

# BIBLE SERIES: "EXPLORING OUR AWESOME BIBLE"

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## 2 PETER 1-2 FALSE TEACHERS'S FATE; CHRIST'S RETURN & JUDGMENT

We continue in 2 Peter 1, where he mentioned seven spiritual qualities to develop so we can enter into God's kingdom. He knows the brethren have heard this message before in his sermons and letters, but is aware the world and Satan are always trying to have them discard it, so he wants to leave them *this testimony of God's truths*.

He says, "For this reason I will *not be negligent* to remind you always of these things, though you know and are established in the present truth. Yes, I think it is right, as long as I am in this tent, to stir you up by reminding you, knowing that *shortly I must put off my tent*, just as our Lord Jesus Christ showed me. Moreover, I will be careful to ensure that you always have a reminder of these things [this letter] after my decease" (2 Peter 1:12-15).

By "the present truth" Peter means the *body of doctrines given by Jesus to His apostles* (see Acts 2:42). Jude calls it "the faith which was once for all handed down to the saints...For certain men have crept in stealthily. Their doom was predicted long ago, ungodly persons who *pervert the grace* of our God into lawlessness [the breaking of God's laws], wantonness and immorality, and deny our sole Master and Lord, Jesus Christ" (Jude 3-4, AMP). Peter and Jude are in agreement: This "present truth" is based on Jesus' teachings, who came to "magnify the law and make it honorable" (Is. 42:21, LITV) so it must *never* be changed!

Peter knows he will soon die for the faith, as Jesus had prophesied (Jn. 21:18-19). He speaks of his body as a *tent* (Gk. *skenoma*) that he will put off. Similarly, Paul says: "For we know that if *our earthly house, this tent (skenoma)*, is destroyed, we have a building from God, a house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens [a spirit body]...For we who are in this tent groan, being burdened, not because we want to be unclothed, but further clothed, that *mortality* may be swallowed up by life [at the resurrection]" (2 Cor. 5:1-4).

So Peter focuses on Christ's coming kingdom and the spiritual body God will give us at that time – it is the *vision* he is giving us to encourage and strengthen us. How is he so sure this will happen? Because he was an eyewitness, stating, "For we did not follow cunningly devised *fables* when we made

known to you *the power and coming of our Lord Jesus Christ*, but were eyewitnesses of His majesty. For He received from God the Father honor and glory when such a voice came to Him from the Excellent Glory: 'This is My beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased.' And *we heard this voice* which came from heaven when we were with Him on the holy mountain" (2 Pet. 1:16-18).

Yes, Peter was an eyewitness of Jesus' *transfiguration*, described in Mt. 17. He saw Christ in all His glory and heard the Father's praising Him. What more testimony is needed? Therefore, Peter was *absolutely sure* of what he was saying.

Moreover, Peter gives a *second proof* about Christ's return – *Bible prophecy*. He says, "And so we have the prophetic word confirmed, which you do well to heed as a light that shines in a dark place, until the day dawns and the morning star rises in your hearts; knowing this first, that no prophecy of Scripture is of any private interpretation, for prophecy *never came by the will of man*, but holy men of God spoke as they were moved by the Holy Spirit" (2 Peter 1:19-21).

So, not only did he see Christ's coming in a vision, but also had God's testimony in the Bible about His return. He gives two analogies about it: The first is of a 'lamp' shining in a dark place to show where to walk. As Ps. 119:105 says: "Your word is a lamp to my feet and a light to my path." The second analogy is that of a night laborer, such as a fisherman, as he had been, who in the darkness of the night finally sees the planet Venus rising (the morning star) announcing the dawn. The Bible, then, is *our guide* in the midst of the world's darkness until Jesus returns in shining glory, bringing forth the dawn of God's kingdom. At that time Peter says we *will leap with joy*, as Mal. 4:2 says, "But for you that *honor* my name, *victory will shine like the sun* with healing in its rays, and you will jump around like calves at play" (CEV).

Peter says God's inspired Word *interprets itself* and what the prophets wrote was *not of their own doing* but as they were *inspired by God*. He had to say this because some among them were teaching *their own private interpretations* of the Bible. He warns them of this present danger: "But there

were false prophets among the people, and there will be false teachers *among you*, who will *secretly* put forward wrong teachings for your destruction, even turning away from the Lord who gave Himself for them; whose destruction will come quickly, and they themselves will be the cause of it. And *a great number will go with them in their evil ways*, through whom *the true way will have a bad name*. And in their desire *for profit* they will come to you with the words of deceit, like traders doing business in souls: whose punishment has been ready for a long time and their destruction is watching for them" (2 Peter 2:3, BBE).

God had prophesied false prophets would enter among His people in both the Old and New Testaments. As Jer. 23:32 says: "Behold I am *against those who prophesy false dreams*, says the Lord, and tell them, and *cause My people to err by their lies* and by their recklessness. *Yet I did not send them or command them*; therefore they shall not profit this people at all, says the Lord."

Christ also warned: "Beware of false prophets, who come to you in sheep's clothing, but inwardly they are ravenous wolves...Not everyone who calls out to me, 'Lord! Lord!' will enter the Kingdom of Heaven. Only those who *actually do the will of my Father* in heaven will enter. On judgment day many will say to me, 'Lord! Lord! We prophesied in your name and cast out demons in your name and performed many miracles in your name.' But I will reply, 'I never knew you. Get away from me, you who break God's laws'" (Mt. 7:15-23, NLT). In 1 Cor. 11:18-19, Paul says God allows false teachers to be in the flock to see *who* will be "approved" by rejecting them and standing firm in the faith.

So, what is *doing the will of the Father*? John answers: "He who says, 'I know Him,' and *does not keep His commandments*, is *all liar*, and *the truth is not in him*. But whoever keeps His word; truly the love of God is perfected in him. *By this we know that we are in Him*" (1 John 2:4-5). The faithful believer distinguishes himself from false teachers by loving and keeping *all* of God's commandments.

As Church historian B.G. Wilkinson notes: "Apostolic Christianity, as a religion supremely superior to paganism, caused widespread upheavals in the world. So strong were her prospects of success that Jesus and His apostles

were fearful of the great deceptions that would come because of imitations and counterfeits. To make a clear-cut distinction between these counterfeits and genuine Christianity, new light from heaven was needed. Such revelations were provided *in the last books in the New Testament*. All the truths needed to chart the future course of gospel believers were to be found in the messages from the apostles" (*Truth Triumphant*, 1944, p. 8).

The *Evangelical Commentary* adds: "False teachers would secretly *infiltrate* the church. At first they would not seek positions...and would work together with those who teach the true doctrines. But gradually they would introduce their destructive heresies. Probably the most outstanding feature of these false teachers is *their contempt for the authority of the church leaders*."

Peter then reminds them God's justice: "For if God did not spare sinning angels, but delivered them to chains of darkness, thrust down into Tartarus, having been kept to judgment" (2 P. 2:4, LITV). This refers to Lucifer's rebellion, mentioned in Is. 14 and Ez. 28. Christ Himself witnessed when God the Father cast him back to the earth, now transformed into a fallen angel, saying: "I saw Satan fall like lightning from heaven" (Luke 10:18). He and his angels are now confined to the earth, as we see Satan told God what he was doing: "Going to and fro on the earth" (Job 1:7).

Notice what fallen angels, who had possessed a person, fearfully said when they saw Jesus, "What have You to do with us, Jesus, Son of God? Have You come here *to torment us before the time*?" 28:29. They are thus confined to the earth (except when God gives them permission to go up) until the time of judgment comes, when they will be condemned and punished. God was patient with them, but when they rebuild, He acted resolutely.

Note the Gk. term here for "hell" is *tartarus*, a *dark place of confinement*. Fallen angels, in fact, *like to be and act in the darkness*, for it is an environment that serves to *hide their evil deeds*. That is why Satan and his evil angels are called "rulers of the *darkness of this age*...spiritual hosts of *wickedness* in the heavenly places" (Eph. 6:12).

Peter now gives second example of God's intervention applied to the wicked by the Flood, saying: "And did not spare the ancient world, but

saved Noah, one of eight people, a preacher of righteousness, bringing in the flood on the world of the ungodly" (2 P. 2:5). God had "longsuffering" with that ancient world, but once they had been corrupted, except for Noah's family, no remedy was left but *destruction*. It is a biblical principle that *universal sin brings universal punishment*.

He gives a third example with the destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah, saying, "And turning the cities of Sodom and Gomorrah into ashes, condemned them to destruction, making them an example to those who afterward would live ungodly; and delivered righteous Lot, who was oppressed by the filthy conduct of the wicked (for that righteous man, dwelling among them, tormented his righteous soul from day to day by seeing and hearing their lawless deeds)--- then the Lord knows how to deliver the godly out of temptations and to reserve the unjust under punishment for the day of judgment, and especially those who walk according to the flesh in the lust of uncleanness and despise authority. They are presumptuous, self-willed. They are not afraid to speak evil of dignitaries" (2 P. 2:12-16).

So Peter is alarmed with the false brethren among them and says the way to bring them out in the open is by testing them about God's commandments. We know some of these deceivers will get away with it in this life, but not in the future. They are accumulating a terrible judgment by allowing themselves to become the Devil's instruments and harming the Church.

Peter says of them: "But these, like natural brute beasts made to be caught and destroyed, speak evil of the things they do not understand, and will utterly perish in their own corruption, and will receive the wages of unrighteousness, as those who count it pleasure to carouse in the daytime. They are spots and blemishes, carousing in their own deceptions *while they feast with you*, having *eyes full of adultery* (breaking the 7<sup>th</sup> commandment) that cannot cease from sin, *enticing unstable souls*. They have a heart trained in *covetous practices* (breaking the 10<sup>th</sup> commandment) and are accursed children. They have *forsaken the right way* and gone astray, following the way of Balaam the son of Beor, who loved the wages of unrighteousness; but he was

rebuked for his iniquity: a dumb donkey speaking with a man's voice restrained the madness of the prophet" (2 P. 2:12-16).

Notice the description of these false brethren. They are in the Church; they eat with members in social activities, but are unconverted and wait for the right moment to "entice unstable souls."

Peter, as an apostle and pastor of the Church, is very concerned that the brethren are tolerating these people and not denouncing their false teachings. He is upset at the harm being done to the "little ones" in the church who do not realize the dangers and warns what will be the end of these false teachers and those who follow them.

He says, "These are wells without water, clouds carried by a tempest, for whom is reserved the blackness of darkness forever. For when they speak great swelling words of emptiness, they allure through the lusts of the flesh, through lewdness, the ones who have actually escaped from those who live in error. While they promise them liberty, they themselves are slaves of corruption; for by whom a person is overcome, by him also he is brought into bondage. For if, after they have escaped the pollutions of the world through the knowledge of the Lord and Savior Jesus Christ, they are again entangled in them and overcome, the latter end is worse for them than the beginning. For it would have been better for them not to have known the way of righteousness, than having known it, and then to turn from *the holy commandment* [God's laws] delivered to them. But it has happened to them according to the true proverb: 'A dog returns to his own vomit,' and 'a sow, having washed, to her wallowing in the mire'" (2 P. 2:17-22). Notice that the punishment will be eternal darkness, which the Bible calls "the second death" (Rev. 20:14-15), when these persons will cease to exist forever.

These false teachers promised them *freedom* from "the *holy commandment* delivered to them" and yet that only takes them back to where they were -- being slaves of sin -- making them backsliders. So our salvation is not assured and we can go back into the world -- just as a dog returns to eat its own vomit! Brethren, let's avoid this at all costs and remain faithful to the end!