

**The Writings of Peter
(The Second Letter)**

- I. Introduction, 1:1-2
- II. The Message of Peter: A Call to Spiritual Growth, 1:3-11
- III. The Authority of Peter: The Means of Spiritual Growth, 1:12-21
 - A. The Passion of Peter, vv. 12-15
 - 1. The intent to remind, vv. 12-13

The word choice of “tabernacle” is interesting. Here it means Peter’s physical existence in a body. The Tabernacle, and later the Temple, was an expression of the presence of God. We are now the indwelling presence of God, a manifestation of God’s glory, by means of the Spirit (I Cor. 6:19, Eph. 2:21).
 - 2. The reason to remind, vv. 14-15

Peter alludes to his emanate death, which appears as an addendum in John’s gospel (John 21:18-19).
 - B. The validity of the reminder, vv. 16-21

The sources of the understanding of the gospel in the earliest churches were two-fold: (1) the memory of the sayings of Jesus, (2) instruction from Him available to the eleven disciples (and later to Paul by revelation), and (3) the Hebrew Scriptures, the words of the prophets that anticipated the coming and ministry of the Messiah Jesus (see John 1:5, 8-9).

The section begins with a reference to humanly devised teachings (“cleverly devised fables”) and ends with “not... an act of human will. When a paragraph begins and ends in the same way (in this case a statement that truth is not of human origins), it is called an inclusion, a literary device and acts as bookends of a single idea.

- 1. The relationship of Peter to Jesus, vv. 16-18
 - a. Fact: an eyewitness of Jesus, v. 16

Peter’s witness is to the divine majesty of Jesus, the transfiguration. I take it that “power and coming of our Lord Jesus Christ” is a reference to His first coming, His earthly proclamation that His origin was heaven itself.
 - b. Meaning: the uniqueness of Jesus, v. 17

The account here is closest to Matthew's version (17:1-8); the major change is the deletion of "Listen to Him." The point is that what Peter explains is attested by what the apostles ("we") saw; it is not an imaginary fable.

To say that Jesus is "the Son of God" is an affirmation of His deity by the Father. The point would be that Jesus is the fulfillment of God's promises to send a redeemer.

- c. Evidence: Multiply witnesses, v. 18
The "we" in the context of Matt. 17 would have been Peter and the sons of Zebedee (James and John). Two apostles are witnesses to Peter's claim.
2. The relationship of Peter to the Hebrew Scriptures, vv. 19-21
 - a. The fact: the unity of the prediction of Jesus and its fulfillment in Jesus, v. 19
The Hebrew Scriptures point to Christ's second coming, but that promise has been underlined, made "more sure," by the transfiguration. "More sure" does not suggest a comparison of value between Peter's witness to Jesus and the Hebrew Scriptures, but the accumulated authority of two witnesses.
 - b. An illustration: the OT an anticipatory book, v. 20
Hebrew prophets did not invent their teachings; their messages came from God. The OT is likened to a lamp illuminating a dark place in comparison to the greater and brighter light that comes with the dawn. The lesser light is the OT Scriptures; the greater light is Jesus who does not merely light a room but enlightens our hearts. The issue is not quality of the OT compared to the new revelation in Jesus; it is in greater clarity.
 - c. The proof, v. 21
Using the metaphor of a boat moved along by the wind, the invisibility recognizable only by the effect of wind in the sail, Peter's point is that the prophets were motivated and invigorated by the actions of God to reveal His message.
 - 1) It's divine origin, v. 21a
The point is that prophetic insight is not a product of human ingenuity or imagination; revelational insight

comes from God. The Hebrew Scriptures find their origin in God's self-disclosure to His people.

2) It's divine superintendence, v. 21b

The method that God employed to convey His insights to us was by overshadowing, controlling, and superintending the prophets in their writings. God sovereignly preserved fallible people from fallibility!

IV. The Caution of Peter: The Hindrance to Spiritual Growth, 2:1-22

If proper input is an essential ingredient to spiritual maturity, it is important that the teaching we receive is not perverted by falsity. Poor information results in stunted consequences through inaccuracy or imbalance. Thus, what we have in this chapter is a stern, sometimes harsh and graphic, warning not to be enamored by the mere flashy, often exciting, presentations that are not only a twisting of Scripture but detrimental to wise living. "That which glitters is not always gold" is an old saying!

A. The fact of false teachers, v. 1a

As there were false prophets in the time of the Hebrew prophets, they can be again expected in our time. There are those in every era that "follow cleverly concocted fables (1:16)" or "stories they have made up (2:3)" that find motivation in self-interest and greed rather than in nourishing and helping other than themselves. Jesus described them as wolves in sheep's attire.

B. The action of false teachers, vv. 1b-3a

1. Their deception, v. 1b

They will act deceptively, in secrecy, and with destructive opinions.

The reference to these false teachers as "bought" of the Lord is a reference to God's general ownership as in the case of all people. These are not deceived and deceiving believers. The context is not redemptive, though a redemptive word is used. When "purchase" has a redemptive connotation, the purchase price occurs (i.e., blood); also, a redemptive title for Jesus is employed, not lordship, an ownership designation. See verse 17 (these are lost people). They are owned of the Lord, but they are not His ambassadors; instead, they will answer for their teachings. They will answer to Him on the Day of Judgment without an advocate.

2. Their behavior, v. 2-3a

Jesus told us that it is not the leaves on the tree that tells us that the tree is healthy, but the fruit it produces. You may not detect the

error of their teaching, but you can by their lifestyles! Tragically, false teachers are slick in deportment and often seem to have enough accurate teaching to confuse listeners with poisonous arrows dipped in honey. The word “heresy” means false opinions or things at variance. The word “greed” suggests extortion!

3. Their fate, vv. 3b-10a

a) Stated, v. 3a

Their end is far more tragic than their superficial appearance. The success of false teachers is not evidence of God’s blessing; it is evidence of His purposes and patience.

b) Illustrated, vv. 4-8

The point of the three examples is that judgment was sure, though in the second and third it was not immediate. In each case, you have rebellion, a rejection of authority for self-gain, leading to exploitation.

1) The case of angels, v. 4

The judgment seems to refer to the angelic rebellion of Lucifer (Ezek. 28:15) before creation. It is likely not a reference to Genesis 6:1-4 (angelic beings do not cohabit [Matt. 22:30]). These fallen angels have been consigned to hell immediately. It seems that both Jude and Peter used the Book of Enoch. The point is that judgment for error is something that God executes.

2) The case of the ancient world, v. 5 (Genesis 6-8)

Peter mentions the flood three times in his letters (1 Pet. 3:20; 2 Pet. 2:5, 3:6). While judgment is inevitable, it is not inescapable. In patience during the construction of the ark, 120 years, God endured wickedness, but a day came when He did not!

3) The case of Sodom and Gomorrah, vv. 6-8 (Genesis 19)

The wickedness of the cities in the Jordan Plain did not go unnoticed by God, but he spared the righteous (Lot and his daughters).

4) The summary, vv. 9-10a

As in the case of Noah and Lot, the Lord protected His own in threatening circumstances, but He extended only justice in judgment to the wicked; in fact, God reserved them for that fate (to personify the justice of His judgments). The angels sinned against God’s authority,

the ancient world ignored a teacher of righteousness, and a group of cities practiced immorality as a virtue.

Thoughts

1. False teachings come in a variety of wrappings, but the substance has certain similarities. False teachers promise things that are not warranted by divine revelation. Their “gospel” is often that God wants you to lead a victorious life, one without stress, pain, and disappointment (instructions for a donation, immediate fulfillment without the pain of growth, the pleasure of God for purchase). The true gospel is about a person who came into a sinful world to create a world without sin by His death for sin, a world where sin will no longer blight human relationships. The true gospel is about forgiveness that is a wellspring of hope that we will someday be set free to love Him as we ought. The true gospel is about a person, not stuff, contentment, not transitory delights, hope, not empty dreams. The false gospel can be spotted; it is man-centered and worldly. It points hearers away from Christ, not to Him.
2. While we live in a sin-cursed world, susceptible to the impact of false teachers that delude and deceive, there is a message for us, they will not succeed. God will not only bring them to judgment; He knows how to rescue us from their judgment. As Noah was delivered from a corrupt culture and Lot from the lore of sinful Sodom and its cultural impact on him, God will deliver us. God will preserve His truth and His people in that truth. While following falsity is serious, it is not final for the children of the Lord. Have you found yourself attracted to false teachings, but God delivered you from its grip?
3. We should daily praise the Lord for His mercies in directing our paths in at least two ways. First, we should praise Him for bringing into all our lives faithful and diligent pastors and teachers who have directed us to Christ and His Word. I am thankful for our pastor and church that provides us a haven where the Bible is faithfully taught and applied to our lives. Second, we should praise Him for keeping false teachers away from us, that their alluring message has fallen on deaf ears and God has led us to see through their false promises based on their distortion of the Bible. May God continue to do that for all of us. I often think of the Puritan’s prayer, “Lord, lead me not into error for you know how hard it is to change my mind.”