to enter an everlasting world.

Peter is a dying man, and he's trying to share with the saints his last thoughts, which he thought were really important for Christians to know. What are 'these things' that Peter is so concerned about? **2 Peter 1:15**.

The things that Peter is so concerned about reminding them about are these things that he has just been speaking about. He's talking about the importance of growing in the knowledge of Jesus Christ.

Peter is a dying man, and he says, 'I want to tell you something very important.' And we can imagine everyone gathering round to read and hear the words of this wise servant, and we can imagine them thinking, 'What is he going to say?'

And Peter says grow Christian grow, know Christ on a personal level, live Christ and let people see Him in your lives, think like Christ and become like Christ, **1 Peter 1:5-11**.

Out of all the things he could have said before he died, he wanted to remind them of what was most important, **2 Peter 3:18**. Peter says keep growing in the knowledge of Christ, whilst we're living and dying will be worth it, **Philippians 1:21**.

"For we did not follow cunningly devised fables when we made known to you the power and coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, but we were eyewitnesses of his majesty. For he received from God the Father honour and glory, when the voice came to him from the Majestic Glory, "This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased." We heard this voice come out of heaven when we were with him on the holy mountain". **2 Peter 1:16-18**

Peter now appeals to two witnesses to reinforce the validity of our faith in Jesus, as something which is based upon a solid foundation, **2 Peter 3:2**. He says, what we're talking about is not some fairy tale, it's real and it's real because we, the apostles, saw these things with our own eyes, **2 Peter 1:16**. He says, he's not just making all this stuff up to deceive them, he's telling them what happened because he was there.

Notice that Peter uses the word 'we', **2 Peter 1:16**; he's telling them that this is not just his testimony but the testimony of others too. He says that he and the other apostles were eyewitnesses to what they made known concerning Jesus' coming and power, **2 Peter 1:16**.

He says, because they all saw with their own eyes and heard with their own ears and felt with their own hands, there is no way they were making all this up, **1 John 1:1-3**.

Because they saw, heard and felt Jesus when He was with them, there is no way that they could be deceived, **Acts 10:39-41 / 1 John 1:1-3**. And so Peter says, we've been there, done that and got the t-shirt concerning Jesus.

And then he goes on to give us an example of one of the things he witnessed, that special event that took place on the mount of transfiguration, **2 Peter 1:17 / Matthew 17:1-9 / Mark 9:2-9 / Luke 9:28-36**.

Peter, James and John witnessed this event, but they didn't stay there; they went out and preached and saved souls, but the Mount of Transfiguration was an event that demonstrated the power, majesty, honour and glory that Jesus had.

But why, out of all the events Peter experienced with Jesus, did he choose this one? The mount of transfiguration event certainly proclaimed the majesty of Jesus. The mount of transfiguration event certainly illustrated the nature of their testimony. But why this event?

He chose this event because it was on that mountain that they 'saw' Jesus transfigured before them and joined with Moses and Elijah, **Luke 9:20**. He chose this event because it was on this mountain that they 'heard' the voice which came from God the Father in heaven, **2 Peter 1:17-18 / Luke 9:35**. The very fact that this event, like many others in the life of Jesus, was seen by a plurality of witnesses serves to strengthen the force of their testimony.

I believe the apostles told the truth, and I don't believe that they were blatant liars, frauds, and deceivers. Think about the apostles for a moment, and think about how they lived. They had nothing to gain by lying; in fact, they were beaten, thrown in jail and even murdered because of their faith.

Peter says we were there with Jesus, we were on that mountain, and we were eyewitnesses to the majesty of Jesus, **2 Peter 1:18**. And so, we don't have blind faith; our faith is precious because it rests upon the testimony of the apostles, **John 17:20**.

Peter doesn't just appeal to the apostles who were eyewitnesses to show us that our faith is precious; he goes on to appeal to the testimony of divinely originated prophecy.

PROPHECY OF SCRIPTURE

“We also have the prophetic message as something completely reliable, and you will do well to pay attention to it, as to a light shining in a dark place, until the day dawns and the morning star rises in your hearts. Above all, you must understand that no prophecy of Scripture came about by the prophet's own interpretation of things. For prophecy never had its origin in the human will, but prophets, though human, spoke from God as they were carried along by the Holy Spirit”. **2 Peter 1:19-21**

Peter is telling us that the scriptures are the mind of God in human language. Here in this text, Peter is referring to the Old Testament Scriptures. The apostles would often appeal to others by quoting the Old Testament prophecies to convince people that Jesus Christ was indeed the Messiah, **Isaiah 9:6-7**, and Peter says these prophecies have been made completely reliable because Jesus Christ fulfilled the prophecies.

Because we see Jesus Christ as the fulfilment of many of the Old Testament prophecies, this should not only strengthen our faith in God but also in His Word.

Peter says we will do well to pay attention to it, **2 Peter 1:19**. In other words, the Old Testament prophecies have been fulfilled concerning Jesus, but as Christians, we still need to carefully study the Old Testament Scriptures, **Romans 15:4**.

When the apostle Paul was writing to his young friend Timothy, he encouraged him to do just that. Paul says all scripture is God-breathed, which means both the Old and the New Testaments, **2 Timothy 3:14-15**. No wonder Peter says reading the Old Testament scriptures has value.

He also says the Old Testament Scriptures are a light that shines in a dark place, and he says, the Old Testament will serve its purpose, **2 Peter 1:19**. In other words, there is a time coming when we won't need the Scriptures, and that time will be when faith will become a reality at the final coming of Jesus. That's why Peter says, the Old Testament will continue to shine until the day dawns and the morning star rises in your hearts, **2 Peter 1:19 / Revelation 22:16**. Coffman, in his commentary, says the following.

‘This clarifies the whole passage as a reference to the light given to Christians through their taking ‘heed’ to the sure word of prophecy. ‘Daystar’ was the term used by the ancients to refer to the planet Venus, also called the morning star. The metaphor of Christ as a star is one of the most beautiful in Scripture.’

Peter goes on to tell them that the prophets didn't speak their own words, but the very words of God Himself, **2 Peter 1:20**. He wants them to understand that the prophecies of the Old Testament were not the views or concepts of mere men.

They didn't write whatever they felt like and left out what they didn't think was important. In other words, they spoke when God wanted to communicate a message to His people.

Barnes, in his commentary, says the following.

‘The truths which the prophets communicated were not originated by themselves; were not of their own suggestion or invention, but were of higher origin and were imparted by God.’

And Peter says these prophets didn't just make things up in their own minds, they spoke on behalf of God Himself, 1 Peter 1:10-12. That's what Peter means when he says they were carried along by the Holy Spirit, 2 Peter 1:21. In other words, they were guided, they were instructed by God through the Holy Spirit to speak to the people of old and us today, Psalm 19:7 / Psalm 119:130 / Psalm 119:160 / 2 Peter 3:15-16. Our faith is very precious not only because our faith relies heavily on the apostles as eyewitnesses, but also because our faith relies heavily on the Old Testament prophecies concerning Jesus as being fulfilled in Jesus Himself, John 5:39 / John 20:30-31 / 1 Peter 1:10-12. Our faith isn't blind faith but a rock-solid conviction based upon rock-solid evidence.

CHAPTER 2

INTRODUCTION

“But there were also false prophets among the people, just as there will be false teachers among you. They will secretly introduce destructive heresies, even denying the sovereign Lord who bought them—bringing swift destruction on themselves. Many will follow their immoral ways, and as a result, the way of the truth will be maligned. In covetousness they will exploit you with deceptive words: whose sentence now from of old doesn't linger, and their destruction will not slumber.” 2 Peter 2:1-3

FALSE TEACHERS AND THEIR DESTRUCTION

Just as there were false prophets in Old Testament times, we should expect false teachers in our day, Matthew 7:15-23.

Barclay, in his commentary, says the following.

‘The false prophets said, Peace, Peace, when there is no peace, Jeremiah 6:14. Its priests teach for hire, and its prophets divine for money, Micah 3:11. The priest and the prophet reel with strong drink; they are confused with wine, Isaiah 28:17. They commit adultery, and walk in lies, they strengthen the hands of evil-doers, Jeremiah 23:14. They lead my people astray by their lies and by their recklessness, Jeremiah 23:32. The prophets invited the people, Let us go after other gods, Deuteronomy 13:1-5 / Deuteronomy 18:20. Paul evaluated the character of false teachers in the New Israel in the same terms, 1 Timothy 6:5 / Titus 1:11.’

When Peter uses the term false prophet not only here, 2 Peter 2:1, but throughout this chapter, he's implying that they are more than someone who is teaching out of ignorance, someone who is sincerely mistaken, like Apollos, Acts 18:24-28.

He's talking about those who know full well what they are doing and are purposely trying to mislead others, and he says if we want to know what a false teacher is like, look at the damage they cause. He says they have their own destructive heresies, 2 Peter 2:1. In other words, some people will come into our assemblies with their own secret agendas.

They may have an appearance like any other Christian; they will be polite and sound godly and even come across as if they know the Scriptures, but they will have an agenda that we're not aware of. And if we listen closely to what they say, we will begin to hear their agenda the more time we spend with them.

Not only will you hear it, but you will see it. Look at the damage which is being caused. Just try to disagree with their thinking and watch what happens, and sadly, churches start arguing over matters of opinion, and churches start splitting because people have different goals.

Peter says, Be careful, some people will come into our assemblies and try to teach their own doctrine and cause division in the Lord's church because of that doctrine, **2 Peter 2:1**. When Christians fight each other, everybody loses, **Galatians 5:15**.

And so, one sign of a false teacher is someone who tries to bring in their own agendas and causes division within the church because they want to push their own doctrinal ideas. The good news is that Peter doesn't leave us in the dark about how false teachers go about doing their work, he says they will work 'secretly', **2 Peter 2:1**.

Isn't it interesting that most crimes are committed during the night? And that's because there are fewer people around, they have the cover of darkness, and they are more likely to get away with the crime. In much the same way, these false teachers can't stand the light of truth, so they set out to work behind the scenes.

They divide and conquer; they will work on creating good relationships with people within a congregation, invite them for dinner, give certain people a call regularly, etc. And it's then, behind the scenes, that they will begin to share their own ideas about something.

And when they have enough people to support their ideas, all of a sudden, out of nowhere, it becomes a congregational matter. And so something which can be easily explained using the Scriptures is rejected because these false teachers don't want to hear it.

We must be careful of anyone who organises secret meetings with a select few. We must be careful of anyone who claims one thing but can't back up what they believe with the Bible.

Peter says these false teachers will cause others to deny Jesus, **2 Peter 2:1**. The very person who bought them, and we know that this was already a problem for the early church, **2 John 7**. Were these false teachers whom Peter had in mind, true Christians at one point in their lives?

I would like to suggest that they were, that's why Peter uses the phrase 'bought them', **2 Peter 2:1**. All Christians were bought by the precious blood of Christ, **Acts 20:28**. We know that our bodies are a temple of the Holy Spirit because we were bought with a price, **1 Corinthians 6:20**.

I believe that these false teachers were once true Christians, but over a period of time, they started to deny the very person who bought them with His blood. And they deny Him by twisting God's word to suit their own agendas and their own beliefs, **2 Peter 2:20**.

The real damage they cause is seen in the many people who follow them. They secretly come in with their own agendas, and they go out of their way to convince others that what they are teaching is right, or they go out of their way to convince others that what everyone else believes is wrong.

But they can't back up what they believe using the Scriptures without either twisting them or taking the text out of context, and so this causes division, and they now have their own following.

Notice that Peter tells us what will eventually happen to these false teachers. He says that they will bring on themselves swift destruction, **2 Peter 2:1**. In other words, not only will their doctrines destroy others, but their doctrines will end up destroying them too.

Peter says many will follow their immoral ways, **2 Peter 2:2**. In other words, instead of following the Lord as they should, they follow what they think is right. Instead of following the Lord, who is the only way to salvation, **John 14:6**, they separate themselves from the only true source of salvation.

That's what Peter means when he says, 'the way of truth will be maligned', 2 Peter 2:2. Peter says, be careful, don't follow them, or we may end up losing our souls because of their false doctrine.

The sad news is that what these false teachers say often sounds very convincing, doesn't it? That's because they are not appealing to the Scriptures; they are appealing to covetousness. Peter says to be careful because these people will take advantage of you, 2 Peter 2:14 / 2 Peter 2:18.

They offer things that the flesh often desires, things like wealth, health, power, and influence, and they use misleading words, 2 Peter 2:3. Peter says they will take advantage of us by using deceptive words, 2 Peter 2:18. He says these false teachers will be smooth talkers who know exactly what they are doing. And they are and will continue to deceive those who follow them, 2 Timothy 3:13.

Peter says if a person cannot give us a book, chapter, and verse, but appeals to something that sounds good, be careful, hence why Peter has been reminding his readers to keep growing in the knowledge of Christ, 2 Peter 3:18. The more we know Christ, live Christ and keep our heads in the Bible, the less chance we will have of becoming deceived when these false teachers come along. We may think the destruction of these false teachers isn't that swift, but Peter goes on to reassure us that it hasn't gone unnoticed, 2 Peter 2:3.

In other words, Peter is saying, when there are false teachers around, don't worry about them. God is not idle, and God isn't asleep when it comes to their judgment and destruction, 2 Peter 2:3. Peter now goes on to give us a few examples of how God doesn't let the guilty off with their sin.

“For if God didn't spare angels when they sinned, but cast them down to Tartarus, and committed them to pits of darkness, to be reserved for judgment; and didn't spare the ancient world, but preserved Noah with seven others, a preacher of righteousness, when he brought a flood on the world of the ungodly; and turning the cities of Sodom and Gomorrah into ashes, condemned them to destruction, having made them an example to those who would live ungodly; and delivered righteous Lot, who was very distressed by the lustful life of the wicked (for that righteous man dwelling among them, was tormented in his righteous soul from day to day with seeing and hearing lawless deeds): the Lord knows how to deliver the godly out of temptation and to keep the unrighteous under punishment for the day of judgment.” 2 Peter 2:4-9

Peter asks have you forgotten the angels who tried to overthrow God in heaven? God hasn't. Peter asks have you forgotten all those who wouldn't listen to Noah and turn to God? God hasn't. Peter asks have you forgotten what happened to those who sinned at Sodom and Gomorrah? God hasn't.

To reinforce the idea that the false teacher's judgment is certain, Peter gives us three examples of God's righteous judgment from the past. Notice that Peter tells us that these angels sinned, 2 Peter 2:4, which means angels must have had some form of divine law to follow.

And notice also that angels were free-will agents. Peter tells us that these angels exercised their God-given free will and chose to disobey God's sacred law. And so, because of disobeying God's law, Peter tells us they were cast out of heaven and committed to pits of darkness, 2 Peter 2:4 / 1 John 1:5.

TARTARUS

Before we look at the word 'Tartarus', we need to think about the meaning of the word 'Hell' itself, because a little thought will help us to clear up some of those misconceptions and erroneous theories which, for centuries, have been sources of needless confusion and unnecessary anxiety, unnecessary that is, if one is a Christian!

THE WORDS

There are, in fact, three Biblical words, the meanings of which are often confused because people tend to use them very loosely. Two of the words are New Testament Greek words, and the third is an Old Testament Hebrew word. For instance, in the New Testament, we have these words.

1. ‘Gehenna’, which occurs twelve times, and, in the A.V., is always translated ‘hell’, and
2. ‘Hades’, which occurs ten times, and which is also always translated as ‘hell’.
3. The third word is the word ‘Sheol’, found in the Old Testament, and which sometimes is erroneously said to be the word that corresponds to ‘Gehenna’.

You clearly see the confusion that has been created about the meaning of this word when you understand that, in the A.V., out of the sixty-five instances it occurs, thirty-four times it has been translated ‘hell’ and thirty-one times it has been translated ‘the grave’!

Now, although the word ‘Sheol’ literally means ‘the Place of the Dead’, you don’t need much intelligence to recognise that Hell and the Grave are not the same place! When a body is placed in the grave, it has not been consigned to Hell!

But there is a history behind this inconsistent rendering of the word ‘Sheol’. Whilst the translators of the A.V. believed Hell to be the place of punishment for the wicked, they recoiled from the idea of saying that good people also go to Sheol, and so in passages that related to the death of good people, they decided to translate ‘Sheol’ as ‘the grave’!

HELL

Like I just noted, the word ‘hell’ is, unfortunately, a bad translation in many places. The New Testament clearly describes the destination of the wicked after the Judgment and their place of punishment, as ‘eternal banishment from the presence of God’, **2 Thessalonians 1:9-10**

The wicked will be denied the fellowship and blessing of ‘everlasting life’, ‘the life of the ages’, and there will be no need for fire and brimstone, for they will know that their banishment is something they have deserved because of their rejection of God’s offer of forgiveness.

What will add to the pain of banishment will be the knowledge that it could have been so very different. No fire! No burning! But the pain and suffering of experiencing the loss of what might have been will be painful enough. This means that the future of those who reject the Gospel and refuse to accept the Lordship of Christ is not annihilation or extinction.

In other words, it’s not the cessation of being, it’s exclusion from the presence of God and all the redeemed, those faithful souls who have accepted His offer of forgiveness. The alternative to this enjoyment of the bliss of salvation shouldn’t be overlooked because it’s horrible to contemplate.

Eternal punishment involves spending eternity in the presence of all those who have chosen to reject God’s grace and His love. In other words, with the unforgiven, this means the immoral, murderers, liars, and all the vicious, cruel and evil in the history of the world. Surely, that is the most appalling punishment imaginable!

In Greek mythology, Tartarus was both a ‘primaeval deity’ that existed before the Olympians, as well as a name to describe a region of the ‘underworld’. As a god, he was third in rank after Chaos and Gaea, preceding Eros.

As a place, it was far below where Hades resided, and it was used as the most horrible prison. Some accounts say that the distance between Tartarus and Hades was the same as between the earth and heaven.

Although the kingdom of Hades was the place of the dead, Tartarus was where ferocious monsters and horrible criminals were banished, or where the gods imprisoned their rivals after a war.

The three judges of the ‘underworld’, Rhadamanthus, Aeacus and Minos, decided who would go to the realm of Hades and who would be banished to Tartarus. The Greek word, ‘tartaroo’, only occurs here in **2 Peter 2:4**, and has unfortunately been translated as the word ‘hell’ in several different translations.

In fact, it’s nowhere found in the Septuagint translation of the Old Testament, and the only place where there’s anything about it is in Greek classical literature, where writers such as Homer describe it as ‘a place of darkness, with iron walls and a brass gate, deep under the Earth, where rebellious angels have been confined’.

And please note, this was a place solely for these rebellious angels; it’s never used in connection with sinful mankind!

CONTEXT

Peter is speaking about the work of false teachers, **2 Peter 2:1-3**, and he’s saying that these false teachers will face God’s judgment. We know this because he gives three examples of sinfulness from history, which led to judgment: Noah, Sodom and Gomorrah and Lot, **2 Peter 2:5-7**.

Notice the similarities between **2 Peter 2:4** and **Jude 6**. Jude is dealing with false teachers, and he also gives three examples of God’s judgment: the Israelites who rebelled against God after being brought out of Egypt, **Jude 6:5**, the rebellious angels, **Jude 6** and Sodom and Gomorrah, **Jude 7**. Both Peter and Jude are reminding us that God will move against false teachers and judgment will come upon them.

Who were these angels, and what did they do? We don’t know when this angelic rebellion against God took place, but we know that it did because both Jude and Peter tell us so, and God condemned them for it because they ‘didn’t keep their positions of authority’. We know Satan was the leader of these sinning angels, and we know it because it was because of pride that he fell, **Isaiah 14:12-15** / **1 Timothy 3:6**.

WHERE IS TARTARUS?

I’m sure you are aware that there are many theories concerning ‘Tartarus’, but little information. Some believe it’s actually Hades, that is hell, where the Rich Man was, **Luke 16:23**, but notice, the rich man was ‘in agony because of the fire’, **Luke 16:24**. Both Jude and Peter mention nothing about ‘fire’; these angels were ‘awaiting their judgment’, whilst the Rich Man had received his final judgment.

Some believe Tartarus is ‘the deepest part of hell.’ This can’t be right because whether it’s the deepest part of hell or the highest part of hell, it’s still located in hell, it’s still hell. Others believe that Tartarus is actually describing the condition of the angels and not an actual location.

Wherever or whatever Tartarus is, it's not nice; it's a place of temporary torment for these rebellious angels until they are judged with everlasting torment, **Matthew 25:31-46 / 2 Thessalonians 1:5-10 / Revelation 20:10 / Revelation 14-15**.

Why did Peter use the word 'Tartarus'? Who knows! Maybe by using Greek mythology, he wanted to help the Greek Christians understand that there's a place of torment for these rebellious angels until the final judgment comes.

CONCLUSION

All we know about Tartarus is what Peter writes in **2 Peter 2:4**, and we know this much, there are no humans in Tartarus, only fallen angels, those in Tartarus are bound by chains of darkness, there are no flames of fire mentioned, it's dark there, which means it's not 'hell', **Matthew 13:50**, and finally their restraint in chains isn't forever, they are 'being held for judgment', **Leviticus 24:10-12 / Numbers 15:32-36**, in other words, they haven't been judged as yet, but they will be, **Revelation 20:10**.

Remember, Tartarus is the place where certain sinful angels are presently kept bound, awaiting final judgment. It has no reference to the final destination of the wicked; hell, Tartarus isn't even the final destination of these angels.

It's unfortunate that some English versions translate the term 'Tartarus' as 'hell' because it confuses this place with the place of the final judgment of the wicked, **Matthew 25:41 / Revelation 20:10**.

And so these disobedient angels are now kept in hell 'Tartarus', awaiting judgment, and it seems fairly obvious to me at least that some angels didn't like the position they were given by God and tried to seek higher positions by rebelling against God, **Jude 6**.

When Jesus is describing what His people should be doing, He tells us that those who don't follow Him will be eternally punished, but notice who else is mentioned as being eternally punished: the devil and angels, **Matthew 25:41**.

If God did not spare the angels who beheld His glory when they sinned, **2 Peter 2:4**, He will certainly punish false teachers who purposely lead His people astray. Peter reminds us that God used the flood to judge the ungodly, **2 Peter 2:5 / Genesis 6:5-7**.

Notice that the wickedness of man was great in the earth, and every intent of the thoughts of his heart was continually only evil, and at this time the earth was corrupt in God's eyes and filled with violence, **Genesis 6:11-12**.

If we know anything about it, we know it was bad enough for God to be grieved in His heart, **Genesis 6:6**, to such an extent that He found it necessary to destroy both man and beast from the face of the earth.

Noah was the first evangelist mentioned in the Bible, and his life should teach us some lessons. For example, Noah faced the same circumstances that Christians face today.

Just as most people today do not believe Jesus is coming back at all, let alone soon, the people of Noah's day did not know when the Flood was going to happen, **Matthew 24:36-39**. They would have seen Noah building the ark, and surely some people would have asked what on earth he was doing and why he was doing it, **Hebrews 11:7**.

And so, like people today, almost certainly the people of Noah's day were busy enjoying the pleasures of life and did not believe or care that judgment was coming.

The point that Peter is trying to remind us of is this: if God destroyed the whole world because of their ungodliness, will He not destroy these false teachers who deny the Lord who bought them? And be assured, all people will be judged; no one is going to escape the great Judgment Day, which is coming, **Hebrews 9:27**.

It's not all bad news because, as we know, God spared Noah, **1 Peter 3:20**. In other words, that very same flood that God used to destroy the world was used to save Noah and his family's lives. And it's here as we begin to find comfort for the Christians who find themselves surrounded by the ungodly.

Noah walked with God, even amid a perverse generation **Genesis 6:8 / Genesis 7:1**. He was a preacher of righteousness, both in deed and word. And so while God was bringing judgment upon the ungodly, He did not lose sight of the godly.

God sees what the ungodly are up to, but don't forget that He also provides deliverance for the godly. In other words, not only will God bring destruction upon the false teachers, but He will also preserve all those who remain faithful to Him.

Peter also reminds us that God turned the cities of Sodom and Gomorrah into ashes, **2 Peter 2:6-8 / Genesis 19:24-28**. Why would God use such a terrible judgment on these cities? They were involved in sexual immorality and pursued unnatural desires, **Jude 7**. Their sin was simply blatant, **Genesis 18:20**.

MacKnight, in his commentary, says the following.

'The sin of Sodom was unnatural lusts, **Genesis 19:5**, and pride with fullness of bread, and abundance of idleness, especially among the women, and hard-heartedness towards the poor, **Ezekiel 16:46 / Judges 1:7**.'

We remember that Lot had a visit from two angels who wanted to stay in the town square, but Lot persuaded them to stay at his house and eat. A bunch of people came to his house and demanded to have sex with his visitors, **Genesis 19:4-11**. And when we read that whole account, we can understand why their sin was so great. Now, we can understand why God totally destroyed these cities.

But once again, notice that even though God destroyed the ungodly, He delivered righteous Lot, **2 Peter 2:7**. And this should serve as another reminder of how God does not lose sight of His faithful children when He brings judgment upon the ungodly.

Lot was delivered because he was righteous. In **2 Peter 2:7**, Peter describes him as righteous Lot. In **2 Peter 2:8**, Peter describes him as a righteous man. In **2 Peter 2:8**, Peter describes him as a righteous soul.

If God destroyed these cities because of their sin, He will certainly destroy these false teachers for their sin. So we leave these false teachers for God to deal with; their fate is already awaiting them.

It's difficult living in this world, surrounded by so much evil, and sometimes we can get very discouraged because of what's happening. Peter says if God can rescue Noah from a corrupt generation, then He can rescue us. Peter says if God can rescue Lot from a perverse generation, then He can rescue us, **2 Peter 2:9**.

So not only is God in the business of rescuing His people, but He is also in the business of keeping the unrighteous in a secure place until judgment day comes, **2 Peter 2:9**.

Peter says our God not only knows how to deliver the godly out of temptation, but He hasn't forgotten those who have sinned either. And so, we must be careful because false teachers are everywhere, and although we cannot tell by their appearance, we can tell by their fruit, **Matthew 7:15-20 / Galatians 5:22-23**.

It is entirely possible to have a good tree and a bad tree that look nearly identical in trunk, limbs, and leaves, yet they differ in the quality of fruit they produce. But if we listen closely to these false teachers, their hypocrisy will eventually be shown to all those who observe them.

So why doesn't God deal with these false teachers and all the ungodly people of this world today? Peter says, God is not controlled by time like we are, and He doesn't want anyone to perish but everyone to come to Him in repentance, **2 Peter 3:9**.

In other words, as long as today is called today, we have a chance to reach some soul with the true Gospel of Jesus. Sinners everywhere have still got time to come to God because God is patiently waiting for them to come. He's

waiting, but He won't wait forever, and when judgment day comes, it will be too late because Peter says He will come like a thief in the night, **2 Peter 3:10**.

Peter reminds us that false teachers would come amongst us and totally destroy the Lord's church with their words and teachings. He reminds us that they would bring on themselves swift destruction, and he also reminded us that their judgement will not be forgotten by God.

“Especially those who indulge their fleshly desires and who despise authority. Brazen and insolent, they are not afraid to insult the glorious ones, yet even angels, who are much more powerful, do not bring a slanderous judgment against them before the Lord. But these men, like irrational animals – creatures of instinct, born to be caught and destroyed – do not understand whom they are insulting, and consequently in their destruction they will be destroyed.” **2 Peter 2:10-12**

So far, Peter has informed us about the damage these false teachers can and do cause, **2 Peter 2:1-3**. He has informed us that God sees what they are doing and they will certainly not go unpunished for it, **2 Peter 2:4-9**. And here, Peter informs us of just how corrupt these false teachers can be.

Insulting those who are in authority is something that these false teachers are very good at doing, **2 Peter 2:10**. Peter is describing a specific type of person here, a person who was once a true Christian but has now fallen from grace. Notice how Peter describes these false teachers, he says they indulge in their fleshly desires, he says they are brazen and insolent, **2 Peter 2:10**. And as a result of their inner character, they behave more or less like irrational animals who have absolutely no respect for authority.

Peter talked about submission to our local authorities in his first letter, **1 Peter 2:13-17**, but here, Peter says these false teachers despise authority. Submission is not in their vocabulary, but what is in their vocabulary is the way they speak about the glorious ones, **2 Peter 2:10**.

Who are the ‘glorious ones’ that Peter has in mind here? If we keep the text in its context, it's clear he's speaking about angelic beings, **Jude 8-9**. In other words, Peter is saying that these false teachers would speak evil of fallen angels, which is something that the angels who have greater power would never do, **2 Peter 2:11**.

Plummer, in his commentary, says the following concerning **2 Peter 2:11**.

‘Against them’ may possibly mean ‘against the false teachers.’ The angels bring no accusation against the false teachers, but leave all judgment to God, **Deuteronomy 32:35-36 / Romans 12:19 / Hebrews 10:30**. This explanation avoids the awkwardness of making ‘dignities’ in **2 Peter 2:10** mean ‘good authorities’ and making it refer in this verse to ‘evil powers only.’

Clothes may disguise a fool, but their words will give them away, and all that comes from these false teachers' lips is corruption. So not only are they speaking evil against fallen angelic beings, but Peter also says they are speaking evil of things that they haven't got a clue about, **2 Peter 2:12**.

And so these false teachers have this condemning attitude and despise authority; they speak evil about things they don't know the whole story about. Peter describes them as ‘unreasoning animals, creatures of instinct, born only to be caught and destroyed, and like animals’ and so because they despise authority, they themselves will be destroyed, **2 Peter 2:12 / Jude 10**.

Plummer, in his commentary, says the following.

‘Animals cannot help themselves; it is their nature to rush after what will prove their ruin; but the false teachers voluntarily seek their own destruction against nature.’

“Suffering harm as the wages for their harmful ways. By considering it a pleasure to carouse in broad daylight, they are stains and blemishes, indulging in their deceitful pleasures when they feast together with you. Their eyes, full of adultery, never stop sinning; they entice unstable people. They have trained their hearts for greed, these cursed children!” **2 Peter 2:13-14**

Have you ever wondered how a worm gets inside an apple? We might think the worm burrows in from the outside, but it doesn't. Scientists have discovered that the worm comes from inside.

But how does he get in there? An insect lays an egg in the apple blossom. Sometime later, the worm hatches in the heart of the apple and then eats its way out.

Sin, like the worm, begins in the heart and works out through a person's thoughts, words, and actions. And these false teachers are not afraid to speak evil of others or even show it in their lives. Peter says these guys revel with great pleasure, they love to carouse, **2 Peter 2:13**.

These false teachers revel in pleasure, **2 Peter 2:13**; it's the idea of going out and painting the town red, as we would say. But this is taking it to the extreme, it's extreme because they don't hide it, they think it's great acting like this even during the day, **2 Peter 2:13**.

Peter says, like stains and blemishes, they carouse in their deceptions while they feast with you, **2 Peter 2:13**. In other words, they take advantage of gathering Christians.

We always need to be careful because these false teachers are very skilled in the art of deception, and so they will come in and take advantage of us, even in broad daylight, **2 Peter 2:13 / John 9:4 / Romans 13:13 / 1 Thessalonians 5:7**.

Peter says these guys are full of corruption, their eyes are full of adultery, **2 Peter 2:14 / Matthew 5:28**, their eyes and their hearts are so corrupt, **2 Peter 2:18**. So these false teachers come into our assemblies, teaching one thing but practising another.

Peter says they can't help themselves, they can't stop sinning, which again tells us just how corrupt they are, **2 Peter 2:14 / Ephesians 2:3**. They take advantage of unstable people, but notice what Peter says about their hearts here. He says they have trained their hearts for greed, **2 Peter 2:14**. Now, what does that mean?

It means that these false teachers are very skilled in the art of deception in order to get what they want. No wonder Peter calls them cursed children, **2 Peter 2:13**; no wonder Peter says to the church, grow Christian but be careful, **2 Peter 3:18**.

“By forsaking the right path, they have gone astray because they followed the way of Balaam, son of Bosor, who loved the wages of unrighteousness, yet was rebuked for his own transgression (a dumb donkey, speaking with a human voice, restrained the prophet's madness)”. **2 Peter 2:15-16**

I suggested earlier that I believe that these false teachers were once true Christians, and one of the reasons I believe this is because of what Peter says here.

He says they have forsaken the right path and gone astray, **2 Peter 2:15**. It is hard to forsake what we never had or to go astray if we were never in the right way in the first place.

Peter says just like the prophet Balaam, they were swayed by the wages of unrighteousness, **2 Peter 2:15 / Jude 1:11-13**. Interestingly, Peter mentions the wages of unrighteousness in **2 Peter 2:13**, in terms of the eternal compensation one receives for their sins.

But here, the wages of unrighteousness refer to the momentary compensation one receives for their sins. In other words, there's a price for everything in this world.

The story of Balaam is found in **Numbers 22:22-35**. Balaam is a seer and diviner who has been hired by Balak, king of Moab, to curse Israel, because Balak fears Israel's growing strength. And in the story, we find a talking donkey, which God uses to make Balaam see the danger of following Balak's order.

God turns Balaam's curses into blessings, and Israel will continue safely on its way, altogether unaware of either its danger or its rescue. Having seen the angel of the Lord with his threatening sword, the donkey tries three times to keep Balaam from going down that path.

The tension heightens each time, but Balaam perseveres. Finally, God opens the animal's mouth, and it argues with Balaam, but the amazing thing is that it is Balaam who has misunderstood everything.

The point is, Balaam was rebuked and restrained by a dumb donkey who spoke, **2 Peter 2:16**. Peter is saying how much more should we pay attention to when it is the voice of an inspired apostle who seeks to rebuke and restrain the madness of false teachers.

Coffman, in his commentary, says the following.

‘Balaam was not always a false prophet; because, at one time, he was a genuine prophet of God, one of the great Messianic prophecies of the Old Testament being accredited to him:’ There shall come a Star out of Jacob, and a scepter shall rise out of Israel, and shall smite the corners of Moab, and destroy all the children of Sheth, **Numbers 24:17**.

“These men are waterless springs and mists driven by a storm, for whom the utter depths of darkness have been reserved. By speaking high-sounding but empty words, they are able to entice, with fleshly desires and with debauchery, people who have just escaped from those who reside in error. Although these false teachers promise such people freedom, they are enslaved to immorality. For whatever a person succumbs to, to that he is enslaved”. **2 Peter 2:17-19**

Peter says these false teachers will promise much but deliver nothing. He says they are springs without water, they are mists carried by a storm, and their eternal fate is awaiting them, **2 Peter 2:17**. In other words, they promise much, but they never truly deliver what they promise, **Jude 12-13**.

MacKnight, in his commentary, says the following concerning the

‘Blackest darkness reserved for them’, **2 Peter 2:17**.

‘In Scripture, darkness signifies a state of disconsolate misery. Here it denotes the punishment of the wicked after judgment, which our Lord also hath represented by persons being cast into outer darkness, **Matthew 8:12**.’

Earlier, Peter said that these aflame teachers ‘will exploit you with deceptive words,’ **2 Peter 2:3**, now he says, ‘they speak high-sounding empty words’, **2 Peter 2:18**.

Peter says that these false teachers sound great and impressive, and they promise much, but sadly, they lack any true substance. Why? Because they actually appeal to the flesh, **2 Peter 2:18 / Galatians 5:19-21**.

Peter says it's by using this deceiving method that they seek to charm those who have escaped from those who live in error, **2 Peter 2:18**. And not only do they appeal to the flesh, but they also promise freedom from the flesh, **2 Peter 2:19**.

Peter says they promise freedom, but they don't deliver, especially if it is freedom from the lusts of the flesh. He has just told us that they appeal to the flesh to lure people in, but at the same time, they are promising freedom from the flesh, **2 Peter 2:19**.

What's going on here? They are enslaving people through the very thing they promised deliverance from. These false teachers promise freedom, while they are still slaves, **John 8:34 / Romans 6:16**.

Peter says they are slaves to immorality, trying to promise what they don't have themselves, **2 Peter 2:19**. And so, these false teachers who promise freedom are themselves still enslaved by the very things they promise to free us from. No wonder Peter goes on to tell us that they are worse off now than they were before.

“For if after they have escaped the filthy things of the world through the rich knowledge of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ, they again get entangled in them and succumb to them, their last state has become worse for them than their first. For it would have been better for them never to have known the way of righteousness than, having known it, to turn back from the holy commandment that had been delivered to them. They are illustrations of this true proverb: “A dog returns to its own vomit,” and “A sow, after washing herself, wallows in the mire.” **2 Peter 2:20-22**

Peter says their latter end is worse than their beginning, 2 Peter 2:20. He says it would have been better for them never to have known the way of righteousness, 2 Peter 2:21 / Luke 12:47-48.

Caffin, in his commentary, says the following concerning 2 Peter 2:21.

‘This verse implies that these unhappy men once had the full knowledge of Christ.’

I can’t picture a more sickening scene than a dog that has just been sick all over the kitchen floor going back and eating it, that’s just gross, 2 Peter 2:22. Or what sense does it make for a female pig to spend hours cleaning herself just to go back into a pool of mud to get dirty again? 2 Peter 2:22 / Proverbs 26:11. In other words, these false teachers have become like the dog returning to his vomit, and the washed sow wallowing again in the mire.

Coffman, in his commentary, says the following.

‘The origin of the second half of this verse is not known; but it is exactly the same kind of stark, realistic, down-to-earth saying as the other half, both expressions being exactly the type of homely wisdom that would have been familiar to a man like Peter.’

Peter has been encouraging us to keep growing in the grace and knowledge of Jesus Christ, but we also need to listen to his warning and be careful of these false teachers. Because if we don’t, we too may end up becoming just as lost as they are.

Peter warns us about falling away because it’s a very real possibility, and he’s not alone in the Bible with that concept, Galatians 1:6-9 / Hebrews 3:12-13.

Peter believes that Christians can fall from grace, and he believes Christians can be led away by the error of false teachers. That’s why he dedicates a whole chapter to describing these false teachers who are losing their salvation and trying to take others with them.

CHAPTER 3

INTRODUCTION

“This is now, beloved, the second letter that I have written to you; and in both of them I stir up your sincere mind by reminding you; that you should remember the words which were spoken before by the holy prophets, and the commandments of us, the apostles of the Lord and Saviour: knowing this first, that in the last days mockers will come, walking after their own lusts, and saying, “Where is the promise of his coming? For, from the day that the fathers fell asleep, all things continue as they were from the beginning of the creation.” 2 Peter 3:1-4

THE DAY OF THE LORD

In the previous chapter, Peter warned his readers to be careful regarding false teachers. And one of those warnings was about the damage these false teachers can do, especially within our assemblies. In this chapter, Peter warns them about another group of people who can cause damage, but not so much on the inside, but on the outside.

Notice, Peter calls them beloved, which is a term of endearment, and it's a word he will use again in this chapter, **2 Peter 3:2 / 2 Peter 3:14-15 / 2 Peter 3:17**. Peter wanted to remind them to think about both letters he sent to them to stimulate wholesome thinking in them, **2 Peter 3:1**.

He wants to get their minds focused on the words of the prophets and the command given by our Lord and Saviour through your apostles, **2 Peter 3:2**. When we as Christians face ridicule about Jesus' return, we need to remember Jesus' promise that He will certainly return, **John 14:1-3 / Acts 1:9-11**.

Peter says the first thing we need to remember is that Christians should expect mockers, **2 Peter 3:3**. He says when we get people coming up to us and having a go at our faith concerning Jesus' return, just remember.

Remember the words spoken before the holy prophets, remember the commandment of the apostles of the Lord and Saviour, **2 Peter 3:2**. In other words, when these people come up to us and start mocking us because of our faith, just remember that what God says is going to happen, will happen, **2 Peter 3:2**.

Whether He spoke through His prophets or spoke through His apostles, God's Word is sure, **2 Peter 3:2**. And when God's Word says that unbelievers will come and ridicule us, you can be sure that they will, and in that way it shouldn't come as a surprise to us. And when are we to expect these mockers? Peter says, in the last days, **2 Peter 3:3**.

THE LAST DAYS

There is so much going on in the 'religious world' concerning the last days. People are looking for signs and wonders to prove we're in the last days, there are wars, and there are terrors that all point to the end of the world. I wonder what the Bible actually teaches concerning 'the last days'. I think you'll find it fairly straightforward.

Notice how the Hebrew writer begins; he writes as a matter of fact. There's no doubt or question about the existence of God; he simply says, 'in the past God', **Hebrews 1:1**.

We find a similar style of writing in **Genesis 1:1**, 'In the beginning God.' Again, 'In the beginning, was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God,' **John 1:1**.

And notice again that there's no doubt or question about the existence of God in these authors' minds. In other words, the Bible never sets out to argue for the existence of God; it's taken as a matter of fact that God is, God exists.

And because the writer says 'at many times and in various ways', **Hebrews 1:1-2**, this actually implies that God had more to say. In other words, each prophet didn't carry the final message. The whole truth wasn't out yet, God's revelation wasn't complete yet.

We know that God first spoke directly to the patriarchs, and then God spoke through the written law. Then God spoke in dreams and visions, and God also spoke through the prophets. But God wasn't done revealing His word yet.

And I use the word 'but' because that's the word the writer of this letter uses, **Hebrews 1:2**. And he uses that word to emphasise the contrast between how God spoke and revealed His Word to mankind in the past and how He revealed His complete and final revelation in Jesus. He says, 'but in these last days', **Hebrews 1:2**, which is obviously a Messianic reference.

Now, there are times when I get a knock at the door, and there are usually two very polite religious people telling me how bad the world is today and how Jesus is coming soon because we are living in the last days.

They bring to my attention all the wars and famines which are happening throughout the world and try to convince me that these are all 'signs' that we're living in the last days.

But the truth is, we've been living in the last days ever since the arrival of Jesus. The last days are the days of the Messiah, not the end of the world. Several centuries before the birth of Christ, the prophet Joel in **Joel 2:28-29** foretold that the Spirit of God would be 'poured out' in the 'last days'.

When Peter preached the first Gospel message to the Jews in **Acts 2** he says, 'And in the last days it will be,' God says, 'that I will pour out my Spirit on all people, and your sons and your daughters will prophesy, and your young men will see visions, and your old men will dream dreams,' **Acts 2:17**.

Peter quotes from **Joel 2**, and notice how he describes the days in which they were living at that point in time. He describes them at 'that point in time' as living in 'the last days', **Acts 2:17**.

Countless sermons have been preached, and thousands of books have been sold, which all try to tell us that certain things are happening in the world today, and they tell us these are all 'signs' that Jesus is about to return. And so, they go out on the streets preaching, and they have these posters which say, 'The end is near, we're in the last days.'

People have been proclaiming the end of the world since 66 A.D. Simon bar Giora, who was a member of a Jewish sect, was the first to predict the end of the world. The Jehovah's Witnesses have tried to predict the end of the world at least three times. Most recently, Harold Camping tried to predict the end of the world twice.

And did you know that there are around thirteen different new predictions for the end of the world coming up in the next few years? All of these predictions, past and present, have claimed the signs are there to warn us we're living in the last days.

Well, of course, we're in the last days, and we've been there for the last two thousand years. Look at what Paul wrote to his young friend Timothy, 'There will be terrible times in the last days', **2 Timothy 3:1**.

And then Paul lists a whole bunch of non-Christ like attitudes, but look at what he tells Timothy later, 'Have nothing to do with such people', **2 Timothy 3:5**. This is present tense and has nothing to do with those people who were around at that time. That in itself tells us that Timothy was living in 'the last days'.

When Peter is talking about the Christ, he says, 'He was chosen before the creation of the world, but was revealed in these last times for your sake', **1 Peter 1:20**. Was Jesus around during the time of the Apostle Peter? Of course, He was. Peter understood he was living in the last times.

Jesus uses a similar kind of language in **Matthew 24:1-35**. Now, remember the disciples have come to Jesus privately to ask Him 'What will be the sign of your coming and of the end of the age?' **Matthew 24:3**.

And so, Jesus is answering their questions. Jesus says, 'How dreadful it will be in those days for pregnant women and nursing mothers!' **Matthew 24:19**. He uses the words 'those days' throughout this text when He's describing the destruction of Jerusalem.

But when we carry on reading from **Matthew 24:36**, through to **Matthew 26:46**, He uses the words 'that day' to describe what will happen at the end of the world.

Do you see how His words are more specific? If we were studying the topic of 'the end of the world', that's one of the texts we would go to. But we're not studying that today, we're studying the topic of 'the last days', which isn't something still to come.

'The last days' were then, as the prophets looked forward to the time by speaking of 'in those days and at that time.' If the world continues for another thousand years, we would still be in the last days. And so, God formerly spoke through the prophets at many times and in many ways, but in these 'last days', He has spoken to us by His Son, **Hebrews 1:1-2**.

Peter says when these scoffers come along, the real motivation behind it all is because they are walking according to their own lusts, **2 Peter 3:3**. In other words, most people know that when we talk about Jesus' return, we're talking about judgment. And so what these people do is make fun of us, why?

Because it soothes their guilty consciences, **2 Peter 3:3**. Peter says the biggest argument that these people will use is that everything continues as it always has, **2 Peter 3:4**.

Coffman, in his commentary, says the following.

‘As the centuries pass away, this objection recurs repeatedly, with greater and greater intensity. The central thesis of Christianity is the Second Coming of Christ in the resurrection of the dead and the final judgment, the Lord’s Supper itself being oriented absolutely to that future event. Peter here foretold the ultimate mockery with which unbelievers and apostates would receive such doctrine, there being in all probability at the time he wrote outcroppings of the same thing.’

Green, in his commentary, says the following concerning **2 Peter 3:4**.

‘It is not said that things continue as they were from the coming of Christ, but from the beginning of the creation.’

How are we going to answer these critics? Remember what Peter has just told us: he told us to remember what the holy prophets and apostles have said, **2 Peter 3:2**. Remember that God’s Word is true and consistent.

“For this they wilfully forget that there were heavens from of old, and an earth formed out of water and amid water, by the word of God; by which means the world that then was, being overflowed with water, perished. But the heavens that now are, and the earth, by the same word have been stored up for fire, being reserved against the day of judgment and destruction of ungodly men.” **2 Peter 3:5-7**

Whilst we are remembering God’s Word, these scoffers are forgetting; these scoffers have forgotten about the flood. They forgot it was God who created the heavens, **Genesis 1:1**, and they forget that it was God who formed the waters during creation, **2 Peter 3:5 / Genesis 1:6-10**.

Many people disregard the Old Testament and forget the many stories within it, but as Christians, we need to remember what other people forget or disregard, we are to remember because it gives us the big picture.

And so Peter says these scoffers forget, but not just forget, they wilfully forget, **2 Peter 3:5**. In other words, they purposefully choose not to remember an event that proves their argument wrong. They aren’t interested in determining truth; they, like many other people, are actually trying to justify their lifestyle.

Many people today conveniently ignore the evidence because they know the evidence would weaken their case; that’s why they ridicule Christians, rather than deal with it fairly and seriously.

But Peter says the flood is evidence of the certainty of God’s Word, **Genesis 6:9-9:17**. What happened with Sodom and Gomorrah is evidence of the certainty of God’s Word, **2 Peter 2:5-6**.

Peter says by God’s Word that the world was once destroyed by water, **2 Peter 3:6 / Genesis 6:9-9:17**. And he says the same Word that promised and carried through with the promise about the flood, is the Word that promises and will carry through about the Lord’s coming and the fire to accompany it, **2 Peter 3:7**.

Strachan, in his commentary, says the following.

‘The writer means that both the rainbow promise and the delay are not to be regarded as implying that there will be no more great cosmic changes. The heaven and the earth are reserved for destruction by fire.’

In other words, since God kept His first promise to destroy the world with water, we can expect Him to keep His present promise as well.

“But don’t forget this one thing, beloved, that one day is with the Lord as a thousand years, and a thousand years as one day. The Lord is not slow concerning his promise, as some count slowness; but is patient with us; not wishing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance”. **2 Peter 3:8-9**

These scoffers may come along and say, ‘yes but, it has been so long since that promise was made,’ **2 Peter 3:8**. And in one sense they might be right, it has been just over two thousand years since the promise of the Lord’s return but to answer that question we need to remember something else, we need to remember that God is not affected by time. We all know that our time on earth is short; we all know that time dominates our lives every day, whether we like it or not. But God is not man, and He is not controlled by time as we understand it.

Peter says with the Lord one day is as a thousand years, and a thousand years as one day, **2 Peter 3:8**. Sadly, this is one of those passages which has been used and abused and taken out of context over the years.

Some people have homed in on this verse to make it mean something it was never meant to mean, but Peter is simply reminding us that time is irrelevant to God, **Psalm 90:4**.

And so while it may have been just over two thousand years since this promise of Jesus’ return, to God that is no different from two days, **Psalm 90:4**. In other words, another two thousand years could pass, and God’s Word would not be weakened at all.

Since God kept His promise about the first coming of Christ, **Genesis 3:15**, we can expect Him to fulfil the promise of His Son’s return. No one knows when Christ is coming back, **Acts 1:7**.

We must remember God’s Word is sure, we must remember God is not governed by time, and finally, Peter says there is one more thing we need to remember: remember that God is patient.

Peter says these mockers believe that the Lord is slow concerning His promise, **2 Peter 3:9**. It has been just over two thousand years since the promise was made. However, while some people may think that the Lord is slow in coming back, we can be sure that He is slow for a reason.

Peter says, ‘He is patient with us, not wanting anybody to perish’, **2 Peter 3:9**. Although God is a just God, He is also a merciful and loving God. While God’s justice requires judgment and the eternal punishment of all the ungodly, God’s love and mercy are willing to give them time to repent.

This explains the Lord’s delay in returning. He has given every generation that has lived during the last two thousand years time to repent. And in that way, He has been patient with everyone, He’s hoping that people will repent, **2 Peter 3:9**.

Peter says to remember God’s Word is sure, remember God is not governed by time and remember that God is patient with us and He wants those who aren’t Christians to come to Him today. Peter now goes ahead and speaks about what will actually happen when our Lord Jesus finally does come back.

“But the day of the Lord will come like a thief in the night. The heavens will disappear with a roar; the elements will be destroyed by fire, and the earth and everything was done in it will be laid bare. Since everything will be destroyed in this way, what kind of people ought you to be? You ought to live holy and godly lives as you look forward to the day of God and speed its coming. That day will bring about the destruction of the heavens by fire, and the elements will melt in the heat. But in keeping with his promise, we are looking forward to a new heaven and a new earth, where righteousness dwells.” **2 Peter 3:10-13**

The day when Jesus returns, Peter calls the day of the Lord, **2 Peter 3:10**. Some believe that the coming of Christ and the day of the Lord are actually two separate events.

They believe that the coming of Christ is a secret coming in which He will rapture His saints. And they believe that the day of the Lord is the final Day of Judgment, which occurs much later.

But if those who believe this would actually take the time to read the text, they would soon discover that both Peter and Paul use these expressions interchangeably. Paul describes the coming of the Lord and its implications for the righteous, **1 Thessalonians 4:13-18**.

But then the apostle Paul calls it the day of the Lord as he is discussing the timings of these events, **1 Thessalonians 5:1-4**. And so, the coming of the Lord and the Day of the Lord are one and the same thing. Luke simply tells us that Jesus will return in the same way they saw Him go up into heaven, **Acts 1:9-11**.

We all know how most thieves work; they usually wait until late at night to break into someone's house, and nobody goes to bed expecting to be burgled. Peter says for a lot of people, Jesus' return is going to happen in the same way, they are just not expecting it, **2 Peter 3:10**. Paul tells us the same thing, **1 Thessalonians 5:1-3**.

Peter tells us about the Lord's return and says, It will be unexpected, without warning. Paul says as Christians, we don't need to know the date and time of His return, but as Christians, we should be ready for His return. Paul says the day of the Lord should not overtake you as a thief would, **1 Thessalonians 5:4-6**.

In other words, we should be ready for His return, not because we know the day or hour of His coming, not because of any so-called revelation that pinpoints the time of His coming. But we should be ready for His return because, as Christians, we're told to stay alert.

We always need to remember that Jesus is coming back one day, and until then, we need to remain faithful to His word and repent when necessary, **Revelation 3:1-3**. Because if we don't, then the Lord will indeed come upon us as a thief in the night, **2 Peter 3:10 / Matthew 24:43 / Revelation 3:3 / Revelation 16:15**.

The second thing which Peter tells us concerning the Lord's return is that it will be catastrophic. When we read Peter's words in **2 Peter 3:10**, do they sound like a 'secret silent' return of Jesus?

Peter is not talking about some fiery purification process of the earth, as some believe. He is talking about what can only be described as the total destruction of the whole universe.

The sun, moon and the stars are going to melt because of great heat, **2 Peter 3:10**. And that word 'melt' is the Greek word 'luo', which means to break up, destroy, or dissolve as the other verses translate it. Peter says all these things will be dissolved, the heavens will be dissolved from being on fire.

Reicke, in his commentary, says the following.

'The solar system and the great galaxies, even space-time relationships, will be abolished. All elements which make up the physical world will be dissolved by heat and utterly melt away. It is a picture which, in an astonishing degree, corresponds to what might actually happen according to modern theories of the physical universe.'

If we believe in God and trust that the great day is coming, what do we do in the meantime? Peter says the very fact that we believe that Jesus the Christ is going to return should inspire us all to live right for God, **2 Peter 3:11**. Jesus' return should encourage us to live holy lives and strive for godliness.

All our wealth, all our fame and all our physical relationships are going to be dissolved when Jesus returns. The only thing that has the promise of the life to come is godliness, **1 Timothy 4:8**.

Peter says Jesus' return should encourage us to live holy lives, and he says we should be looking forward to and earnestly desiring the coming of the day of God, **2 Peter 3:11-12**.

The apostle Paul didn't have any problem in wanting the Lord to come, **1 Corinthians 16:22**, and the apostle Peter himself had no problem in asking the Lord to come, **Acts 3:19-20**.

The word 'melt' used in **1 Peter 3:12** is the Greek word 'teko', which means to liquefy. In other words, the universe is going to be totally destroyed. Now look what Peter says will happen to the Earth: he uses words like 'pass away, melt, and dissolve', **1 Peter 3:12**.

Peter says when it comes, we will know it has come because the world as we know it will be non-existent. For some people, this is frightening, and so it should be, but not for the Christian.

Peter says that when everything in the universe has been totally destroyed, this will actually usher in a new order. He says there will be a new heavens and a new earth in which the righteousness will live, **2 Peter 3:13**.

NEW HEAVENS AND A NEW EARTH

There are many theories about the phrase, 'new heavens and a new earth', but probably the most common theory is that the phrase means that the present Earth is going to undergo some kind of renovation, some kind of cleaning process using fire, so that it becomes like it was in the beginning when God created it and so, it will become our new heaven.

The problem is that this theory doesn't correspond with what the Scriptures actually teach. This present earth is to pass away. Notice the following Scriptures: **Matthew 24:35** / **Hebrews 1:10-12** / **2 Peter 3:10-12**. Our eternal dwelling place is heaven, **1 Peter 1:3-4**.

CONTEXT! CONTEXT! CONTEXT!

When it comes to understanding any Scripture, we must always keep the text in its context. With this in mind, let's go to the Scriptures where we first find the phrase, 'new heavens and a new earth.'

The apostle Peter declared by inspiration that all the Old Testament prophecies pertaining to Christ are fulfilled in the present age, **Acts 3:19-26**, which is the last days, **Acts 2:16-17**, or last age, **1 Corinthians 10:11**, that is, the age when God speaks through His Son, **Hebrews 1:1-2**.

Now, some people object to these truths by pointing to Isaiah's prophecy of 'new heavens and a new earth', **Isaiah 65:17**, and argue that these prophecies haven't been fulfilled. I guess we need to ask the question, what is this 'new heavens and a new earth'? Has this prophecy of Isaiah been fulfilled or not?

Notice that Isaiah twice foretold the 'new heavens and a new earth', **Isaiah 65:17** / **Isaiah 66:22**, the apostle Peter did so too, **2 Peter 3:13**, and so did the apostle John, **Revelation 21:1**. But what do they mean when they use this phrase? Let's take a moment to go through each one whilst keeping each one in its context.

The apostle Paul quotes **Isaiah 65:1-2**, the beginning of the context, and applies them to the present age, **Romans 10:20-21**. Notice how Isaiah's prophecy ends, **Isaiah 65:25**. The words, 'my holy mountain', **Isaiah 65:25**, are a clue that identifies the time and nature of the fulfilment.

The prophecy of the Lord's 'holy mountain' relates to the first coming of Christ, **Isaiah 11:1-2** / **Isaiah 11:9** / **Isaiah 61:1-2** / **Luke 4:16-21**, and is a figurative term for the rule of Christ in His church, His kingdom, **Isaiah 2:1-4** / **Hebrews 12:22-23** / **Hebrews 12:28**. The nature of this kingdom is spiritual rather than material, **John 18:36** / **Romans 14:17**.

In other words, 'the new heavens and a new earth' of **Isaiah 65:17** is the present divine order under the rule of Christ and the spiritual dwelling place for the people of God, the church.

In **Isaiah 66:22**, Isaiah refers to this same 'new heavens and the new earth'. The context here is a prophecy of Christ coming into the world and establishing His church, **Isaiah 66:7-9** / **Micah 5:2-3** / **Revelation 12:1-11**. In other words, **Isaiah 66:22** is a continuation of the promise of **Isaiah 65:17** and likewise relates to the present rule of Christ over His kingdom, the church.

In **2 Peter 3:13**, it is in a totally different context, Peter is warning against scoffers who deny that Christ will come again, **2 Peter 3:1-4**. And so, he assures us that the promise of the Lord's return will be fulfilled, **2 Peter 3:5-9**, at which time 'the heavens will pass away with a great noise, and the elements will melt with fervent heat; both the earth and the works that are in it will be burned up,' **2 Peter 3:10**.

But notice there is nothing in the passage or even the context, for that matter, which indicates Peter is speaking figuratively; we should take the warning literally. This present universe is destined for sudden, fiery, divine destruction. This shouldn't worry the Christians because Peter says in **2 Peter 3:13**.

In other words, in harmony with the meaning of the phrase 'new heavens and a new earth,' we await a new order of things and a new dwelling place. This is a home in heaven, **1 Peter 1:3-5**, in which we will have glorious, immortal, spiritual bodies like that of the Lord Jesus Christ, **1 Corinthians 15:35-58** / **1 John 3:2**.

John likewise saw in a vision this new order of things after the return of the Lord, in which the death, sickness, pain, suffering, and sorrow of this present age shall have passed away, and God once more dwells with His people and this for all eternity, **Revelation 21:1-5**.

CONCLUSION

Common sense tells us that if the Christian is promised 'heaven', which is our final dwelling place, and yet we're also promised a 'new heavens and a new earth,' this tells us that the 'new heavens and new earth' represent the same state as heaven.

All the Old Testament prophecies concerning Christ, most of which were both figurative and spiritual, are indeed fulfilled in the New Testament age. The 'new heavens and a new earth' of Isaiah are the rule of Christ over His spiritual kingdom, His church.

So, what does the phrase mean in the New Testament? It simply means it's symbolic of heaven itself, nothing more, nothing less. There are yet 'new heavens and a new earth' in store for Christians at the Lord's return; it will be a wonderful home in heaven where everlasting joy awaits. No wonder John writes, 'Amen. Come, Lord Jesus,' **Revelation 22:20**.

The new heavens and a new Earth are something that the early Christians looked forward to, **Hebrews 13:14**. This new heavens and new Earth, which Peter is talking about, is the ultimate destination for Christians. We look forward to the new heavens and the new earth because of God's promise.

Peter says no one knows the date and time of Jesus' return, but when it happens, it's going to be catastrophic. Everything will be totally destroyed, and then we will live eternally in the place which God has prepared for His people.

And he says we can be sure that's going to happen because God said it's going to happen. And so, as Peter draws his letter to a close, it is evident that he is filled with love toward his brethren.

"Therefore, beloved, seeing that you look for these things, be diligent to be found in peace, without blemish and blameless in his sight. Regard the patience of our Lord as salvation; even as our beloved brother Paul also, according to the wisdom given to him, wrote to you. As also in all of his letters, speaking in them of these things." **2 Peter 3:14-**

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Notice that he calls them 'beloved' again, **2 Peter 3:14** / **2 Peter 3:1** / **2 Peter 3:8**, and in the text where he uses this term of endearment twice, once and later he will use it again, **2 Peter 3:18**. And it's with this love which Peter has in his heart for his brethren, he writes his final words.

And I say his final words because remember he has already told us that he is about to die, **2 Peter 1:14**, and as far as we know, Peter didn't write any other letters after this one.

As we mentioned earlier, the words of a dying man can be the very thing that will last forever. And just as the final words of any dying person are significant, we know that they can reveal what is of greatest concern to that person.

So what is Peter concerned about? What is Peter going to write to the very people whom he dearly loved? Notice he uses the word ‘diligence’; some translations use the words ‘make every effort’, **2 Peter 3:14**.

Peter has already used the word ‘diligence’, which means earnestness. He used it when he was encouraging us to earnestly grow in our knowledge of Jesus Christ, **2 Peter 1:5 / 2 Peter 1:10**.

But here he uses the word ‘diligence’, to encourage us to earnestly look for peace whilst we’re waiting for the Lord’s return, **2 Peter 3:14**. Peter says when Jesus returns He should find us in peace, without blemish and blameless, **2 Peter 3:14 / Luke 18:8**.

When he talks about peace, he can be talking about our relationship with God or he can be talking about our relationship with our fellow man or he can be talking about both.

Whatever Peter has in mind, the point is, when we as Christians focus on being at peace with God, then God will help us to be at peace with our fellow man, **Proverbs 16:7**.

We’ve all got our faults, spots and blemishes, but how on earth can we be without blemish and blameless? It’s certainly not because of anything we have done but because of what Someone else has done.

In the eyes of God, we are without blemish and blameless only because of the sacrificial love of Jesus Christ, **1 Peter 3:14 / Ephesians 5:25-27 / 1 Peter 1:19**. Jesus was the One who redeemed us from sin through His precious blood, as of a lamb without blemish and without spot, **1 Peter 1:18-19 / Philippians 3:5-6**.

If we continue to follow God’s ways, if we continue to confess our sins to Him, then the blood of Jesus will come to wash us clean, **1 John 1:7-9**. So whilst we’re continually being washed, we’re continually going to be found without blemish and blameless in God’s eyes.

Peter says to remember the patience of the Lord is salvation, **2 Peter 3:15**. He has already reminded us that time is irrelevant to God, **2 Peter 3:8**, and he has also reminded us that God is patient in His return because He wants others to come to Him in repentance, **2 Peter 3:9**. The apostle Paul says the same thing, **2 Corinthians 6:1-2**.

Now it’s interesting that Peter mentions the apostle Paul in these verses, **2 Peter 3:15**. Remember that Peter himself took advantage of God’s patience for him to repent after he denied Jesus three times, **Luke 22:54-62**, and we find the apostle Paul rebuked Peter for being a hypocrite, **Galatians 2:11-21**.

And we can see very clearly that Peter did repent of being a hypocrite by the very fact that he calls Paul his beloved brother, **2 Peter 3:15**. Peter clearly held no animosity toward his beloved brother Paul for what may have occurred at Antioch, **Galatians 2:11-21**.

Coffman, in his commentary, says the following concerning **2 Peter 3:15**.

‘Indeed Paul did write of longsuffering, not only as an attribute of God, but as a grace to be cultivated by Christians, and even as one of the fruits of the Holy Spirit, **Romans 2:4 / Romans 9:22 / 2 Corinthians 6:6 / Galatians 5:22 / Ephesians 4:2 / Colossians 1:11 / Colossians 3:1 / 2 Timothy 1:16 / Titus 3:10 / Titus 4:11**. Which of such references had Peter read? There is actually no good reason to suppose that he had not read most of them!’

We remember God’s patience in terms of His return, and we need to be careful what we do with the Scriptures. Peter says yes, there are some of Paul’s writings that are hard to understand, but don’t go twisting the Scriptures to our own destruction, **2 Peter 3:16**.

The Bible can be a great source for much good, **Hebrews 4:12 / 2 Timothy 3:16-17 / James 1:21**, but they can also be abused and used to cause a lot of harm. It’s all very well running around with a huge sword ready to do battle, **Ephesians 6:16**, but if we don’t know how to handle that sword properly, the chances are we’re going to hurt ourselves with it.

And it’s in that way which Peter says twisting the Scriptures can lead to your own destruction, **2 Peter 3:16**. And so Peter reminds us that we need to be careful when we’re dealing with the Scriptures because if we’re not careful, we can fall and be led away by the error of those who twist the Scriptures.

“You, therefore, beloved, knowing these things beforehand, beware, lest being carried away with the error of the wicked, you fall from your own steadfastness. But grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ. To him be glory both now and forever! Amen.” 2 Peter 3:17-18

What Peter says in this one verse, **2 Peter 3:17**, is a total summary of what he’s been warning us about in **1 Peter 2-3**. He is telling us that there is a very real danger of falling away, **1 Corinthians 10:12**.

Remember, he told us that these false teachers who were once true Christians are now denying the Lord who bought them, **2 Peter 2:1**. He told us that these same people have now forsaken the right way and gone astray, **2 Peter 2:15**. And finally, he told us that these very same people once escaped the filthy things of the world but are now entangled again in those very things, **2 Peter 2:20**. As a result, they are now in a worse state than they were before they actually became Christians.

And what he says here in **2 Peter 3:18** is a total summary of what he is encouraging us to do in **2 Peter 1**. He reminded us of the blessings which come by the grace and knowledge of Jesus Christ, **2 Peter 1:1-4**.

He reminded us about how we can grow in the knowledge of Jesus Christ, **2 Peter 1:5-11**. He reminded us that in order for us to grow in our knowledge of Jesus Christ, we constantly need to look at the witness of the apostles and the witness of the Old Testament Scriptures, **2 Peter 1:12-21**.

Amy Grant wrote a song called ‘Fat Baby’, and I think her words are a very appropriate reminder of how Christians need to be growing.

I know a man, maybe you know him, too
You never can tell; he might even be you
He knelt at the altar, and that was the end
He’s saved, and that’s all that matters to him
His spiritual tummy, it can’t take too much
One day a week, he gets a spiritual lunch
On Sunday, he puts on his spiritual best
And gives his language a spiritual rest
He’s just a fat little baby!
He wants his bottle, and he don’t mean maybe
He sampled solid foods once or twice
But he says doctrine leaves him cold as ice
He’s been baptized, sanctified, redeemed by the blood
But his daily devotions are stuck in the mud
He knows the books of the Bible and John 3:16
He’s got the biggest King James you’ve ever seen!
I’ve always wondered if he’ll grow up someday
He’s momma’s boy, and he likes it that way
If you happen to see him, tell him I said,
“He’ll never grow, if he never gets fed”
He’s just a fat, fat, fat, fat, Baby.

In other words, Peter is simply saying, if we want to avoid falling away, then simply keep on growing. Grow in the grace of Jesus Christ, by appreciating and living with and in God’s unmerited favour, **2 Peter 3:18**.

Remember, growing in the knowledge of Jesus Christ isn’t just about intellectual knowledge; it’s more than that. Growing in the knowledge of Jesus Christ means to live as Jesus lived, behave as Jesus behaved, and speak as Jesus spoke. Handle difficult times as Jesus did, and trust in our heavenly Father as Jesus did.

Growing in the grace and knowledge of Jesus Christ will not only help us from falling away, but it will also ultimately help us to give glory to Him both now and forever, **2 Peter 3:18**.

MacKnight, in his commentary, says the following concerning the words, ‘for now and ever more.

‘The literal meaning of the words thus rendered is, ‘until the day of eternity.’ ‘This teaches that eternity is a day without any night, a real and perpetual day.’