

The second epistle of Peter is like the three other “second” epistles in scripture (2Corinthians, 2Thessalonians and 2Timothy). We might add all three of John’s and Jude as well. These epistles are especially about declining conditions of the “last days.” Conditions that arise among God’s people rather than coming from without. There is a unique testimony especially given saints in this age to have, to hold, and to give witness to. Peter’s first epistle speaks to that. (Paul’s and James’ do too.) But early signs of departure had been detected by the apostles and prophets. So they are directed by the Holy Spirit to write to call back, and restore if possible, those that were going astray. They were also intended to slow the decline, while equipping the saints to stand faithful despite the departure already unfolding among them. And they speak of impending judgement. **If these messages were needed in those days how much more we need them today!** The last days began as the apostle’s work was done and they departed this life. Now nearly 2000 years later we seem to be nearing the **end of the last days** and shortly the Lord will return for His own. In these epistles, and especially 2Peter, sharp contrasts are drawn between the walk of believers and that of other religious people. Heed them.

Peter in this second letter writes as he is about to depart leaving, as it were, his last words to the flock he loves. (Both Peter and Paul write this way at the end of their ministry knowing that they will die before the rapture.) First he encourages continued spiritual growth and progress. He reminds us of our **calling and election** and urges that we make this sure to our hearts, for then we have a firm basis for godliness and faithfulness. He refers back to the Transfiguration and the prophets as witnesses to Christ and the glory (and judgement) to be revealed.

Then in chapter two he warns of **false prophets** which were arising. He issues scathing rebukes exposing them for what they are and calls down judgement upon them in a manner reminiscent of the Old Testament prophets. But he reminds us of God’s mercy and power to deliver the righteous from destruction that awaits the false prophets and their followers.

In chapter three he continues this theme and takes us back to the **Deluge** likening the conditions now to those in Noah’s time. **Judgement hangs over mankind today.** The only thing delaying it is the longsuffering of the Lord not being willing that any should perish. Peter then stretches our hearts forward to God’s final judgement of all, including the destruction of the universe as we now know it. Although this is yet more than a thousand years ahead of us (at least three thousand from when Peter wrote), **a thousand years is as but one day with the Lord.** But awaiting the faithful are New Heavens and a New Earth wherein **dwell** righteousness. What grace! Will you be there? God held back His wrath for thousands of years, so you and I could be born and live to enjoy earthly blessings he richly gives all men, though all are sinners. And He has made us to hear the gospel and receive eternal life and the hope of heaven. Knowing this moves us to devote ourselves to Christ and His interests. Grow in grace and in the knowledge of the Lord Jesus Christ.

By Ron Canner, April 6, 2005.

This second letter of Peter is addressed to those of like faith. His first letter was more specifically addressed to scattered Jewish believers displaced from their homeland. Now some time has passed and Peter sees a need to write to all saints, Jews and Gentiles, all of like precious faith.

Acts 15:14 Simeon hath declared how God at the first did visit the Gentiles, to take out of them a people for his name.

He maintains no borders between Jew and Gentile. Rather he combines all saints together in the one precious faith we all have obtained. Faith we have not obtained though our own efforts or merits but though the righteousness of God through our Savior Jesus Christ. He is our righteousness, the Man who died on the cross for us.

The word “faith” can denote the ability **to believe** something (Ephesians 2:7-8) or it can denote **what we believe**. Here the “like precious faith” is the whole of our beliefs, truth which has been revealed to us by God. This is precious indeed! We are not left to observations and speculations to form our own opinions about God. We are given specific truths, a specific body of truth to believe and act upon. Every believer on earth since Peter’s time has had the same scriptures, the same faith to adhere to. Speaking of this faith or that faith denies what Peter teaches here. There is one faith! It is precious! Others say so too.

Ephesians 4:5 One Lord, one faith, one baptism, Jude 3 that ye should earnestly contend for the faith which was once delivered unto the saints.

People have since greatly confused “the faith” by emphasizing parts of the truth at the expense of other parts, ignoring parts of it and even adding fables and traditions to it. Dig into it. Make it your own, all of it, but have no more than what is given in scripture.

Peter greets us with a blessing, calling down grace and peace which are conveyed **in** the knowledge of God our Savior and of Jesus our Lord. Note in verse one we **received** and now possess precious beliefs, the faith, from God. In following verses we learn that though His divine power He has **given** us all things that pertain unto life and godliness, **given** us exceeding great and precious promises, and has **made us to be** partakers of the divine nature. No room for pride or boasting here. He has **given** all to us. But what elation, what delight when we begin to realize what we have been given and begin to live and grow in it.

God is a giving God. He created us, gave His one and only Son to redeem our lost souls, and has made us partakers of His divine nature. Divine nature that moved Him to give His all so He could give us more

than we could ever have dreamed of. The divine nature is encompassed with just one word: LOVE. Beginning with verse 5 Peter sets us forward on our path of spiritual growth culminating in love. With time and diligence our born again souls will develop character that exhibits the divine nature (love) of which we have been made partakers by God’s grace.

All the blessings mentioned in verses 3-5 are given **through** the **knowledge** of God given to the believer. Do you and I know God? He is the One who hath called us **by** His glory and virtue (excellence). It is God’s glory and virtue that initiated the thought and generated the action to bless us with all things that pertain to life and godliness. None of this came from within ourselves, but now both glory and virtue should be seen in our lives.

We have been given life so that we might through godliness be partakers of the divine nature.

1Peter 1:23 Being born again, not of corruptible seed, but of incorruptible, by the word of God, which liveth and abideth for ever

As we are wholly taken up with Him we soon realize we have escaped the corruption that is in the world through lust. All desires and needs of our hearts are fully met and satisfied, leaving no reason to lust after the attractions of the world around us. Attraction that tend toward corruption not virtue.

We are partakers of His divine nature. Are we then divine? No! Sinless? No! But we do share and enjoy the characteristics of God’s very nature.

partaker 2844. *koinonos*, a sharer, i.e. associate: — companion, fellowship, partaker, partner.

And others see Him in us! What a privilege! What a responsibility! As we are entranced with Him we escape practically the corruption of the world.

God takes us, poor lost sinners, members of Adam’s fallen race, makes us saints and sets us apart, restoring us in Christ to a position of dignity in the universe. A dignity in Christ, far beyond that which Adam lost.

He calls us to glory and virtue.

glory 1391 *doxa* dignity, honor, praise, worship.

virtue 703 *arete* manliness (valor), i.e. praise, excellence, intrinsic eminence, moral goodness,

From that basis of life and calling we grow and walk before Him, devoted to Him, as man was intended to from the beginning. The next few verses lead us on in that path of glory and excellence.

Peter has reminded us of the basics of Christian *life and godliness* God has given each believer through the knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ. We each have *like precious faith*. We each have been called to *glory and virtue*. We each have the *great and precious promises*. We've been given all of these things so we can personally be *partakers of the divine nature*. He now exhorts us to **grow** and to make our *calling and election sure*. **Not more sure in God's heart but in our hearts.** Peter refers to the fact that God, in His sovereign love, has *chosen* (elected) each believer out from among the mass of the lost and then He *called* us through the good news of the gospel to be saved and born again. Note that Peter mentions these terms in reverse chronological order. The calling is what he is focusing upon here. God's electing (choosing) us is in view of a specific purpose or calling God has in mind for each believer. This growth is a lifelong process not ending at age 18 or even 70. Yet there is noticeable growth, progress and fruitfulness beginning almost immediately. For example a newborn baby must grow to survive and become a mature man or woman. The youngster adds to his knowledge and different skills daily, growing and delighting parents and siblings. He had nothing to do with choosing his parents, the decision to be conceived and when, his or her gender, genetic heritage, or birth time or place. Once born he makes his calling and election sure through physical, emotional and spiritual growth. Similarly, a newly hired employee must learn and adopt the goals and objectives of his employer, learn the policies and rules of the company, learn his own role in the company, become acquainted with those he works with, etc., in order to be effective. As he works into the job he makes his calling and election sure as a loyal, increasingly productive employee.

So Peter sets before us the progression needed to become mature and fruitful Christians. In the process we continually make our calling and election sure. He encourages us to use **all** diligence, **to get at it, and stick to it.**

These things are to **abound** in us. Half hearted or token efforts won't achieve full growth. Such end up old men or women physically but immature spiritually. Not lost personally but never reaching their full, God given, potential. Peter speaks of them as barren or unfruitful. He predicts the outcome of those who do not tend to the business of growing. They may lapse into blindness no longer seeing realistically both their current situation and the future hope before all believers. They may even forget that they were purged from their old sins. Talk about a guilt trip. Yet this does not mean the person was saved and then lost his salvation due to neglecting the

blessings God gives each new born believer. But he may actually become indistinguishable from an unbeliever to our eyes and to the eyes of the world. His fruitfulness and testimony is gone. So it is with this very real danger in mind that Peter strongly urges we give all diligence to make our calling and election sure. We each confess we have not been as diligent as we could have been and have fallen short of the potential God placed in us and before us. But, no matter what our age, Peter's challenge is still set before us to take to heart. God hasn't changed. Go on with Him to maturity.

In this spiritual growth we begin with faith a gift from God. Next we add to it virtue. The progression expected is multiplication not mere addition. Virtue (moral courage and excellence) puts faith into practice, both in every day life and in life's crises. But spiritual excellence and courage must be according to knowledge. Paul, before he was saved, had boundless virtue and zeal, but he says it was not according to knowledge. Nevertheless we are changed, as we come to know Christ better and better we become more and more like Him. In our knowledge of Christ we exercise temperance (self control). "Knowledge puffs up" Paul said, 1Corinthians 8:1. We live as Jesus lived, in self control. When we live in moderation we need to endure those not exactly like us, yet are like Christ. And we need patient steadfastness or perseverance in the midst of ungodly, worldly influences and attacks. We are to add godliness assuring that in our endurance in the midst of evil and our gracious tolerance of each other we put God first in our thinking and walk. God first so we don't just focus on avoiding wrong or exposing evil but we walk with God through it all. A walk together with others of like precious faith.

2Timothy 2:22b follow righteous, faith, love, peace with those who call on the Lord out a pure (undivided) heart. To godliness we are to add brotherly love (**philadelphia**). Peter emphasized brotherly love in his first letter. It is precious and essential to enjoying the unity of all believers in the Assembly. We carry out the purposes of God in affectionate unity on a very human level. But the believer is carried beyond even genuine human affection as the cement that bonds us together in Christ. We are to add love (**agape**), the glory of the whole mature believer in Christ. All the attributes of a Christian named here are not only crowned with love, but generated and infused throughout by love. Selfless, unassuming, faithful love, God's love acting in our hearts. Love that has been shed abroad in our hearts by the Holy Spirit

Romans 5:1 ¶ Therefore being justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ: 2 By whom also we have access by faith into this grace wherein we stand, and rejoice in hope of the glory of

God. 3 And not only so, but we glory in tribulations also: knowing that tribulation worketh patience; 4 And patience, experience; and experience, hope: 5 And hope maketh not ashamed; because the love of God is shed abroad in our hearts by the Holy Ghost which is given unto us. 6 ¶ For when we were yet without strength, in due time Christ died for the ungodly.

This list in Romans is a complement to the list in 2Peter 2. It describes the shaping and training of the believer by God that accompanies the believer's diligent spiritual growth urged in 2Peter. God has done His part, equipping us with the blessings mentioned plus the power of the indwelling Holy Spirit and the loving, encouraging assistance of godly believers around us. Let us diligently tend to our part. We won't fall if we are doing so. If we don't we will fall. Not that one can be lost once saved but we can still fall and need to be retrieved and confess our sin.

1John 1:8 If we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us. 9 If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness. 10 If we say that we have not sinned, we make him a liar, and his word is not in us.

As we do our part "so an entrance shall be ministered unto you abundantly into the everlasting kingdom of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ." All

believers are part of the Kingdom of God. We are redeemed subjects of the coming King. Peter is not saying we earn our entrance into the kingdom of God. What is set before us here is the **abundance** of entrance granted us when that kingdom is established visibly on the earth. The abundance of entrance ministered to us will differ depending upon our faithfulness. While we are each part of that kingdom we will have differing positions in it. Those positions are awarded us based upon how we conduct our lives and how we avail ourselves of God's equipping blessings. It is in our hands, not that we earn it by our own strength, but though faith we lay hold on all that Peter has told us here and carry it out in the wisdom and strength that only God can give. While what we do for the Lord is out of love and gratitude to Him, He will reward us publically when He appears in glory to reign in the everlasting Kingdom. Long live the King.

The recent funeral of a pope and selection and crowning of a new pope gives but a hint of the ceremony, pomp and glory of the coming coronation of the King of Kings when He takes His Kingdom to reign forever, we with Him. Let us diligently seek to be a credit to Him now and thereby a glory to Him then.

By Ron Canner, April 20, 2005

Peter has reminded us of our new nature and spiritual heritage we received directly in grace from God. Exhorting diligence, he has set us upon our lifetime course in developing spiritual maturity. He has warned of the unfruitful results of lack of diligence in this. He has encouraged us, setting before us a glorious entrance into the Kingdom when the King appears publically to take up His reign. He has promised we will never fall while we are occupied with making our calling and election sure, being in real life what God has made us and called us to be.

Peter pauses to give the reason he is writing. He is getting on in years and will be departing before the Lord returns. He was told this by the Lord himself after He was raised from the dead. Upon restoring Peter to the work to which He had called him He tells him this.

John 21:17b *Jesus saith unto him, Feed my sheep. 18 Verily, verily, I say unto thee, When thou wast young, thou girdedst thyself, and walkedst whither thou wouldest: but when thou shalt be old, thou shalt stretch forth thy hands, and another shall gird thee, and carry thee whither thou wouldest not. 19 This spake he, signifying by what death he should glorify God. And when he had spoken this, he saith unto him, Follow me.*

So Peter knew for the rest of his life he would not be alive for the rapture. It turns out most Christians have gone ahead with Peter, although many alive today might be among those that go to heaven alive as Enoch and Elijah did. But we faithfully nourish and admonish one another, leaving reminders as we grow older, so the younger will carry on faithfully despite the departure and decay amongst Christendom, and the fearsome godlessness of the age.

Peter, Paul, John and Jude each have written reminders, to be there for us to be heeded after they are gone. Peter writes so that we will have **these things** always in remembrance, even after his decease. “**These things!**” Peter refers to “these things” eight times in this letter alone.

Peter speaks of his death as putting off his tabernacle (tent), taking down his tent, breaking up camp and leaving. Paul uses similar expressions,

2Corinthians 5:1 *For we know that if our earthly house of this tabernacle were dissolved, we have a building of God, an house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens. 2 For in this we groan, earnestly desiring to be clothed upon with our house which is from heaven:*

2Timothy 4:6 *For I am now ready to be offered, and the time of my departure is at hand.*

Now Peter presents another reason why he repeatedly reminds us of “these things.” **The glory shines before him!** Not only the glory of heaven but the glorious public appearing of the Man, the Lord Jesus

Christ when He returns to earth itself. It wasn’t some cunningly devised tale. Peter has seen a glimpse of it already. Few had. Jesus had taken three with Him to show them His glory on the mount where He was transfigured before their very eyes. This incident is described in three gospels and referred to by John in his gospel and his epistles. The Lord had told them before they went up the mountain what they would see.

Matthew 16:28 *Verily I say unto you, There be some standing here, which shall not taste of death, till they see the Son of man coming in his kingdom.*

Matthew 17:1-9, Mark 9:1-10, and Luke 9:27-36 describe the transfigurations itself.

John 1:14 *And the Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us, (and we beheld his glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father,) full of grace and truth.*

1John 1:1 ¶ *That which was from the beginning, which we have heard, which we have seen with our eyes, which we have looked upon, and our hands have handled, of the Word of life;*

Skeptics today say the gospels and epistles, the whole New Testament, is merely a cunningly devised tale put together by the disciples of Jesus to perpetuate the religious movement He had started before His untimely death. They do not believe Jesus’ resurrection, ascension or that the events told of in Acts actually occurred. Willing unbelief! This is despite much external supporting evidence, not to mention the supernatural power and endurance of this “movement” started by a motley bunch of simple uneducated fishermen from Galilee. Humanly speaking the only sophisticate among them capable of conceiving and executing such a scheme was Judas Iscariot. But he betrayed his Master and committed suicide. Paul might have been able to do this also, but he was a bitter opponent until after the Christians were a well established factor to be reckoned with in Judea and nearby nations. We will read what Peter says about such skeptics in the next two chapters.

Peter describes what the transfiguration really was. Jesus, an ordinary man in appearance and manner among the population of Judea was more than what He appeared to be on the surface. Of course those who were called by Him or were touched by Him knew better. Those who sat at His feet, such as Mary, knew. Peter himself had acknowledged Him as the Christ the Son of the living God and that before seeing Him transfigured. Matthew 16:16. We read in Philippians 2 the story of Him coming down.

Philippians 2: 5 *Let this mind be in you, which was also in Christ Jesus: 6 Who, being in the form of God, thought it not robbery to be equal with God: 7 But made himself of no reputation, and took upon him the form of a servant, and was made in the likeness of men: 8 And being found in fashion as a man, he*

humbled himself, and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross. 9 Wherefore God also hath highly exalted him, and given him a name which is above every name: 10 That at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, of things in heaven, and things in earth, and things under the earth; 11 And that every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.

What happened on the mount was a revelation of what was veiled within the Man they knew as Jesus of Nazareth. The blinding glory of a Person who God the Father Himself honored and glorified as “My beloved Son in whom I am well pleased.” This was a foretaste of His glorious coming at the end of the age to take

possession of the earth and take up His rightful place as ruler. When we look at the story of the event given in the gospels we note that it was Peter’s impulsive remarks that prompted the Voice from Heaven that he speaks of here. But Peter is not too embarrassed to mention the voice and awesome sight he had seen. It was far greater than any self consciousness he might harbor.

Peter sets before us two witnesses to the glory that lies ahead. The Transfiguration and “a more sure word of prophecy” which he comments upon next.

By Ronald Canner, April 27, 2005

The second of the two witnesses is prophecy. Peter calls it more sure word of prophecy. The first witness, the transfiguration, was brilliant light in the glorious, unveiled face of Jesus Christ. The prophecies presented in the Word of God are light as well and are more sure than even Peter's eye witness of the glory of the Lord Jesus. Light shining in a dark, murky place long before the day dawning and the sun rising. The thought of the day dawning and rising sun reminds us of Malachi who in the last words of the Old Testament forecasts the glorious appearing of the Lord to purify, organize and rule His everlasting kingdom.

Malachi 4:2 *But unto you that fear my name shall the Sun of righteousness arise with healing in his wings;*

Before the dawn and sunrise we often see the morning star (now called the planet Venus) in the dark eastern sky. The brightest object in the night sky other than the moon, it announces the coming dawn. The Lord speaks of Himself as the Morning Star.

Numbers 24:17 *I shall see him, but not now: I shall behold him, but not nigh: there shall come a Star out of Jacob,*

Matthew 2:2 *Saying, Where is he that is born King of the Jews? for we have seen his star in the east, and are come to worship him.*

Revelation 2:25 *But that which ye have already hold fast till I come. 26 And he that overcometh, and keepeth my works unto the end, to him will I give power over the nations: 27 And he shall rule them with a rod of iron; as the vessels of a potter shall they be broken to shivers: even as I received of my Father. 28 And I will give him the morning star.*

22:16 *I Jesus have sent mine angel to testify unto you these things in the churches. I am the root and the offspring of David, and the bright and morning star. 17 And the Spirit and the bride say, Come. And let him that heareth say, Come. And let him that is athirst come. And whosoever will, let him take the water of life freely.*

He speaks of the Rapture preceding the dawn and rising of the Sun of Righteousness prophesied in Malachi.

No Old Testament prophets speak of the Rapture for it was not revealed until the Lord has risen from the dead and ascended to the Father's right hand. Their subject was the destiny and fate of Israel. Yet even so Peter refers to the day star (morning star) that arises in our hearts not to the physical revelation of Christ in His glorious Kingdom. What does that mean? The hope in the believer's heart for the Lord's return for us before He returns publically to conquer and reign. This event includes all believers living at that instant and all who died in the Lord since Abel. This hope brightens, lightens and preserves our hearts, and encourages us to be shining lights in the surrounding darkness Peter is about to speak of. The prophecies and promises of scripture are

the basis for our hope today.

The nature of these prophecies is described here, perhaps more clearly than anywhere else. They were not spoken by the will of man. The Holy Spirit spoke through men. They were holy men who spoke as moved by the Holy Spirit. Not sinless, but devout godly men counted as holy by God because of their faith and attendance to His word and their meekness in confessing promptly their faults and sinful acts.

Who were these men? They are those whose prophecies are recorded in scripture. Moses, Isaiah, Jeremiah, Ezekiel, Daniel and the rest, the authors of the so called minor prophets. They are minor only in that they are generally shorter and more focused than the so called major prophets. The Lord makes no such distinction when speaking of them or quoting them. Prophets whose prophesies are not preserved as separate books include Enoch, Lamech, Noah, Abraham, Jacob, Samuel, David, Elijah, Elisha and others. The Lord said the last and greatest of them was John the Baptist. The Lord Himself was a prophet and is especially presented as such in the Gospel according to Mark, Peter's son in the faith. Then there are the New Testament prophets Paul refers to in Romans 16:26 including Mark, Luke, James, Jude and others as well.

None of these men prophesied his own thing, but what God through the Holy Spirit inspired him to write. These are not mere idle daydreams or "pipe dreams" (opium pipes). They are the result of deeply felt interactions between the prophet and God the Spirit. Each is an authentic part of the whole prophetic word of the scriptures. Peter's statement therefore reminds us of the complex interrelationship of the prophecies contained in scripture. None of them were written independently so they cannot be interpreted alone in isolation from all the others. We must read and study the Word as a whole to properly grasp what it is saying. If we pick and choose some scriptures to the exclusion of others we are in danger of being deceived. Self deceived or deceived by others. For as there were false prophets among the people in Old Testament days there are in Christendom today as well. Some may be genuinely self deceived. But many, for whatever reason, have adopted their own agenda, intentionally ignoring clear scripture passages that clearly contradict their teaching. Note it is "among you" they arise. He is not speaking of heathen religions infesting the world outside of Christendom. No, it is arising from within. Paul warns of this as well. Speaking to the Ephesian elders representing one of the most blessed and godly assemblies on record he says:

Acts 20:27 *For I have not shunned to declare unto you all the counsel of God. 28 Take heed therefore unto yourselves, and to all the flock, over the which*

the Holy Ghost hath made you overseers, to feed the church of God, which he hath purchased with his own blood. 29 For I know this, that after my departing shall grievous wolves enter in among you, not sparing the flock. 30 Also of your own selves shall men arise, speaking perverse things, to draw away disciples after them. 31 Therefore watch, and remember, that by the space of three years I ceased not to warn every one night and day with tears.

Peter does not mince words. We would not expect a man like Peter to mince words and he doesn't. He couldn't be any more clear or more specific.

- These are false prophets, Grk. *pseudo prophetes*.
- They are described as false, (spurious) teachers.
- They arise from within Christian circles.
- Their activities are secret, surreptitiously sneaking in error along side the truth.
- They will bring in destructive heresies, surrounding themselves with a following, forming **sects** around certain beliefs, not the whole truth of the Bible.
- They will even go so far as to deny the Lord that bought them. What does that mean? He purchased and paid for all mankind (as well as the whole earth and each of the nations in it) paying the price of His blood. All are now responsible to Him, not only as Creator, but as Owner. They are all His, to dispose of however He pleases. He has graciously offered redemption freely to all. If they refuse His merciful offer of redemption they will die in their sins and perish to an eternity without Christ. If they repent and accept His shed blood as the price of their redemption they are His and can never be judged or lost.
- Their ways are described as “pernicious,” destructive.
- Many** professing Christians will follow them, whose lives and thinking will cause the way of truth of the scriptures to be blasphemed. What is taught does not have the power of the inspired word of God and the Holy Spirit. This “Christianity” will simply be ridiculed by unbelieving rationalists. **They** easily see through the meaningless ritual and nebulous teaching put forward by many as representing Christianity on earth. Christ is derided. Proof is in the news stories and articles nowadays.
- They will use “feigned words,” false, molded,

deceptive, well-turned words, like the pitch of an unscrupulous sales person.

–The results of their work will be **destruction**: their own destruction will be **swift, sudden** (when it finally occurs), their judgement, while delayed, has been **prepared and ready** for ages awaiting any who will not repent but go on in arrogant, prideful rebellion, like Satan, their damnation (judgement) “slumbereth not.” The “delay” is not because the executioner has nodded off. It is **scheduled and sure**.

–They will make merchandise of the saints whom they deceive. They will get rich and powerful as a result of their evil work, at the expense of those they have duped.

Can you think of any like this in the world today?

Have we ever had anyone like that attempt to work in our local assembly? Thankfully, I can't think of any. Lord, save us from that! Over the years I have occasionally seen believers who, when their personal views* are not accepted by those watching the flock, “go underground.” They seek to privately spread their views among some who seem more receptive (vulnerable?). This tends to be divisive. Don't do that. Keep your views out in the open. We desperately need one another's check on each other. The Lord has set each of us in local assemblies for a reason.

1Corinthians 1:10 Now I beseech you, brethren, by the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that ye all speak the same thing, and that there be no divisions among you; but that ye be perfectly joined together in the same mind and in the same judgment. {divisions: Gr. schisms}

Philippians 3:16 Nevertheless, whereto we have already attained, let us walk by the same rule, let us mind the same thing.

Don't thwart the Lord's working in us through one another. Sharpen one another.

Proverbs 27:17 Iron sharpeneth iron; so a man sharpeneth the countenance of his friend.

By Ronald Canner, May 4, 2005.

* Even when these views were not crucial to fundamental Christian faith, **the act** was heretical, divisive in spirit.

Peter has made the point that sure and permanent punishment awaits false prophets arising among the Christian profession on earth. It will be sudden, swift and is sure. To back up his warning he appeals to three examples where God has taken positive action to judge certain beings while preserving His own. The three are:

- angels that sinned,
- the ungodly destroyed by the worldwide flood in Noah's time,
- the cities, Sodom and Gomorrah, destroyed by fire and brimstone.

In each case the righteous were spared. God's judgement is **discriminating**. In the case of human beings, **warning** is given and **space** is given for repentance. (We aren't told that space was given the angels to repent.) As to humans, God is longsuffering not willing any should perish, as Peter states in the next chapter.

The angels who rebelled and sinned have been put out of circulation permanently, not only being locked up and confined but bound. They are cast down into the deepest pit, here called Tartarus in the Greek. (The mythology of the Greeks tell of fallen gods being confined in Tartarus.) This is the only use of this word in the Bible. It appears to be a **separate** and **more severe** place or condition than the place (hades) where lost souls are confined while awaiting the final judgement. (Stories and cartoons showing Satan and demons running loose in hades or hell and tormenting humans there are totally false and deceptive.) Both Tartarus and Hades are most unpleasant, as the Lord tells us in Luke 16:24-26, a place of torment even though not the Lake of Fire awaiting them. They are **reserved** unto judgment, before the Great White Throne, Jude 6; Revelation 20. Believers who have died do not even see either of these places, but are immediately in Paradise, Luke 23:43.

There is much speculation about what these rebel angels actually did and where and when. Many commentators agree these angels had children by women before the Flood. Jude seems to imply this as well, even though the Lord states that in heaven we will not marry or give in marriage but be like the angels in heaven. Satisfying curiosity to know what really happened is not God's purpose at this time and this is not particularly edifying to dwell upon. We have been told what we need to know, that sin **will be judged!**

God has a testimony among us humans today as He did in the days of Noah and the days of Lot. He gives plenty of warning prior to destruction. Noah **walked with God** and was a **preacher of righteousness** while building the ark, about 120 years.

Hebrews 11:7 By faith Noah, being warned of God of things not seen as yet, moved with fear, prepared an ark to the saving of his house; by the which he condemned the world, and became heir of the righteousness which is by

faith.

1Peter 3:20 Which sometime were disobedient, when once the longsuffering of God waited in the days of Noah, while the ark was a preparing, wherein few, that is, eight souls were saved by water.

Yet only his immediate family had faith to enter the safety of the ark. He is spoken of as the eighth, probably as the eighth and last through the door, before the Lord shut it. Christ the Door of salvation is still open today to those still in their sins. Enter while you may.

Lot is characterized as having a **righteous soul**. Though truly a child of God he wasn't walking with God or preaching righteousness as had Noah. Instead, His soul was vexed at the unrighteousness surrounding him daily. (**Vexed:** tortured, pained, toiling, tormented, tossed, distressed, oppressed, worn out.) When he and Abraham separated, Lot didn't have to go live in the green plains of the Jordan near Sodom, he chose to. Soon he moved closer and eventually became not only a citizen but was sitting in the gate (an official, judge and elder). He was vexed but unable to effect any changes there for the better even though participating in the local government. We need to learn from his experience. Avoid world bordering and decline to be actively involved in the affairs of the world. When Lot finally tried to warn his relatives of impending destruction they thought he was joking. He was so much part of Sodom he couldn't witness against it, even to those who knew him best. In John 17 the Lord prays for us that we be kept from the evil in the world (v.15). He prays that we be sanctified as He is (v.17). We are to be as separate from the world in spirit as Christ is physically right now in heaven.

God is able to save His own from judgement and He will. He even sent angels to rescue Lot despite his lack of faithfulness. He was so entrenched in that evil place he had to be dragged away by angels to safety. He left Sodom with just three family members, and even then his wife looked behind and perished. His own daughters, raised in Sodom, seduced him and their descendants, Moab and Ammon, have harassed Israel for centuries. May our path and legacy be like Abraham's not Lot's.

God consigns to judgement all who choose to remain evil. He sent angels to rescue Lot but He will personally return for us. In Matthew 13 Jesus speaks of angels being sent to gather men for that judgement at the end of the age. But the Lord Himself will personally come for us, accompanied by an honor guard of angels, 1Thessalonians 4. His heart yearns for His bride.

Peter says the chief of the unjust destined for judgement are the those who:

- walk after the flesh in the lust of uncleanness. They have a longing especially for what is forbidden (concupiscence, desire).
- those who despise government. They do not want to be

controlled and want to do their own thing without restraint.

So what is new? These two characteristics of the last days are closely tied together. They are selfishness and pride at work. This is so rampant today in the world that we scarcely notice it around us. It vexes us. But Peter is speaking of the Christian Profession. We hear supposed Christian men and women rail publically against government leaders. While they may be the “basest of men,” Daniel 4:17, yet they are the ones suiting God’s purposes. He has established and given them authority and rule over the nation, state, county or city we happen to live in. In his first letter Peter has called upon us to honor the king, etc., 2:11-17. Note also Paul’s statements in Romans 13. Respect for authority begins with children being taught to respect, honor and obey their parents, Ephesians 6:1-3. If we will not stoop to obey our parents or the other governments God set over us, how will we stoop to honor and obey God Himself? This prideful, selfish, anti-authority attitude is natural to man’s fallen nature. They may arise in any of our souls if we are not diligently feeding upon the Word daily and growing in grace and in the knowledge of the Lord Jesus Christ.

I have heard “Christian” preachers railing against the devil. They boldly “rebuke” the devil, apparently seeking to display Jesus’ authority over him for purposes of achieving some miraculous objectives before their audience. Jesus hasn’t authorized us to do that. Jude cites

an instance where Michael the archangel didn’t dare do that. *Jude 1:9 Yet Michael the archangel, when contending with the devil he disputed about the body of Moses, durst not bring against him a railing accusation, but said, The Lord rebuke thee.*

When Satan was resisting the Angel of Jehovah, the Angel of Jehovah does not personally rebuke him but says: “Jehovah rebuke thee Satan,” The Angel of Jehovah was God the Son in angelic form. He invokes His own Name, Jehovah, to rebuke the wily created dignity resisting Him.

Zechariah 3:1 And he shewed me Joshua the high priest standing before the Angel of Jehovah, and Satan standing at his right hand to resist him. 2 And Jehovah said unto Satan, Jehovah rebuke thee, O Satan! (JND)

Jesus Himself never railed (spoke abusively) against the devil or any demon, even when rebuking them. Presumptuous railing accusations against the devil and other dignities characterize ungodly men. We are not even allowed to rail against “equals,” other humans. Those who dare to verbally abuse or accuse other men are counted as wicked, 1Corinthians 5:11; 6:10. Always respect the created dignity of other creatures whether superior, equal or inferior to man, and no matter how wicked they may be. We each must beware of indulging in a prideful attitude, reflecting a prideful heart.

By Ronald Canner, May 25, 2005

only do the same, but have pleasure in them that do them.

Sadly this history has repeated itself generation to generation, civilization upon civilization, and still men don't learn.

Peter points up several things that distinguish these degenerates from real Christians. Some statements describe what they do. Others (here marked with a *) what they are. He also declares their doom. They are allowed to live whatever life span God gives them in which to repent. But those who will not are doomed.

- They speak evil of the things that they understand not; and shall utterly perish in their own corruption; and shall receive the reward of unrighteousness,
- They count it pleasure to riot in the day time. Most evil activities occur in the dark. Men love darkness rather than light, John 3:19; Romans 13:13; 1Corinthians 11:20-21; Philippians 3:19; Jude 1:12. But these flaunt their evil ways out in the open without shame. For example, note the Rainbow Sash's in the news these days.
- *They are “spots” and “blemishes,” Christ offered Himself without spot or blemish, 1Peter 1:19. His Bride, the Assembly, will be without spot or blemish as well, Ephesians 5:27.
- They sport themselves with their own deceivings while they feast with believers. These are unashamed to publically behave unrighteously while remaining among God's people and even seek leadership positions there. Peter exposes these so the believers will cease to allow this free association. They have eyes full of adultery, and that cannot cease from sin; Matthew 5:28-29. Spiritual adultery involves dividing one's heart between another god and the God that gave His one and only Son. We are to call upon Him with an undivided heart, 2Timothy 2:22.
- They beguile unstable (vacillating) souls, James 1:5-8; 4:8.
- They have exercised a heart with covetous practices; indulging themselves in whatever attracts their heart desire,
- *They are cursed children, still in their sins.

Galatians 3:10 Cursed is every one that continueth not in all things which are written in the book of the law to do them.

3:13 Christ hath redeemed us from the curse of the law, being made a curse for us:

- They have forsaken the right way and are gone astray,

Isaiah 53:6 Isa 53:6 All we like sheep have gone astray; we have turned every one to his own way; and the LORD hath laid on him the iniquity of us all.

- They follow the way of Balaam, the son of Bosor, who loved the wages of unrighteousness; But was

Peter continues to describe presumptuous men among the Christian profession. We are not to be surprised. We meet them everywhere and in every age, sometimes in the mirror.

We learn by studying the Lord Jesus' words, and the words of the apostle like Peter and Paul, what the limits are surrounding appropriate speech for a believer. We are mere fallen men descended from Adam. He lost the dominant position given him by God when he submitted to Satan in the garden. But we are now Christian men and women brought into the dignity of a new race headed by the Second Man, Jesus Christ. (For instance, in 1Corintians 11 we learned one way to quietly acknowledge that restored dignity though our hair length and head coverings.) As we have seen, abusive language or actions are never appropriate even against the most vile and malicious creatures. Peter's language here is among the strongest in scripture. He exposes and rebukes the wicked persons who presume to rise up among God's people and usurp places of dignity and authority not theirs. They choose to live only to fulfill the selfish lusts of their wicked hearts. They strongly and vocally champion their evil ways as normal and desirable. They defend the most gross evil acts as customary. **But Peter calls it as he sees it, yes, as God sees it.** Today the news media of the world give adequate witness to the corrupt reasoning and vile acts of some claiming to be Christian. Peter's prophetic prediction was true.

Men in Christian circles are spoken of “as natural brute beasts made to be taken and destroyed.” They have spiritually regressed to a lower life form, that of an animal. Popular evolution philosophy today holds that man is merely a sophisticated beast evolved naturally from “lower forms.” All humans are said to be the mere products of evolution and “natural selection.” Judging from the beast-like attitudes and behavior some degraded people exhibit men may be somewhat justified in reaching that conclusion. The thinking of the Animal Rights folks is consistent with the erroneous philosophy of evolution. On the other hand Humane Societies by their very name presume human dignity and authority higher than the animals they are dedicated to protect and treat “humanely.” Humans, certainly Christians, shouldn't be inhumane to one another or beasts. But God says mankind has departed from the original created position at the head of Creation above all mere animals. Step by step some have descended (“devolved”) into beast-like creatures and worse, beings without feeling lower than the beasts. Paul, in Romans chapter 1, deftly outlines this historical regression from unthankful beings to those with a reprobate (debased, depraved, worthless) mind. Summing up Paul says,

Romans 1:32 Who knowing the judgment of God, that they which commit such things are worthy of death, not

rebuked for his iniquity: the dumb ass speaking with man's voice forbad the madness of the prophet. This is one of several extraordinary incidents Peter cites from scripture. He has no doubts or hesitation to believe that they really happened to real people, in real places, on real occasions. Balaam's deep down problem was pride. He wasn't accustomed to being overridden by anyone, even God. If he couldn't succeed in cursing Israel he would defeat them through immorality, not because he hated them but because he was hired to bring about their downfall.

- *These are wells without water, preachers without spiritual refreshment though advertising to be a source.
- *These are clouds that are carried with a tempest; preachers or sects with a promise of relief for spiritual drought but having nothing to give but chilling, buffeting wind.
- To whom the mist of darkness is reserved for ever, doom in eternal gloom, not only absence of light but an impenetrable unrelieved depression of soul.

What is Peter's purpose in writing these strong condemnations of false prophets and skeptics (ch.3) in Christendom and the secular world?

First we are alerted to what is to come so we will not be taken in by:

- the false prophets
who, among other things, advocate tolerance at the expense of faithfulness;
- secular theories,
such as evolution.

Second, he reassures us God is in control and hasn't changed.

Third, he affirms that these will be righteously judged in God's own time. Therefore we should not attempt to take judgement into our own hands and seek to punish or hurt these false prophets or attempt to have them punished by the civil authorities. God will deal with them in due time. On the other hand, if they commit crimes they should be reported to the authorities.

Fourth, by exposing these false prophets Peter clearly intends that true believers should not continue to fellowship in any way with such imposters. They are intent upon destruction of the faith, for whatever reason. If God has reserved them for judgement, we are to also. We must take every opportunity to witness to them of their sin and their need for the Savior in view of the judgement to come. But we should not find ourselves linked with them in any way. We join the Lord in reserving them for judgement and coming out from among them and not touching the unclean thing, 2Corinthians 6:14-7:1.

By Ron Canner, June 1, 2005

“Natural brute beasts”

From Romans 5:12 some believers hold that death came upon all animals because of the fall of Adam. They reason that there could have been no “gap” between Genesis 1:1 and Genesis 1:2 in which large populations of creatures could have lived and thrived and died before Adam. They say the fossil and bone remains cannot reflect earlier ages in the earth before the creation of Adam, because there was no death until Adam sinned. They could be right!

On the other hand 2Peter 2:12 seems to indicate death of a “brute beast” is not counted the same as death of a human being. Other scriptures seem to support this thought. The profusion of animal sacrifices required by God, beginning with those necessary to clothe Adam and Eve, indicates the death of an animal, while significant, is less important than that of a human. In contrast, even today God totally obliterates nations that practice human sacrifice. Use of Romans 5:12 to infer that animals couldn't have lived and died leaving fossil remains in ages prior to Genesis 1:2 may not be justified.

Someday we will know.

There are many zealous religious persons in the “Christian world” today. Yet, sadly, many are not preaching Christ and Him crucified, 1Corinthians 1:23. Some promise liberty from poverty both temporal and spiritual. Yet they themselves are servants, servants of corruption. Some unsaved, well meaning perhaps, are making a career of helping the unfortunate, but misleading them regarding their eternal destiny. Some promote liberty to realize one’s full potential. Some preach “do what you please so that grace may abound,” Romans 6:1. Far be the thought. Some peddle the word of God as a commodity to enrich themselves or to gain a following, 2Corinthians 2:17, (NASV NKJ, JND). But Jesus says:

John 8:31 Then said Jesus to those Jews which believed on him, If ye continue in my word, then are ye my disciples indeed; 32 And ye shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free.

Some promise wealth if the listener will just send them money. The victims bring loss upon themselves through wanton lust for gain.

1Timothy 6:6 Godliness with contentment is great gain... 8 Be content with such things as ye have.

Some promise healing if the listener will just send them money. Their victims only bring themselves greater pain through their impatience with the chastening hand of God. Some souls get religion, seeking to reform themselves perhaps after some terrible experience that had befallen them. Learning about the Lord Jesus, as a result may actually begin to live cleaner lives, perhaps even using Him as their example. But they have barely escaped from those who live in error only to be tempted away by another smiling deceiver drawing them back into their old crowd and old ways.

But even born again believers can’t deliver a godly life through personal strength and resolve. Every true born again believer experiences what Paul experienced when he attempted to live godly in his own strength unless he reads and heeds Romans chapters 7 and 8. Chapter 7 graphically documents this experience and the desperate cry of frustration for deliverance from one’s own indwelling sin. Chapter 8 gives the solution. Those who are not born again, but have become religious for what ever reason, will experience the futility of an unregenerate soul trying to adhere to some prescribed religious principles, avoiding evil deeds and doing good. But if they do not cast themselves upon the Lord for saving grace, confessing their incurable sinfulness, they remain in their sins. Unable to sustain their ambitious resolve to be faithful to their conscience or the religion they have selected they may apostatize, abandoning it all. Unable to restrain the flesh that is in them, much less overcome the bad habits deeply ingrained by past misdeeds, they fall into a worse state than before. They

had been temporarily changed in outward appearances but they remained unsaved, unchanged, unclean inside. Mere reformation falls short. Instead of being born again and becoming a **sheep** under the tender protective care of the Good Shepherd they remain, with unrenewed hearts, in their natural in-born sinful condition. They easily return to their old ways like a washed **sow** finding cooling relief from the heat (threat of coming judgement) and protection from pests (pesky reminders from a defiled and hardening conscience) by wallowing in the mud (self pity). They first rejected the sinful uncleanness in which they had been indulging themselves, like **dogs** who carelessly eat anything they find no matter how awful it smells and later vomit it up. Yet when they find nothing better to indulge in, they return to what they rejected. It smells even worse, but they gobble it down again. Things ordinarily repulsive to upright persons easily pass the “smell test” of a perverted person whose conscience is seared.

Timothy 4:1 Now the Spirit speaketh expressly, that in the latter times some shall depart from the faith, giving heed to seducing spirits, and doctrines of devils; 2 Speaking lies in hypocrisy; having their conscience seared with a hot iron;

Drugs, alcohol, gambling, anger, sexual immorality, shoplifting, compulsive behaviors of all kinds, self-destructive adventurism, whatever vice or habit that had captured them before calls them back. See Romans 1:29-32; 1Corinthians 6:9-10; Galatians 5:19-21.

Peter says they would have been **better off** never having the religious experience they had. Why? For one thing they have now become disillusioned about religion and God. They attribute **their failure** to something lacking in God rather than rightly blaming their own sinful nature and the deceptive worldly religion that originally captivated them by its appeal to their lusts. They have less chance of being eternally saved now than before. Satan has duped another soul through his human agents (dupes themselves). They are members of any number of religious systems, thriving under the god of this world.

2Corinthians 4:4 In whom the god of this world hath blinded the minds of them which believe not, lest the light of the glorious gospel of Christ, who is the image of God, should shine unto them.

Religions appeal to man’s flesh and pride. Paul calls these systematized evil.

Ephesians 4:13 Till we all come in the unity of the faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of God, unto a perfect man, unto the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ: 14 That we henceforth be no more children, tossed to and fro, and carried about with every wind of doctrine, by the sleight of men, and cunning craftiness, whereby they lie in wait to deceive;

The Corinthians were drawn away by entertaining spiritual manifestations, 1Corinthians 14. Some are attracted by inspiring rituals, others by a challenging list of daunting commandments by which to prove themselves.

1Timothy 4:3 Forbidding to marry, and commanding to abstain from meats, which God hath created to be received with thanksgiving of them which believe and know the truth. 4 For every creature of God is good, and nothing to be refused, if it be received with thanksgiving: 5 For it is sanctified by the word of God and prayer.

Each of these worldly forms of religious service gratify the flesh. But the truly born again believer can discern this by the Spirit dwelling in him and be delivered by His power from their alluring call. Peter has, by the Spirit, given the alert here in writing which cannot be ignored. Don't do anything or allow anything that will distract a concerned seeking soul from the only way of salvation, Christ crucified. Don't do anything that will quench the Spirit or add man's arrangements or traditions to Spirit led worship, individual or collective.

The Lord says Judas would have been **better off** if he had never been born, Matthew 26:24. Didn't Judas experience a greater privilege than perhaps any other man who perished in his sins? He was personally befriended and discipled by the Son of God and lived and walked by Him, enjoying His favor for three years. At the end He was offered the choicest morsel of the supper. Dare anyone say God didn't give him a fair chance? Did anyone harden his heart more against such repeated appeals of mercy and grace? Couldn't God override such a stubborn will? He could! And has! After all, no one would be saved if He didn't! Not me! Not you! Why then does God allow certain people to be born and live adult lives only to die in their sins, eternally lost? Paul tells us God endured Pharaoh's wicked behavior in order to demonstrate to the world that Jehovah is in charge, Romans 9:14-22. Simply put, **God is Sovereign** and has the right and power to do what He pleases. He is

righteous in all, Genesis 18:25. And more importantly, God is love! Always! Whatever life span He allows one to continue on unsaved reflects His mercy and is **longsuffering** to us-ward, not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance, 2Peter 3:9. What if God by His **goodness** seeks to lead men to repentance, Romans 2:4? Men enjoy His goodness and mercies daily, Acts 14:17, yet refuse to be thankful, Romans 1:21, much less repent. What if He has given the Son of His love to save sinners, John 3:16; Colossians 1:13? What if He persists seeking to save, Luke 19:10? Persists, long after any human patience would be exhausted in frustration, offering this or that poor lost soul opportunity after opportunity to bow, kneel, repent and accept His saving grace? What if He offers this mercy to every lost soul? Was He unrighteous to send Pharaoh to his death and eternal punishment after relenting and removing a plague ten times? He gave him more than ten opportunities to repent, opportunities squandered by the prideful, unbreakable heart that only hardened when given mercy. Didn't God know the ultimate outcome? Yet can anyone say He didn't give Pharaoh a fair chance? Did God enjoy enduring Pharaoh's rebellion and multiple refusals to repent? No. Does God enjoy offering multiple opportunities displaying His mercy and grace to all? Yes. A c t s 17:30 *God ...commandeth all men every where to repent.* See Acts 17:24-31. Is He glorified by this attitude? Do men and angels come to know His character better because of His longsuffering? Do they not detect glimmers of what is behind His stern, yet merciful, treatment of Pharaoh? Love? Isn't He glorious? Awesome, glorious LOVE. Yet people, like sows, return content to their wallow and like dogs return to their vomit, LOST.

By Ron Canner, June 8, 2005

Here Peter pauses and introduces this second epistle he is writing, even though he has already written more than half of it. It is as if he was so eager to get to his message he didn't immediately take time to formally introduce the epistle. Indeed in the first two chapters he has made a number of important points warning, preparing and encouraging the saints regarding the last days already coming upon them.

He has outlined the expected spiritual growth and development of a disciple from the initial faith of a newborn believer to a mature, godly, loving saint fully confident of his calling and election. He has presented testimony of the glory of the future appearing of the Lord Jesus Christ as seen in the transfiguration he had personally witnessed as a disciple. He also calls to attention the numerous rich prophesies presented in the Old Testament authored by different Spirit led men at different times and places but which taken all together give a comprehensive picture of events. While many have already been fulfilled many remain yet to be accomplished in God's own time and wisdom.

Given these wonderful resources the believer is well equipped to courageously walk safely through the seeming chaos that has encompassed Christendom since Peter wrote. The Holy Spirit left us with plenty of warnings and much encouragement especially in later epistles of Paul, John, Peter and Jude. Too many believers ignore these warnings and simply accept conditions in Christendom today as normal. To others, the reality that such conditions exist today is profoundly disheartening. Unless viewed in the light of scripture these times can cause great discouragement and even despair that God has lost control. Peter has assured us God is indeed in control despite the great welling up of religious humanism monopolizing the scene today. Peter has accurately predicted this. Sad to say, without much thought, one can today name names of people and groups who fit well into the graphic descriptions in Chapter 2. People who are lost yet instead of outright apostasy from Christendom they prefer to remain to attempt to destroy or desecrate that which they themselves will not accept. Peter has shown that these are reserved for judgement yet to come, and that the faithful, such as Noah or even Lot, will be preserved and enjoy eternal life. Clearly, to have any meaning at all, these warning should result in a separation between faithful believers and those recognized by Peter to be reserved for judgement.

Peter now continues with the warnings begun in chapter 2 exposing a somewhat different breed of spiritual enemy, the skeptic. Up to here we have been looking at religious impostors taking eminent roles in Christendom, drawing unwitting souls after them to doom. The skeptics of chapter 3 are aware of the warnings of impending judgement. Therefore they attempt to deflect the

threatened doom through denial, scoffing at it. The old "head in the sand" routine. Don't let them fool you.

Psalm 1:1 *Blessed is the man that walketh not in the counsel of the ungodly, nor standeth in the way of sinners, nor sitteth in the seat of the scornful.*

They give scientific "theories" more credence than the inspired word of God.* Peter predicted such arrogance in verse 4. The skeptics like to take refuge in a fancied stable uniformity of geologic conditions over time thereby dismissing a precedent for any universal judgement of the world they live in. But there is precedent! The Flood! The worldwide Deluge of Noah's time. Much effort is spent to debunk this annoying fact as it undermines their sense of well being, and rightly so. But there is no doubt in scriptures of the reality of the worldwide flood covering the mountains. Moses, Genesis 6-9 Job, David, Solomon, Proverbs 8:28-29; Isaiah 54:9; Ezekiel 14:14,20; Hebrews 11:7; all speak of it, not to mention Jesus Himself, Matthew 24:28 & Luke 17:26-27. And Peter refers to it more than most, 1Peter 3:20; 2Peter 2:5; and here in 2Peter 3. He gives a perspective and details perhaps not obvious in other accounts. The earth is portrayed as standing in the water and out of it. What does that mean? Science has determined that if the exposed land, mountains and all, sank again into the sea the ocean is deep enough to completely cover the land. Peter knew this from the scriptures long before men plumbed the depth of the oceans and discovered this.

Proverbs 8:29 *When he gave to the sea his decree, that the waters should not pass his commandment: when he appointed the foundations of the earth:*

See also Genesis 1:9-10; Job 38:8-11; Psalm 33:6-7; 104:6-9; Jeremiah 5:22. Men have used these scriptures to claim the flood in Noah's time couldn't have been universal because God had confined the seas. But Peter, by the Spirit reveals that God made an exception and caused it to overflow the whole earth causing it to perish. He is still in control.

This was not a mere local flood. But I have heard scoffers deride Noah for his selfishness in not allowing his neighbors aboard his boat when the waters rose. No. Let's get this right! His neighbors refused his persistent pleading to come aboard his ark and escape. Had they tired of one hundred twenty years of his pleading? If this was a mere local flood why wouldn't God just warn Noah to move any endangered animals to higher ground. The truth is there was no higher ground that wasn't violently submerged. There is:

- Scientifically well documented anthropological witness of legends world wide of a worldwide Flood and the Ark story;
- Worldwide scientific geological evidence of miles deep deposits of sediments, fossils, and bones that cannot be ignored by any.

Yet they persist in their unbelief. Recently scientists discovered deeply submerged evidence of human occupation of what is now the seabed of the Black Sea. Apparently this basin was once occupied as dry land although far below present sea level. The Mediterranean Sea is said to have broken through to catastrophically drown this basin to form what is now the Black Sea. Some even speculate the Mediterranean itself was formed the same way, by the Atlantic Ocean breaking through at what is now the strait of Gibraltar. While these huge events probably actually took place they still would not account for the worldwide distribution of flood legends or for the need of an ark to rescue representatives of every animal “kind”. One hundred and twenty years warning was time enough for those who heard and believed to migrate away from the danger.

These skeptics are said to hold that all things remaining the same since the “creation.” Many skeptics today do not even believe in a creation, at least not one created at the command of a Creator God. The Greek word translated here is consistently translated “creation” in the NT where, from the perspective of the Spirit, an original act of the Creator is in view, whether the original physical creation of the earth or new creation of a born again person. Even though the skeptics did not necessarily accept the existence of a Creator, Peter accurately presents the foolishness of their ungodly position.

Evolutionists now believe that the early earth was bombarded by destructive meteorites and asteroids for millions of years and that these prepared it to accommodate the introduction of life. They say the building blocks of life arrived with these objects from space and evolved into what we see today. The “fossil

evidence” and geologic evidence both demand episodes of great and rapid change interrupting the slow, gradual evolution uniformitarianism once envisioned. They have called it “punctuated equilibrium.” They now speculate about the apparent sudden, catastrophic mass extinction of dinosaurs, and other life forms from time to time, over periods of millions of years. (They are inexorably getting closer to the truth, which is inevitable if they maintain their integrity as scientists.) Hence the public’s fascination today with the possibility of a comet impacting somewhere, destroying civilization and life as we know it on earth. So educated mankind is now ambivalent about impending doom. Recognizing the natural dangers of impacts from outer space they fear this, and even talk of developing technology to detect and ward off such threats. They accept the possibility of world wide catastrophes in ages past and years ahead. But they steadfastly deny the universally destructive Deluge in Noah’s time and reject the clear warning of impending worldwide judgement from the hand of their Creator. Much less do they expect it from the meek and gentle Jesus, God’s Son whom they boldly crucified. So they foolishly continue to spurn the freely offered Way of escape as their predecessors did in both Noah’s day and Lot’s day. The Way of the Cross! Yet their impending judgement is sure, it will be swift, it will be universal, and it will be by fire this time, not water.

We’re going to the mansions! Climb aboard, before He comes and it is too late and you perish.

By Ron Canner, June 22, 2005

*Yet these “facts” are not stable. For instance, the theory of “uniformitarianism” which was widely accepted during the nineteenth and twentieth centuries is now being modified.

Earth already has had baptism by water, its next baptism will be by fire. It is being held in reserve for that just as it was in Noah's time before the Deluge. That judgement was scheduled, sure, and actually took place as warned. Those who perished then have no excuse. Those who will perish in the fire in the Day of the Lord have no excuse either. They have had adequate warning, multiple offers of grace and forgiveness, plenty of advance harbingers of the coming doom (the recent tsunami in the Indian Ocean for one, etc.). The sceptics that refuse now to acknowledge their responsibility to their Creator will do so when they stand before Him at the Great White Throne. The One who is the Creator and Sustainer of the universe and of all life is the only One who has the right to judge it and to destroy it.

The mockers do not know that "one day is with the Lord as a thousand years, and a thousand years as one day." Psalm 90:4 *For a thousand years in thy sight are but as yesterday when it is past, and as a watch in the night*

And Peter admonishes us as well: "But, beloved, be not ignorant of this one thing." Don't lose heart! Don't faint while waiting! The Lord is not slack concerning His promises. No! Far to the contrary, He is longsuffering, **not willing** that **any** should perish. Some people complain, wrongly accusing God of predestining some to hell. No, He is not willing that any should perish. **BUT!** But that **all** should come to repentance. Repentance! That is the key. Humble repentance. He offers all the opportunity to repent. Not all take it. Few take it. In fact none would take it unless He sweetly forced some to. Some whom He sovereignly elects (chooses) for reasons known only to Himself. Yet doing so in totally awesome and profound mercy and grace. But none can say they deserved to be saved. None can say they didn't deserve to perish. None can say they didn't have a chance.

He has delayed judgement almost two thousand years since the cross. Delayed it so that you and I could hear the gospel faithfully preached to us, and through it be drawn to salvation by the power of the Holy Spirit. How much longer will He wait? No man knows the day or the hour. The door could be shut while you are reading this. It could remain open several more days, twenty-four hour days or one-thousand-year-long "days." Counting that way only two days have elapsed since Jesus was born, only six since Adam was created. But you obviously do not have another day to take advantage of God's day of grace. You could be called into eternity in an instant if you are of no further use to God on this earth and have not responded to His command to repent. Don't wait. Don't hesitate. One thousand years is as one day to him. Your life expectancy, some seventy years, Psalm 90, calculates out to about 100 minutes, slightly over an hour and one half. Gnats live longer. Time's a-wasting.

Time remaining for us to serve Him who saved us is moving right along. What are we doing? Are we building monuments to our prowess here on earth? These will all be destroyed, not just ruined but dissolved, vaporized, dissociated. Matter will be returned to pure energy as occurs in detonation of a nuclear device. Not that Peter is forecasting a nuclear holocaust generated by rogue nations or berserk terrorists. No, God is in control. He will not allow man to destroy the earth. It is not their's to destroy. It belongs to His Son, bought with the price of His blood shed down upon the ground below the cross. God has reserved its destruction and re-creation to His Son, and no one else. And He will ultimately use fire to purge the present creation of all traces of sin and wickedness. All physical evidence of the fierce pride and independence of the race of men descended from Adam will be erased. No relics or ruins and inscriptions will remain for future archeologists to explore, decipher and report as there is now since the Flood. There will be no archeologists on the New Earth for there will be nothing to find or investigate. All they will know about this world will be what they find in God's Holy word. It will, I believe, still be available for their reference.

Isaiah 40:8 *The grass withereth, the flower fadeth: but the word of our God shall stand for ever.*

Matthew 24:35 *Heaven and earth shall pass away, but my words shall not pass away.*

Their reading it will give rise to worship and eternal praise for the mercy and grace of the Holy God down through the long ages of His longsuffering with man. What Love!.

It will be a surprise! Not a pleasant surprise, but a surprise likened to that of having a thief break in the middle of the night when the whole household is asleep. An unwelcome intrusion on their comfortable, civilized life occupying and possessing the earth, sustaining life as best their learning, philosophy and technology can sustain it, **but without God**. How annoying! How frightening! How does one guard against a Thief like this? Where does one get insurance to cover such a loss? How devastating this Thief will be. How dark it will be before He interrupts their revels.

John 3:17 *For God sent not his Son into the world to condemn the world; but that the world through him might be saved. 18 He that believeth on him is not condemned: but he that believeth not is condemned already, because he hath not believed in the name of the only begotten Son of God. 19 And this is the condemnation, that light is come into the world, and men loved darkness rather than light, because their deeds were evil. 20 For every one that doeth evil hateth the light, neither cometh to the light, lest his deeds should be reproved. 21 But he that doeth truth cometh to the light, that his deeds may be made manifest, that they are wrought in God.*

Eph 5:6 *Let no man deceive you with vain words: for*

because of these things cometh the wrath of God upon the children of disobedience. 7 Be not ye therefore partakers with them. 8 For ye were sometimes darkness, but now are ye light in the Lord: walk as children of light: 9 (For the fruit of the Spirit is in all goodness and righteousness and truth;) 10 Proving what is acceptable unto the Lord. 11 And have no fellowship with the unfruitful works of darkness, but rather reprove them. 12 For it is a shame even to speak of those things which are done of them in secret.

The works of darkness will be exposed and destroyed, while the guilty are taken away to await judgement. There are numerous scriptures* referring to this event, the Lord Himself warning of it more than once.

1Thessalonians 5:1 But of the times and the seasons, brethren, ye have no need that I write unto you. 2 For yourselves know perfectly that the day of the Lord so cometh as a thief in the night. 3 For when they shall say, Peace and safety; then sudden destruction cometh upon them, as travail upon a woman with child; and they shall not escape. 4 But ye, brethren, are not in darkness, that that day should overtake you as a thief. 5 Ye are all the children of light, and the children of the day: we are not of the night, nor of darkness.

What is the date forecast for this destruction? We aren't given a date. That's right, no one knows but God the Father and He hasn't even told the Lord Jesus, at least He hadn't told Him while He was still on earth. Not even after the resurrection, Acts 1:6-8. Not that it isn't sure to happen. It is sure! It is scheduled! When? Well, we can gather this much, it is over one thousand years from our present date. The Day of the Lord begins when He appears in the view of all on earth, the saved and unsaved and destroys the armies of the Beast, as described in Revelation 19:11-21. It will last one thousand years, (but of course, for "a thousand years is as one day..."). Therefore we call it The Millennium. During this period the Man Christ Jesus will reign over the whole earth, and his saints with Him, we the Church, His Bride at His side. He will introduce His Kingdom by conquering all His enemies, both spiritual and human. He will have Satan and his angels (demons) bound in the Bottomless Pit for the full thousand years. He will slay all those boldly coming to battle against His armies arriving from heaven, Revelation 19:19. (Mistaken for invaders from outer space?) Then He will search out all the unrepentant still living on earth bringing them to justice and sending them into everlasting fire, Matthew 25:41.

Then Righteousness reigns. He reigns for the thousand year Day of the Lord, blessing the whole world with justice; swift, impartial, fair, enforcement of righteous law and order. Thereby its citizens enjoy uninterrupted peace on earth. At the end of this one-

thousand-year Day dissolution of the Universe will take place. That is why Peter says "in the which" in verse 12. Peter vividly describes it, repeating it twice so there is no mistaking his forecast. If the thousand-year Day of the Lord begins with purging the unrighteous from His Kingdom, it ends with open rebellion of men born in His kingdom. Those who have feigned obedience under His righteous reign openly rebel under the instigation of Satan. He has been released in order to expose them for what they are. They are summarily destroyed by fire from heaven. This initiates the dissolution of the whole universe, clearing the way for the New Heavens and New Earth wherein **dwells** righteousness. The Day of God commences. It has no end. The Lord Jesus Christ returns His Kingdom to God who gave it to Him, 1Corinthians 15:23-28. A reigning King is no longer needed where **righteousness dwells**.

Those who died in their sins are raised and judged before the Lord Jesus on the Great White Throne and consigned to the Lake of Fire, in outer darkness outside of the presence of God forever, Revelation 21:11-15. He now makes the New Heavens and New Earth, longed for by all godly persons since Adam. A new creation which has been hated, dreaded and resisted by Satan and his angels since their rebellion against their Creator. They are permanently cast into the lake of fire prepared for them, Matthew 25:41; Revelation 20:10). Righteousness dwells in the New Creation. God Himself dwells among men, Revelation 21:1-8.

Peter doesn't touch upon how God will preserve His own while all that is seen is destroyed and all things are made new. Perhaps in the Father's hand? Nor does He enlarge upon details of the New Heavens and New Earth. We'll find out, won't we. How wonderful! How exciting! What a prospect to look forward to! What a blessing to our fearful hearts to be given to know the future outcome of the world and to know the One who patiently holds it in His hand. What peace of heart! What joy to belong to the Winner and to know Him as trophies of His love. Yes Peter, you asked what manner of life ought we to live now? We now enjoy the most exquisite of mixed feelings! We desire to depart to be with Christ which is far better. We desire fervently to see the wickedness of this world judged and eradicated. We desire to be like Christ. So to be most like Him, we desire to remain here for a while glorifying God and serving as channels of His blessing to others. We are partners with His longsuffering, not willing that any should perish. That is how we best hasten His coming!

Even so come Lord Jesus!

By Ron Canner, June 29, 2005

* Psalm 102:26; Isaiah 51:6; Matthew 24:35,43; Mark 13:31; Luke 12:39; Romans 8:12; 1Thessalonians 5:2; Hebrews 1:11; Revelation 3:3; 16:15; 20:11; 21:1

As pilgrims and aliens in this world we look forward to the wonderful things Peter has just described even if they involve destruction of the world as we know it. With that in mind we won't waste time and energy indulging ourselves in this world's attractions, religions, politics, treasures, etc but in diligently hastening the Lord's coming. The New Heavens and New Earth lie before us. Yet have you noticed? Peter has not discussed two major events we are told elsewhere in scripture will occur before the kingdom of Christ and the end of the world. The Rapture and the seven years Tribulation. These events are barely alluded to in Peter's epistles, 1Peter 1:4-5 and 2Peter 1:19. Although acknowledged here as important to the believer, they are not the center of what the Spirit moved Peter to write. Peter directs the eyes of our faith upon the 1000 year reign of Christ and the end of the world following it. He encourages our hearts in the midst of this scene of strife, controversy, injustice and in-subjection to God, (and all authority for that matter). Although we will soon be safely removed from this scene, we are assured that the earth we leave behind will see justice done, peace come and God receive the glory due Him. And those who thumb their noses at God will be put out of the universe forever.

Knowing all this, knowing God's Plan, we are exhorted to be diligent as to our walk and ways. If He should come what will He find us doing? What will He note us having neglected? We are to be diligent to be found in peace, without spot and blameless. Allowing no cause to arise and persist that would separate us from one another. Nothing in our behavior for which another could blame us. Nothing in our past that would deter others from associating themselves with Christ. This is a tall order, but by the grace of God aren't we able to be what he asks us to be? We look at the elapsed time since the Lord ascended to heaven and wonder sometimes, isn't He ever going to return for us? But we can accept, yea embrace this "delay," for it is the longsuffering of God as we had in verse 9 and also it is evidence of salvation. How so? Because the of fact that we are suffering rather than perishing. Paul makes that point, too.

Philippians 1:27 Only let your conversation be as it becometh the gospel of Christ: that whether I come and see you, or else be absent, I may hear of your affairs, that ye stand fast in one spirit, with one mind striving together for the faith of the gospel; 28 And in nothing terrified by your adversaries: which is to them an evident token of perdition, but to you of salvation, and that of God. 29 For unto you it is given in the behalf of Christ, not only to believe on him, but also to suffer for his sake;

2Thessalonians 1:3 We are bound to thank God always for you, brethren, as it is meet, because that your faith groweth exceedingly, and the charity of every one of you all toward each other aboundeth; 4 So that we ourselves glory in you in the churches of

God for your patience and faith in all your persecutions and tribulations that ye endure: 5 ¶ Which is a manifest token of the righteous judgment of God, that ye may be counted worthy of the kingdom of God, for which ye also suffer: 6 Seeing it is a righteous thing with God to recompense tribulation to them that trouble you; 7 And to you who are troubled rest with us, when the Lord Jesus shall be revealed from heaven with his mighty angels, 8 In flaming fire taking vengeance on them that know not God, and that obey not the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ: 9 Who shall be punished with everlasting destruction from the presence of the Lord, and from the glory of his power; 10 When he shall come to be glorified in his saints, and to be admired in all them that believe (because our testimony among you was believed) in that day.

Peter here endorses Paul's epistles, not that they required his approval or endorsement. But in uniting grace he removes the occasion for any rivalry or sect forging by professed followers of Paul or of Peter. Peter does not make this remark as from a place of superiority but as a fellow laborer in the Lord. We are not to follow Peter, or Paul, or any other man but Christ. Recall that once Paul faithfully withstood Peter to the face because of a compromising position Peter had taken, Galatians 2:11. Yet Peter shows no sign of chagrin, grudge or rivalry. Grace is victorious. Nor does he allow a place below Paul in authority. He does admit that Paul's writings are hard to understand but commends them and defends them, clearly counting them among the scriptures. And he warns that they are subjected to continuous attack, not a frontal attack but devious twisting by unlearned and unstable persons intent upon defending the religion and way of life they have chosen rather than God's Way. Peter leaves little room for that. He warns again of the danger of being led away with the error of the wicked. It is possible for a believer to be led astray by error. The result is not loss of eternal salvation but a fall from the steadfastness that is to characterize each believer. We are to be solid in the truth, not bending and twisting in every wind of teaching that comes along, Ephesians 4:14.

The secret to spiritual maturity and longevity is continued growth. Therefore we are to grow in grace and the personal full knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. Grace, not power. Grace, not intelligence. Christ, the Person, not learning. Not only is He Savior but Lord. The One who deserves our total allegiance, purity, obedience and devoted faithful service. Not only is He Lord, but Savior. The One who loved so much He became a Man to die for us, to die for our sins on the cross of His shed blood. To Him be glory both now and forever! AMEN!

The End of the World. Peter is speaking of momentous future events here in chapter three. But Peter is not speaking of the Rapture. The Rapture is the long awaited, promised, secret return of the Lord Jesus Christ for His Bride. Nor is he speaking of the glorious public appearing of the Lord Jesus Christ with His saints at the **beginning** of the Day of the Lord, His 1000 year reign over the earth. No, Peter is here speaking of the literal end of the world. This long prophesied event really will occur, although much later than sooner. It takes place at the **end** of the Day of the Lord and **begins** the Day of God.

All is part of a Master Plan God had before the foundation of the earth. Knowing Adam would sin leaving each of his descendants, all mankind, with sinful natures, God in His infinite mercy and grace wisely tests mankind with various opportunities to acknowledge and confess their rebellious departure from their Creator and return to Him. (The reason God can do this and maintain His righteousness is because He gave His one and only Son Jesus Christ our Lord to die upon the cross.) God tests man in differing ways in different ages down through the course of time. Each time He displays His goodness, mercy and grace dispensing new signals to repent. These dispensations are marked out in scripture. Brother A. E. Booth (and others) noticed this and he charted out the progressive revelation of God over the course of time, an island in the sea of eternity. The seven days in the Genesis account of the Creation correspond with the different ages.

Peter mentions the first test and its outcome, the Flood, first. It is a witness of God's power and willingness to judge the whole world. Men today scoff at it. They do not want to face reality. Peter then skips down thousands of years to the final dispensation of God's Plan, the Day of the Lord. In the the sixth day of Genesis 1, Adam and Eve are given dominion over the earth, prefiguring Christ reigning with the Church. This thousand year period is a time of unparalleled earthly blessing and prosperity, peace and safety, and righteousness reigning over the whole earth. It begins with the Lord appearing and destroying those coming to fight Him. He then calls all of the living before Him to weed out those who rejected and opposed Him. When this is done mankind enters a new era given a fresh new start . . . everyone on earth is a believer. Satan and the demons are locked up so they cannot harass or tempt people. There is no disease, hunger, wars or crime to mar or threaten their daily enjoyment of life. Life is easy! Any person openly sinning is immediately detected, apprehended and punished. To avoid this men hide out as far from Jerusalem as possible and feign obedience. They somehow manage to behave under these rigorous conditions as but entertain no love or subjection for their King in their hearts though He has blessed them with ideal

earthly living conditions. And this at the cost of the cross.

The test! Can man subject himself to God's Anointed King under these ideal conditions? Will they? No! When the 1000 year test is completed Satan is released and gathers men who had chafed under the law and order dominion of the Righteous King. Who are these? The children born to the believers who will have made up the initial population of the Kingdom. They still have Adam's sinful nature. Now a vast multitude of these descendants, who had feigned obedience, openly rebel and gather to attack the Camp of the Saints, Christ's capitol, Jerusalem. God doesn't mess around fighting them. He sends fire down from heaven and destroys them all in a flash. They will appear before the Great White Throne. (These cannot claim that poverty, squalor, violence or corrupt leadership caused their rebellion as some criminals do today.) With no further ado God acts to do what Peter so graphically describes in this chapter. The heaven and earth are destroyed and a New Heaven and New Earth appear. Righteousness no longer **reigns**, righteousness **dwells** there. **God dwells there.** Enforcement is no longer needed. The tests are over. The total depravity of man is fully proven. The awesome grace and longsuffering of God are fully proven and displayed as well. Many are saved! Many perish! Many refuse His love, do not come when invited, hide when sought, reject His overtures to return, and perish in their sins. But **none** are unloved, unwelcome, unsought, or rejected. The world as we know it will come to an end. A fiery end. Yet a well publicized end. But a manner of ending well suited as a final awesome commemoration of the utter incurable depravity of sinful man. God through this fire eliminates sin from the created universe for ever and ever. We look forward to that. Hallelujah!

Peter and Paul. Peter shows no sign of asserting or exerting any authority above Paul or any one else except as an equal among the apostles. Paul doesn't either. Paul had to clearly establish his unique call to apostleship by the risen Christ, Galatians 1 and 2, because some were claiming all authority flowed from Jerusalem and that the Old Testament was still in effect for believers today including the Gentiles. In his letter to the Galatians (ch2) Paul took great pains to clearly establish that he didn't receive his apostleship or any spiritual gift, power or authority from the 12 apostles residing in Jerusalem or from the established assembly there. He documents how he respected the other apostles and took great pains to demonstrate that on his visit to Jerusalem. He also made personal calls on them and received their right hand of fellowship in his position work and teaching. Peter reconfirms that here. There was obviously great mutual respect between them and there is no hint of rivalry and they condemn rivalry among saints in their writings.