

# **A Verse-by-Verse Study of 2 Peter**

**Includes a Lengthy Appendix that Contains Excerpts and Comments Dealing with the Doctrine “Once Saved, Necessarily Always Saved?” and Related Issues (Mostly Dealing with the Viewpoints of Augustine and the Calvinists); the Appendix Includes Many Quotations from the Early Christian Fathers Dealing with Eternal Security and Related Issues**

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This internet version of the paper has been modified from the original paper. The primary modification is that I have not included the lengthy appendix here. The reader can, however, see the contents of the appendix on the Contents page. In the future I may add part of the contents of the appendix to the internet; I believe the contents are quite important. I still have several copies of the original paper.

**by Karl Kemp  
April 2002**

# CONTENTS

Introduction.....	1
2 Peter Chapter 1.....	5
2 Peter Chapter 2.....	15
2 Peter Chapter 3.....	23
<b>APPENDIX:</b> Excerpts and Comments Dealing with the Doctrine “Once Saved, Necessarily Always Saved?” and Related Issues (Mostly Dealing with the Viewpoints of Augustine and the Calvinists).....	33
Excerpts from Douglas J. Moo’s Commentary on 2 Peter that Deal with Eternal Security.....	34
Excerpts from <i>Kept by the Power of God: A Study of Perseverance and Falling Away</i> by I. Howard Marshall; Includes Excerpts from the Foreword by Clark H. Pinnock.....	39
Excerpts from “From Augustine to Arminius: A Pilgrimage in Theology” by Clark H. Pinnock.....	48
Excerpts from “Salvation and Apostasy” by Dale Moody.....	54
Excerpts from <i>Apostasy: A Study in the Epistle to the Hebrews and in Baptist History</i> by Dale Moody.....	59
Excerpts from “The Universal Power of the Atonement” by Terry L. Miethe.....	63
Excerpts from “The Nature of the Divine Sovereignty” by Jack W. Cottrell.....	65
Excerpts from <i>God’s Strategy in Human History</i> by Paul Marston and Roger Forster.....	76
Excerpts from <i>Will the Real Heretics Please Stand Up: A New Look at Today’s Evangelical Church in the Light of Early Christianity</i> by David W. Bercot.....	89
Excerpts from <i>Life in the Son</i> by Robert Shank.....	96
Excerpts from <i>The Believer’s Conditional Security and Falling Away</i> by Daniel D. Corner.....	103

## INTRODUCTION

This epistle (letter), which was written by the apostle Peter near the end of his life (2 Pet. 1:14), is packed with powerful teaching, powerful exhortation, and powerful warnings for his Christian readers. The first four verses of chapter 1, which are discussed in some detail in this paper, contain one of the most important brief descriptions found in the New Testament of the glorious salvation that God has given us through and in the Lord Jesus Christ. These verses speak, among other things, of Christians knowing God, who called us to His own glory and excellence; of His divine power that has granted us all things pertaining to life (*zōē*) and godliness; and of the fact that He has granted to us His precious and magnificent promises by which we become partakers of the divine nature, having escaped the corruption that is in the world by lust.

In the next seven verses (1:5-11), Peter exhorts his Christian readers to make sure, with all diligence, that they are abounding (and growing) in the things of God, things like moral excellence, knowledge, self-control, perseverance, godliness, brotherly kindness, and love (*agapē*). We must cooperate with God's Word, promises, Spirit, and power on a continuous basis (by grace through faith) in order to appropriate and walk in the things He makes available to us. Peter warns that if Christians aren't diligent about the things of God they may well (in the worst-case scenario) find themselves being denied a place in God's yet-future eternal kingdom (1:10, 11).

In the last six verses of chapter 1 (16-21), Peter speaks of God's prophetic word regarding the second-coming of Christ. What he says here shows, for one thing, that some "Christians" were challenging key aspects of God's prophetic word. (Based on what Peter goes on to say in chapters 2, 3, we know that some "Christians" were denying the second coming of Christ and the need for Christians to live in righteousness and holiness so as to always be ready for the day of judgment. Peter made it clear that these serious problems would continue until Christ returns.) We need God's interpretation of His prophetic word. The apostle Peter insisted that he had been, and still was, accurately transmitting and interpreting God's prophetic word. He reminded his readers, for one thing, that he (with the apostles James and John) had been privileged to see the Lord Jesus glorified on the Mount of Transfiguration, which prefigured His coming in glory at the end of this age. Thank God for the Bible!

Throughout chapter 2 Peter speaks of "false teachers" who will cause serious problems for the Christian church until Christ returns. There is widespread agreement that these false teachers were already in view in the last six verses of chapter 1 as people who distort God's prophetic word regarding the second coming of Christ and the attendant day of judgment.<sup>1</sup> And there is widespread agreement that the false teachers are also in view in chapter 3, where Peter speaks of mockers "following after their own lusts [these words fit perfectly with Peter's description of the false teachers in chapter 2], and saying, 'Where is the promise of His coming? For *ever* since the fathers fell asleep, all continues just as it was from the beginning of creation' " (2 Pet. 3: 3, 4).<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> There is no need to insist that Peter was thinking only of the false teachers of chapter 2 when he wrote 2 Pet. 1:16-21.

<sup>2</sup> The mockers of chapter 3 need not be fully equated with the false teachers of chapter 2.

Throughout chapter 2 Peter speaks of false teachers.<sup>3</sup> In verse 1 he says they “will secretly introduce destructive heresies, even denying the Master who bought them.” In verse 2 he says “Many will follow their sensuality, and because of them the way of truth [Christianity] will be maligned,” and in verse 3 he says, “in *their* greed they will exploit you with false words.” In verses 4-9 he classes the false teachers with the “ungodly” and the “unrighteous.” In verses 10-12 he speaks of “those who indulge the flesh in *its* corrupt desires and despise authority. Daring, self-willed, they do not tremble when they revile angelic majesties, whereas angels who are greater in might and power do not bring a reviling judgment against them before the Lord. ...reviling where they have no knowledge.”

In verses 13-15 Peter further describes the false teachers, “They count it a pleasure to revel in the daytime. They are stains and blemishes, reveling in their deceptions, as they carouse with you, having eyes full of adultery that never cease from sin, enticing unstable souls, having a heart trained in greed, accursed children; forsaking the right way, they have gone astray, having followed the way of Balaam, the *son* of Beor, who loved the wages of unrighteousness.” In verses 17-19 he says, “These are springs without water and mists driven by a storm.... For speaking out arrogant *words* of vanity they entice by fleshly desires, by sensuality, those who barely escape from those who live in error, promising them freedom while they themselves are slaves of corruption; for by what a man is overcome, by this he is enslaved.”

Peter speaks much of the judgment and destruction awaiting the false teachers throughout chapter 2. In verse 1 he mentions, “bringing swift judgment upon themselves.” In verse 3 he mentions that “their judgment from long ago is not idle, and their destruction is not asleep.” Then in verses 4-9 he strongly reinforces the idea that the false teachers are headed for intense judgment by reminding his readers of three of God’s previous judgments against sinners. In verse 4 he speaks of the angels who sinned (apparently referring to the sin spoken of in Gen. 6:1-4), “God did not spare angels when they sinned, but cast them into hell [Tartarus] and committed them to pits of darkness, reserved for judgment [the final judgment at the end of this age].” In verse 5 he refers to the judgment of the flood, “and [God] did not spare the ancient world...when He brought a flood upon the world of the ungodly.” And in verses 6-9 he refers to God’s judgment of Sodom and Gomorrah, “He condemned the cities of Sodom and Gomorrah to destruction by reducing *them* to ashes, having made them an example to those who would live ungodly *lives* thereafter...the Lord knows how...to keep the unrighteous under punishment for the [end-time] day of judgment.” In verses 12, 13a he says, “But these, like unreasoning animals, born as creatures of instinct to be captured and killed...will...also be destroyed, suffering wrong as the wages of doing wrong.” In verse 17 he speaks of them “for whom the black darkness has been reserved.”

Two things make the verses cited in the last paragraph all the more awesome. For one thing, Peter wants his Christian readers to understand that Christians who continue to follow false teachers will end up being destroyed (not annihilated) along with the false teachers in God’s end-time judgment of the world (cf. 1:10, 11; 2:2, 3, 5, 6, 14, 18-22). Peter wanted to put a healthy fear of God in the hearts of all who have ears to hear. Those who end up in an ungodly state will suffer the fate of the ungodly; in 3:7, for

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<sup>3</sup> We need not assume that all the sinful things that Peter goes on to mention in chapter 2 fit all the false teachers of that generation or of subsequent generations.

example, Peter speaks of “the day of judgment and destruction of ungodly men.” And in 3:16 he speaks of Paul’s epistles “in which are some things hard to understand, which the untaught and unstable distort, as *they do* also the rest of Scripture, to their own destruction.” The “untaught and unstable [who] distort [the Scriptures]” include the Christians who follow the false teachers. (In 2 Pet. 2:14 Peter speaks of the false teachers “enticing unstable souls.”)

A second thing that makes the teaching of this epistle all the more awesome is that Peter writes from the viewpoint that the false teachers had, at one time, been true Christians.<sup>4</sup> In 2:1 he speaks of false teachers “denying the Master who bought them.” In 2:15 he says concerning them, “forsaking the right way, they have gone astray, having followed the way of Balaam...who loved the wages of unrighteousness.” In 2:17 he speaks of false teachers “promising them [the Christians who listen to them] freedom while they themselves [the false teachers] are slaves of corruption; for by what a man is overcome, by this he is enslaved.” And in 2:22-24 he says concerning the false teachers (and these words have much application for, and serve as a strong warning to, those who would follow the false teachers), “For if, after they have escaped the defilements of the world by the knowledge of the Lord and Savior Jesus Christ, they are again entangled in them and are overcome, the last state has become worse for them than the first. For it would be better for them not to have known the way of righteousness, than having known it, to turn away from the holy commandment handed on to them. It has happened to them according to the true proverb, ‘A DOG RETURNS TO ITS OWN VOMIT,’ and, ‘A sow, after washing, *returns* to wallowing in the mire.’ ”

Verses 3, 4 of chapter 3 deal with mockers, “Know this first of all, that in the last days mockers will come with *their* mocking, following after their own lusts, and saying, ‘Where is the promise of His coming? For *ever* since the fathers fell asleep, all continues just as it was from the beginning of creation.’ ” There is widespread agreement that mockers were already there in Peter’s day and that these mockers have already been spoken of, using different terminology, in chapters 1, 2 of this epistle.<sup>5</sup> Peter goes on in verses 5, 6 to demonstrate that God’s judgment of the flood (in Noah’s day) disproves what the mockers are saying. He goes on to state that the present heavens and earth will be destroyed with fire (verses 7, 10, 12), which will make way for God’s new heavens and new earth, in which righteousness dwells (verse 13); all who persist in sin will be removed by God’s end-time judgment of this present world.

In verses 8, 9 (and verse 15) Peter shows that some Christians were concerned that Christ’s second-coming was late (tardy). (They were probably being influenced, at least to some extent, by what the mockers were saying.) Verse 8 contains the familiar words, “with the Lord one day is like a thousand years, and a thousand years like one day.” Verse 9 is a verse familiar to many Christians, but I believe most Christians somewhat misunderstand what Peter says here, “The Lord is not slow about His promise, as some [Peter is apparently speaking here of the Christians who were wondering if the Lord wasn’t late in His return] count slowness, but is patient toward you, not wishing for any

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<sup>4</sup> This doesn’t mean, of course, that all false teachers in the church in the days of Peter or in the following days had, at one time, been true Christians.

<sup>5</sup> Mocking wasn’t specifically mentioned in chapter 1, but the mockers mentioned in chapter 3 had their “own [erroneous] interpretation” (cf. 2 Pet. 1:20) of God’s prophetic word.

to perish but for all to come to repentance.” Most Christians think Peter was speaking of God’s allowing time for unbelievers to become believers before the day of judgment, and I agree that this is an important biblical concept that Peter would agree with (e.g., Mark 16:15, 16; Acts 17:30, 31; and 1 Tim. 2:4-6). But I believe Peter aimed these words of verse 9 at the *Christians* (in the Greek you is plural; it refers to Christians, not unbelievers); some of the Christians clearly needed to do some serious repenting in Peter’s day (cf. 1:9-11; 2:1-3, 14, 18-22); the same thing is true for many Christians today. With this interpretation there is much more emphasis on the need for *Christians* to repent (where repentance is required).

As Peter continues with this chapter, he exhorts Christians (all Christians) to be diligent in holiness and godliness, “Since all these things [the heavens, the earth, and all its works] are to be destroyed in this way [by fire and intense heat], what sort of people ought you to be in holy conduct and godliness” (3:11); “Therefore, beloved, since you look for these things [new heavens and a new earth, in which righteousness dwells], be diligent to be found by Him [the Judge] in peace, spotless and blameless” (3:14); “You, therefore, beloved, knowing this beforehand [that some distort the Scriptures to their own destruction, etc.], be on your guard so that you are not carried away by the error of unprincipled men and fall from your own steadfastness, but grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ” (3:17, 18a).

All quotations from the Bible in this paper were taken from the NASB, 1995 edition, unless otherwise noted.

May God (God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Spirit) be glorified through this paper and His will be fully accomplished!

## 2 PETER CHAPTER 1

**Simon Peter, a bond-servant and apostle of Jesus Christ, to those who have received** [or, “to those who have obtained.” The BAGD Greek Lexicon (under *lagchanō*, the Greek verb behind the Greek participle used here) has, “*receive, obtain* (by lot, or by divine will...)...” The recipients of this epistle had obtained salvation in and through Christ Jesus “by divine will” (by the will of God). If it were not the will and plan of God, no Jews or Gentiles would be saved through faith in Christ.] **a faith of the same kind as ours** [In the margin the NASB shows that we could also translate “of the same value as ours.” I believe *equal in value/preciousness* was the intended meaning. The KJV, NKJV have, “like precious faith with us”; the NIV has, “a faith as precious as ours.” Apparently Peter was writing to Gentile Christians, as he was in 1 Peter (cf. 2 Pet. 3:1). He reminded them that their salvation was fully equal/precious with the salvation of the (elect) Jews (who had the covenants with God and to whom Christ and the gospel had first come).

I’ll quote part of what Robert H. Mounce says here.<sup>6</sup> “The letter is addressed to *those who...have received a faith as precious as ours* [NIV]. Weymouth has, ‘a faith of equal privilege with ours.’ The term was used of people who, having moved to another country, had gained full citizenship. They enjoyed equal standing with those who were native to the region (compare Peter’s defense of including Gentiles in the church on the basis that they, too, had received the same gift of the Holy Spirit; Acts 11:17).”

I don’t believe the apostle Peter included the idea here that God gives saving faith to the elect. If he did include that idea, he was going against the common viewpoint presented throughout the New Testament that people repent and submit to the gospel in faith as free moral agents (they respond to God and His Word, His initiative, His call, His Spirit, His grace).<sup>7</sup> I do believe, however, that Peter did include the idea here that the Christians he was writing to (as with all true Christians) had been chosen (elected) by God as individuals before the foundation of the world, and that they had been called by Him with a special call.<sup>8</sup> God’s salvation plans include Gentiles. Thanks be to God! Until He revealed His plan to save Gentiles with the same full salvation with which He was to save the (elect) Jews, this glorious reality (glorious for Gentile believers) was not expected, far from it.

The fullness of the glory of the salvation that believers have in Christ was not expected in old-covenant days either. We become brethren with the Lord Jesus Christ (God the Son) and are destined to be conformed to His image (Rom. 8:29). We will reign forever as glorified sons of God with God the Father and the Lord Jesus Christ., **by [in] the righteousness of our God and Savior, Jesus Christ** [In the margin the NASB has, “or *in*” instead of “by.” I would translate the Greek preposition (*en*) “in” here; with the translation “in” (instead of “by”) these words say so much more about the glory of the salvation that we obtain in Christ Jesus; furthermore, the idea that we are caught up into

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<sup>6</sup> *A Living Hope: A Commentary on 1 and 2 Peter* (Eerdmans, 1982), page 102.

<sup>7</sup> See my *Paper on Faith*.

<sup>8</sup> Compare 2 Pet. 1:3, 10 (see under these verses); 1 Pet. 1:1, 2. See under Eph. 1:4 and under Rom. 8:28-30 in my paper dated July 2000. As discussed there, it is also biblical to say that Christ died for all mankind and that all are called to repent and submit to the Lord Jesus Christ.

the very righteousness of God fits the emphasis of 2 Peter 1:1-4. This same Greek preposition (*en*) is translated “in” in the next verse and very often. The RSV and the *New Testament in Modern English* by J. B. Phillips have, “in the righteousness.” The idea here is not that our faith is in the righteousness of God (though it is true that we do have faith in the righteousness of God), but that born-again Christians live in the dimension/sphere of the righteousness of God—we live and walk in that righteousness.

The very righteousness of God has been given to us (which includes its being imparted to us) in and through Christ Jesus (cf., e.g., Rom. 1:17; 3:21, 22; 2 Cor. 5:21; and Phil. 3:9). We live in the righteousness of God in union with Christ Jesus by the indwelling Spirit of God. We have died to the old man and to sin through the atoning death of the Lamb of God (cf., e.g., Rom. 6:1-14; 1 Pet. 2:24). The mention of the fact that Christians live in the righteousness of God (by grace through faith) at the beginning of this epistle fits with the strong emphasis throughout this epistle on the need for Christians to forsake sin and live in righteousness.

There’s widespread agreement that God the Father and God the Son are both mentioned at the end of verse 2, but many (the majority) think that the Lord Jesus Christ is the only one mentioned here at the end of verse 1 (that is, the majority think the words “our God and Savior” refer to Christ here). There’s no need to be dogmatic on this point, but I believe God the Father and God the Son are both mentioned at the end of verse 1 too. The KJV has, “the righteousness of God and our Saviour Jesus Christ.” I agree, of course, that it is Biblical to call Jesus *God*,<sup>9</sup> but I can’t see excluding God the Father in verse 1.]: **(2) Grace and peace be multiplied to you** [cf. Rom. 1:7; 1 Pet. 1:2] **in the knowledge of God and of Jesus our Lord** [Compare John 17:3; Phil. 3:8; 2 Pet. 1:3, 8; 2:20; and 3:18. As born-again Christians we have an experiential person-to-Person *knowledge* of God the Father and the Lord Jesus Christ through the atoning death and resurrection of the Lamb of God and by the indwelling Spirit of God. God’s grace and peace being multiplied to us in the dimension/sphere of the knowledge of God enables us to know Him as His born-again children, which includes *knowing* the truth of His Word (especially *knowing* His plan of salvation as it is presented in the gospel) and *walking* (in fellowship with Him) in His truth and righteousness. God’s grace sanctifies us, and it enables us to abound and to be growing in the things of God. In verses 3-11 the apostle goes on to remind his readers (including us) that God has provided everything they need to be godly Christians, and he exhorts them to make sure they are walking as Christians are called (and required) to walk with top priority (by the grace of God in Christ); they must abound and be growing in the good things of God.]; **(3) seeing that His divine power** [*power* is the Greek *dunamis*] **has granted to us everything** [“all things” (Greek *panta*); the KJV and NKJV have “all things”] **pertaining to life** [*zōē*<sup>10</sup>] **and godliness** [cf. 2 Pet. 1:6; 3:11], **through the true knowledge** [The Greek noun (*epignōsis*) translated “true knowledge” here was translated “knowledge” in verse 2. It would be better to translate the word the same in both verses, whether *knowledge* or *true knowledge*. If we translate *knowledge*, which is acceptable, it is to be understood, of course, that it is *true* knowledge. As we discussed under verse 2, we

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<sup>9</sup> It is of key importance for Christians to believe the foundational doctrine that Jesus Christ is *God* (deity) with God the Father and God the Spirit (cf., e.g., Isa. 9:6; John 1:1; and 20:28).

<sup>10</sup> The lines above the *o* and *e* show that the Greek uses long vowels in this word, *omega* (the long o) and *eta* (the long e).

have an experiential person-to-Person knowledge of God, which includes knowing the truth of His Word. Without this knowledge of God, we could not participate (by faith) in the *life* or the *godliness* that come from Him (and only from Him).] **of Him who called us** [After what Peter said in verse 1 about his readers having obtained faith (by God's plan), he apparently speaks here of God's special *call* of the elect (see Acts 2:39; Rom. 1:6; 8:28, 30; 9:24; 1 Cor. 1:9, 24; 2 Thess. 2:14; and Heb. 9:15; cf. 1 Pet. 1:15; 2:9, 21; 3:9; and 5:10).<sup>11</sup>] **by** [I would translate "to." With the translation "to" these words say so much more about the glory of the salvation we obtain in Christ Jesus. In the margin the NASB has, "or *to*." The KJV has "to." ] **His own glory** [We have already begun to experience the glory of God in a preliminary sense as born-again Christians (cf., e.g., Rom. 6:4; 2 Cor. 3:18), but most of the glory is still future for us (e.g., Col. 1:5, 27; 1 Pet. 5:10). For one thing, after we are glorified at the return of Christ, we will be conformed to His image (Rom. 8:29)—that, to say the least, is quite a destiny (cf. 1 John 3:2).] **and excellence** [or, "virtue"]. [Before we became Christians we were spiritually *dead* and far from the *life, righteousness, godliness, glory, and excellence/virtue* of God, but now we have been born again by the Spirit of God, and we live in the dimension/sphere of the *life, righteousness, godliness, and excellence/virtue* of God in union with the Lord Jesus Christ (by the Holy Spirit), and through Him in union with God the Father (by the Holy Spirit). His *divine power* makes available to us all that we need to live in the *life, righteousness, godliness, and excellence/virtue* of God, but we must know His will (which is revealed in His Word), and we must cooperate with His grace through faith, walking in/by/after His Spirit on a continuous basis with top priority.] **(4) For by these** [As the NASB points out in the margin, a more literal translation of the Greek would be "through which things" instead of "for by these." *Which things* apparently refer back to the Greek adjective (*panta*) of verse 3 that I would translate "all things" ("everything" in the NASB). This Greek adjective (*panta*) comes at the beginning of verse 3 in the Greek, right after the Greek word translated "seeing that," which puts some emphasis on *all things* in the Greek.<sup>12</sup>

Verse 4 is extremely important in that it shows *how* believers tap into and cooperate with the "divine power [that] has granted to us all things pertaining to life and godliness." We submit to God and His Word (we mix faith with His Word, which includes His promises<sup>13</sup>; we take His Word into our hearts), and we walk in the light of *His precious and magnificent promises* by faith (we walk in the manifested reality of the things promised), being enabled by His divine power, by His grace, by His Spirit. In

<sup>11</sup> See under verse 1, including footnote 8.

<sup>12</sup> God had to determine to grant to us all things pertaining to life and godliness by His divine power (see verse 3) through His plan of salvation, which centers in the atoning death and resurrection of His Son (our Savior), and then to carry out that plan by sending His Son (through the virgin birth) and then sacrificing Him, resurrecting Him, and taking Him back to glory before He could "[grant] to us His precious and magnificent promises, so that by them [we] may become [be] partakers of the divine nature, having escaped the corruption that is in the world by lust."

<sup>13</sup> Much in view here are the *promises* (*promises* that are included as part of the gospel message) regarding things that are available to believers *now*, things we are to appropriate and walk in *now* by faith, things like the new birth and the sanctifying power of God that enables us to walk in righteousness, holiness, and godliness. But we should also undoubtedly include the *promises* regarding the glorious things yet future for us. For one thing, those promises of future things very much affect the way we think and live now—they had better affect us now.

verses 2, 3 Peter has already mentioned *the knowledge of God/Christ*. The *knowledge of God/Christ* includes knowing His Word, which includes knowing His *promises*.] **He has granted to us His precious and magnificent promises, so that by them you may become [or, be] partakers of the divine nature**<sup>14</sup> [cf. Eph. 4:24; Col. 3:10 (KJV, NKJV); Heb. 12:10; and 1 John 3:2], **having escaped the corruption that is in the world by lust**. [Compare 2 Pet. 2:20; James 1:27. The last words of verse 4 (“having escaped the corruption that is in the world by lust”) help give the right perspective: Peter wasn’t thinking of a lifetime of growth out of the corruption that is in the world by lust (or of our future glorification); he spoke in terms of Christians having left that corruption behind (or at least of now leaving it behind once-for-all). This is the typical viewpoint presented throughout the New Testament; this is what living in an abiding state of holiness, righteousness, and godliness is all about.

In one sense, Christians become partakers of the divine nature when they are born again. If we knew the full truth and submitted to the full truth in faith, we would be partakers of the divine nature in a very real sense from the beginning of our Christian walk, living from that time on in an abiding state of holiness. For those who, for one reason, or another, haven’t fully set aside sin and fleshiness, they can repent and quickly change (be transformed) as they begin to submit to and cooperate with the kind of teaching and exhortation that Peter gives here in 2 Pet. 1:1-11 (by grace/the Spirit through faith). Also, there always is room for, and a need for, Christians to continue to grow in the things of God (cf., e.g., 2 Cor. 3:18). (I’m not speaking of growing out of sin, but growing in the things of God.) Peter’s teaching/exhortation of 2 Pet. 1:5-11 probably includes some of that type of growth, but his primary emphasis in those verses (and in many of the verses that follow in the rest of the epistle) is on the need for each Christian to live in the truth, righteousness, and holiness of God, *abounding* in the good things of God.

When Christ returns and we are glorified, we will enter the full dimension of what it means to partake of the divine nature and to fully leave behind every form of corruption (but, again, the primary thing Peter was concerned with as he wrote this epistle was with Christians living as they can, and should, and must, live now, in the righteousness and holiness of God.) **(5) Now for this very reason** [“For [the] very reason” that the things just spoken of in verses 2-4 are so. We must appropriate and walk in the things that are promised through faith. The apostle Paul said, “...work out your salvation with fear and trembling; for it is God who is at work in you, both to will and to work for *His* good pleasure” (Phil. 2:12, 13).

I’ll quote part of what Douglas J. Moo says under verses 5-9.<sup>15</sup> “In verses 3-4, Peter has laid the groundwork for his main sermonic point by reminding his readers that God has provided Christians with the power to live godly lives. In verses 5-9 he gives us that key point itself: *Christians need to live godly lives. ....*”] **also** [The NIV doesn’t include this word, which seems better.], **applying all diligence, in your faith supply** [I prefer the translation,

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<sup>14</sup> We cannot *know* God in the sense pictured in verses 2, 3 without first becoming partakers of the divine nature. Being partakers of the divine nature correlates with being called to God’s glory and excellence (or, virtue) that was mentioned at the end of verse 3. It takes the “divine power” (of verse 3) to make us “partakers of the divine nature.”

<sup>15</sup> *2 Peter, Jude* [Zondervan, 1996], page 44.

“applying all diligence, add to your faith.”<sup>16</sup> True Christians may be somewhat defective in their faith, but they do have faith in Christ and the gospel or they wouldn’t be Christians.] **moral excellence** [The Greek noun translated “moral excellence” here (*aretē*) was also used at the end of verse 3 of the “excellence” of God. In the margin of both verses, the NASB has, “or *virtue*.” The NIV has “goodness” in both verses. The only reason we can add *moral excellence* is that God has called us to share His *moral excellence* through Christ Jesus in the Holy Spirit (“He called us to His own...[moral] excellence” [2 Pet. 1:3]). *Moral excellence* is one of the things that God’s “divine power has granted to us” (2 Pet. 1:3). *Moral excellence*, like all the good things that Peter goes on to mention in verses 5-7 (probably excluding *knowledge*), can be considered fruit of the Spirit.<sup>17</sup>], **and in your moral excellence, knowledge** [Greek *gnōsis*. Here Peter is speaking, at least for the most part, of the knowledge of God’s plan of salvation (as it is presented in the Word of God), including knowing what He requires of us.], **(6) and in your knowledge, self-control** [The same Greek noun was used in Gal. 5:23 for a fruit of the Spirit.], **and in your self-control, perseverance, and in your perseverance, godliness** [In verse 3 the apostle informed us that God’s divine power has granted to us all things “pertaining to life and godliness.” In 2 Pet. 3:11 Peter speaks of the need for Christians to be people of “holy conduct and godliness.”], **(7) and in your godliness, brotherly kindness** [The same Greek noun (*philadelphia*) was used in 1 Pet. 1:22 (translated “love of the brethren”).], **and in your brotherly kindness, love** [*agapē* – this same Greek noun was used for the first fruit of the Spirit listed in Gal. 5:22]. **(8) For if these qualities** [I prefer the more literal translation, “For if these things” (Greek *tauta*); the KJV, NKJV have “these things.”] **are yours and are increasing** [I prefer a translation like “are yours and are present in abundance”; the KJV and NKJV have “and abound.” As I mentioned, I believe Peter’s primary concern was that his readers (and all Christians) live as they are enabled and required to live (in righteousness and holiness with the victory over sin) in union with Christ Jesus and by the grace of God. The primary need is for Christians to live in an abiding state of holiness and fruitfulness, but it is also true, as I mentioned, that there always is a need for growth in the things of God (cf. 2 Pet. 3:18). The ideal is for us to become holy as young Christians (and to stay holy the rest of our lives) and to begin a lifetime of growth in the things of God.], **they render you neither useless nor unfruitful in the true knowledge** [Greek *epignōsis*. On the (true) knowledge of God/Christ, see under verses 2, 3.] **of our Lord Jesus Christ.** [I’ll quote part of what David F. Payne says under 2 Pet. 1:5-8.<sup>18</sup> “In a passage very reminiscent of the teaching of James about faith (cf. Jas. 2:14-26),<sup>19</sup> Peter now indicates the Christian’s responsibility: God has acted, and man must cooperate.” I’ll also quote a sentence from what Payne said regarding 2 Pet. 1:10, 11, “Note the emphasis, once again, on God’s initiative and man’s response; both are essential, or the Christian may fall (literally, ‘stumble’). Cf. Jude 24.”] **(9) For he who lacks these qualities** [“these things” (Greek *tauta*)] **is**

<sup>16</sup> The KJV, NKJV, and NIV have “add to your faith.”

<sup>17</sup> “But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control...” (Gal. 5:22, 23).

<sup>18</sup> *New Layman’s Bible Commentary in one volume* [Zondervan, 1979], pages 1646, 1647.

<sup>19</sup> James 2:14-26 are the verses where James insists that Christians must have works (the works produced by the grace/Spirit of God as they walk by faith). He said, for example, “faith without works is dead” (James 2:26); in other words, it isn’t real (saving) faith.

**blind or shortsighted, having forgotten his purification from his former sins.** [It isn't enough to be forgiven our past sins when we become Christians, as important as that is. We must escape (we have the extreme privilege of escaping) the corruption that is in the world by lust (see verse 4) to "become [be] partakers of *the* divine nature" (2 Pet. 1:4)/to "put on the new man in Christ, which in accordance with God has been created in righteousness and holiness of the truth" (Eph. 4:24).<sup>20</sup>] **(10) Therefore, brethren, be all the more diligent to make certain about His calling and choosing you** [The KJV, NKJV, and NIV have, "to make your calling and election sure." I believe this other translation (not the NASB) better communicates what Peter intended. God chose (elected) us as individuals, and He called us with a special call.<sup>21</sup> But this doesn't ensure our salvation, because (in God's plan) He leaves quite a bit of room for our response to His call to salvation, for our initial response and for our continued response to His call. He doesn't just give His chosen ones faith, nor does He compel those who answer the call to continue in faith to the end of the race. We must answer the call of God and submit to Him and His covenant in faith, and we must continue walking in faith (a faith that appropriates God's saving, sanctifying, enabling grace) until the end of the race. It is Biblical, for example, to speak of the names of the *elect* being erased from the Lamb's book of life if they don't repent where repentance is required (cf. Rev. 3:5).<sup>22</sup> God has left much room for the role of man in His eternal plans, but His salvation is, nevertheless, freely given, totally unearned. We don't *earn* salvation by faith; we appropriate and walk in salvation by faith.

Our salvation is a present reality only to the extent we appropriate and walk in it. We "make [our] calling and election sure" by doing the things we are called to do until the end, by God's enabling grace through faith. For one thing, we must do the things Peter just mentioned in verses 5-9. We are "called *to be* saints [holy]" (1 Cor. 1:2 NKJV).

I'll quote part of what Michael Green says under this verse.<sup>23</sup> "*Make your calling and election sure* is an appeal that goes to the heart of the paradox of election and free will. The New Testament characteristically makes room for both without attempting to resolve the apparent antinomy. [If we limit ourselves to what some verses teach, we could say there is a "paradox" or "apparent antinomy." If, however, we think in terms of a balanced view regarding what the Bible teaches on election and free will, we need not (from my point of view) speak of a "paradox" or an "apparent antinomy." We may not know exactly where the balance is, but *election* and *free will* are both real (according to the Bible), and they aren't mutually exclusive (election doesn't negate free will), so I wouldn't use the words "paradox" or "apparent antinomy" here. It seems that God (in His sovereignty) has chosen to leave room for the free will of man; He doesn't elect (choose) people and that's all there is to it; as free moral agents (we still have something left of free will after the fall, and especially after we are born again) we must respond to His grace and continue in His grace through faith. (Calvinists typically hold the viewpoint that if God chooses a person they will necessarily come to faith and continue

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<sup>20</sup> Ephesians chapter 4 is discussed in a verse-by-verse manner in my paper dated July 2000.

<sup>21</sup> See the third paragraph above under 2 Pet. 1:1, under the words "a faith of the same kind as ours," including the footnotes.

<sup>22</sup> It is only the names of the elect that have been written in the Lamb's book of life since the foundation of the world (e.g., Rev. 13:8; 17:8).

<sup>23</sup> *2 Peter and Jude* [Inter-Varsity Press, 1987], page 83.

in faith to the end.)] So here; election comes from God alone – but man’s behavior is the proof or disproof of it. [In the light of what I said in the preceding bracket, this last sentence isn’t fully adequate to me. If, for example, a Christian turns his back on God, this doesn’t *prove* that that person wasn’t elect of God.] Though ‘good works’... are possible only through the appropriation of God’s gracious aid, they are absolutely necessary, and fairly and squarely our responsibility.”

I’ll quote from Moo (pages 56-58), “...We find it so easy to presume on God’s grace by becoming satisfied with simply ‘being saved.’ Many Christians begin slipping into the attitude expressed by the French skeptic Voltaire, ‘God will forgive; that’s his job.’ Peter wants to sound a clear warning against this spiritual slackness. [Moo then goes on for several paragraphs emphasizing God’s role in making us holy by His Spirit, then he says:] But there is another side to the picture. Peter, as we have seen, focuses on the need for our own effort in becoming holy, and he says the same thing elsewhere as well: [Moo quotes 1 Pet. 1:14-16, then he quotes from the apostle Paul in Rom. 8:12-14 and Eph. 4:22-24 to show that Paul also “[brought] in the human side of sanctification.”] ... We must insist both that it is God, by His Spirit, who makes us holy *and* that it is we, ourselves, who have the job of becoming holy. [What Peter said in 2 Peter 1:1-4 should suffice to confirm the point that we are dependent on the saving grace of God in Christ to be holy; we can’t make ourselves holy.]; **for as long as you practice these things, you will never stumble** [or, “fall.” In the worst-case scenario, *stumbling/falling* would result in loss of salvation.<sup>24</sup>]; **(11) for in this way the entrance into the eternal kingdom of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ will be abundantly** [or, “richly”] **supplied to you.** [The Greek verb (*epichorēgeō*) translated “will be...supplied” here was used in verse 5, translated “supply” (or, “add”). Those who *add* the things that must be added with all diligence (by grace through faith) will find entrance to God’s yet-future kingdom richly supplied/added to them.<sup>25</sup>] **(12) Therefore, I will always be ready to remind you of these things, even though you already know them and have been established in the truth which is present with you** [cf. Phil. 3:1; 1 John 2:21; and Jude 1:5]. **(13) I consider it right, as long as I am in this earthly dwelling** [cf. 2 Pet. 1:14], **to stir you up by way of reminder** [cf. 2 Pet. 3:1], **(14) knowing that the laying aside of my earthly dwelling is imminent, as also our Lord Jesus Christ has made clear to me.** [I assume Peter speaks of something more here than what Jesus had revealed to him many years before about his ultimate martyrdom (John 21:18, 19); I assume God had revealed to him that his death was imminent. It is a common view that Peter (and Paul)

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<sup>24</sup> See my paper *Once Saved, Always Saved?* The BAGD Greek Lexicon understands the meaning of the Greek verb (*ptaiō*) translated *stumble* here in 2 Pet. 1:10 to be “loss of salvation.” Moo (*2 Peter, Jude*, page 49) comments that “most commentators think that the ‘stumbling’ here is of a final nature, denoting a fall that prevents one from getting to heaven. They are probably correct. ....” I’ll quote part of what Moo further says on this topic from page 59. “Calvin himself tried to avoid any problems from 2 Peter 1:10 for his theology by arguing that ‘making sure’ of one’s election meant simply to make one’s election certain in one’s own mind. ... Peter’s language does not seem to suggest any such subjective viewpoint.” Although Moo makes these insightful comments, he believes in eternal security. On page 60, for example, he, being a Calvinist, comments that he believes that since God has given his Spirit to the elect they will necessarily respond to God and make it to heaven.”

<sup>25</sup> In 1 Cor. 3:10-15 the apostle Paul warns that some Christians (in context he is speaking of ministers) who will be saved will receive something far less than a richly supplied entrance into the eternal kingdom. He also frequently speaks of Christians falling away and losing salvation.

was martyred at Rome about AD 65-67.] **(15) And I will also be diligent that at any time after my departure you will be able to call these things to mind.** [For one thing, Peter was diligent to write this epistle for the benefit of his readers. It is mandatory for Christians to know the truth and to live in the truth. Thank God for the Bible! Even in the early days of the Christian church, when the apostles Peter and Paul were still ministering, there was much false teaching circulating in Christian circles. The devil hates the truth and those who listen to him spread lies and half-truths on a rather continuous basis. Even sincere Christians can rather easily miss the balanced truth and get caught up in error to one degree or another if they aren't extremely careful. One major problem that we have in the body of Christ in our day is that many/most Christians assume that what they (and their peers) believe must necessarily be the truth, the balanced truth.] **(16) For we did not follow cleverly devised tales when we made known to you the power** [Greek *dunamis*. Compare Matt. 24:30; 26:64; Mark 13:26; 14:62; Luke 21:27; 22:69; Phil. 3:20, 21; 2 Thess. 1:9; Rev. 11:17; and 12:10.] **and coming** [Greek *parousia*<sup>26</sup>] **of our Lord Jesus Christ** [It may not be obvious to some readers at first, but as you keep on reading it becomes clear that Peter was speaking here of Christ's *second coming* at the end of this age, of His return to the earth with great power to save those who have been living for Him and to judge the world. Peter had to deal with this important doctrine because, for one thing, he knew that this doctrine was being challenged (see 2 Pet. 1:19-21; 3:1-18). That denial of the second coming of Christ (which is a foundational Christian doctrine) was all the more destructive because it was typically associated with a denial of the need for Christians to live in righteousness and holiness.<sup>27</sup>], **but we were eyewitnesses of His majesty.** [To further substantiate the fact that Jesus will return with glory and power to judge the world (not that this fact really needed to be further substantiated for those grounded in the foundational Christian doctrines) and to further substantiate his God-ordained credentials as someone (a key apostle) who knows what he is talking about (in contrast with the false teachers), Peter now refers to the Mount of Transfiguration, which is spoken of in Matt. 17:1-8; Mark 9:1-8; and Luke 9:28-36. On that holy mountain the apostles Peter, John, and James had been chosen to see the Lord Jesus Christ in glory, which, for one thing, foreshadowed and anticipated His "coming in His kingdom" at the end of this age (cf. Matt. 16:28; Mark 9:1; and Luke 9:27).] **(17) For when He received honor and glory from God the Father** [on the Mount of Transfiguration], **such an utterance as this was made to Him by the Majestic Glory, "This is My beloved Son with whom I am well-pleased"** [cf. Matt. 17:5; Mark 9:7; and Luke 9:35]—**(18) and we ourselves** [Peter, John, and James] **heard this utterance made from heaven when we were with Him on the holy mountain. (19) So we** [*We* certainly includes Peter, John, and James, but it also undoubtedly includes the other apostles and those

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<sup>26</sup> This Greek noun is used 24 times in the New Testament. The NASB translates it *coming* 22 times and *presence* 2 times. Most of the 22 uses translated *coming* refer to the second coming of Christ to the earth (which will come to pass, I believe, in the middle of Daniel's 70<sup>th</sup> week). I'll list those verses: Matt. 24:3, 27, 37, 39; 1 Cor. 15:23; 1 Thess. 2:19; 3:13; 4:15; 5:23; 2 Thess. 2:1, 8; James 5:7, 8; 2 Pet. 1:16; 3:4, 12; and 1 John 2:28. The other verses where it is translated *coming* are 1 Cor. 16:17; 2 Cor. 7:6, 7; Phil. 1:26; and 2 Thess. 2:9 (of Antichrist's coming).

<sup>27</sup> 2 Pet. 3:3, 4 show the connection between denying the "His [promised] coming" and "following after their own lusts."

associated with them who were commissioned by God to take the gospel to the world. The false teachers were excluded. Verses like Luke 24:44-49; John 15:26; 16:13-15; Acts 1:1-11; and Gal. 1:11, 12 help explain how the apostles learned with certainty the correct interpretation of God's prophetic word.] **have the prophetic word made more sure** [The fact that Peter, John, and James had seen the foreshadowing of His second coming made the prophetic word regarding His coming all the more sure (not that there was any doubt about the truthfulness of the end-time prophecies before the Mount of Transfiguration).

The BAGD Greek Lexicon (under the Greek adjective *bebaios, a, on*) translates "we possess the prophetic word as something altogether reliable." The "prophetic word" that Peter was speaking of centers in the second coming of the Lord Jesus Christ and the day of judgment that will start with the rapture of the saints. (The "prophetic word," understood in its full sense, includes the prophecies contained in the Old Testament and the prophecies given by Christ and those given through His apostles that are recorded in the New Testament.), **to which you do well to pay attention as to a lamp shining in a dark place, until the day dawns** [The day of glory will dawn for "all who have loved His appearing" (2 Tim. 4:8) when Christ returns. Until that day we must walk by faith, not by sight (cf. 2 Cor. 5:7). Walking by faith doesn't mean walking in the dark. We are walking in the light of the super-solid Word of God. (We must always make it a top priority to make sure that we are walking in God's Word, not a perversion of His Word.) Also, God gives confirmation that we are on the right path as He keeps His covenant with us, works in us and in our midst by His Spirit, and bears witness by His Spirit (cf., e.g., Rom. 8:14-16).] **and the morning star arises in your hearts.** [Christ is called the "bright morning star" in Rev. 22:16, and there could be some reference to Him here (He is in our hearts now by the Holy Spirit), but the main idea here seems to be that then, instead of having the light of the lamp of His Word in our hearts as we walk by faith, the morning star will have arisen and filled us with the light of the glory of God. Faith will have become sight, and what a glorious sight indeed (cf., e.g., 1 Cor. 13:12).] **(20) But know this first of all, that no prophecy of Scripture is a matter of one's own interpretation** [The KJV, NKJV have, "no prophecy of Scripture is of any private interpretation." Most commentators limit the "prophecy of Scripture" here to the Old Testament prophecies (cf. 2 Pet. 3:2). The New Testament had not been completed yet, but I assume Peter was including the New Testament prophecies too (cf. 2 Pet. 3:16).<sup>28</sup> The Old Testament prophecies, by themselves, would suffice to confirm the coming of God/Christ to judge the world at the end of this age, but the New Testament prophecies add many very important details. The Old Testament prophecies and the New Testament prophecies originated with the Holy Spirit, not the minds of men, and they were given through His chosen spokesmen. The same God who gave the prophetic word through His spokesmen interprets (explains) the meaning of those prophecies through His chosen spokesmen, especially the apostles. We need God's interpretation. God did not give His Word to be explained away or misinterpreted by self-appointed

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<sup>28</sup> Peter certainly rated the eschatological prophecies that had been given by the Lord Jesus Christ as part of the Word of God and very important for Christians to know and believe. Also, Peter mentions the writings of the apostle Paul "according to the wisdom given to him" as part of "the Scriptures" in 2 Pet. 3:15, 16. The all-important book of Revelation was not given to the apostle John until some thirty years after Peter was martyred for Christ.

“ministers” (like the false teachers Peter spoke of in this epistle) who have their own interpretations.

In Acts 3:18 the apostle Peter said, “But the things which God announced beforehand by the mouth of all the [Old Testament] prophets, that His Christ should suffer, He has thus fulfilled.” Before long we will be able to say, “The things which God announced beforehand by the mouth of the Old Testament prophets and by the mouth of His Son and His apostles regarding the second coming of His Christ to save and glorify His own and to judge the world, He has thus fulfilled.” Compare, for example, 1 Pet. 1:10-12; 2 Pet. 3:2, 4, 7, 9, and 13., **(21) for no prophecy was ever made by an act of human will, but men moved by the Holy Spirit spoke from God.** [Cf., e.g., 2 Tim. 3:16.]

## 2 PETER CHAPTER 2

**But false prophets also arose among the people** [The apostle Peter was speaking of the false prophets who arose among the people of Israel in Old Testament days. The false prophets often outnumbered the true prophets.], **just as there will also be false teachers among you** [There is widespread agreement that, although Peter used the future tense here and in the next two verses, he was not speaking of false teachers who would come *only* in the future.<sup>29</sup> False teachers were already present among the Christians at that time; much of what Peter wrote in this epistle he wrote against these false teachers. Peter goes on to speak of these false teachers in verses 10-22 in the present tense.], **who will secretly introduce destructive heresies** [more literally, “heresies of destruction” (“destruction” comes from the Greek noun *apōleia*)], **even denying the Master** [Compare 2 Tim. 2:12; Titus 1:16 (“They profess to know God, but by their deeds they deny Him, being detestable and disobedient and worthless for any good deed”); and Jude 1:4 (“For certain persons have crept in unnoticed, those who were long beforehand marked out for this condemnation; ungodly persons who turn the grace of our God into licentiousness and deny our only Master and Lord, Jesus Christ”).] **who bought them** [The Lord Jesus *bought them* with His blood (cf. Acts 20:28; 1 Cor. 6:20; 7:23; 1 Pet. 1:18, 19; Rev. 5:9; and 14:3, 4). These words (along with the words of 2 Pet. 2:15, 20-22) demonstrate that Peter spoke of these false teachers as those who had become born-again Christians (not that all false teachers in the body of Christ had at one time been true Christians). Peter didn’t believe once saved, necessarily always saved (cf. 1 Pet. 1:17; 2:1, 2<sup>30</sup>; 3:8-12; 4:15-19; 2 Pet. 1:5-11; 2:1-22 [especially 2:15, 20-22]; and 3:9, 14-17).<sup>31</sup>], **bringing swift destruction** [“destruction,” Greek *apōleia*] **upon themselves.** [Based on what Peter says as he continues, he apparently was thinking of two stages of *destruction* awaiting these false teachers.<sup>32</sup> There would be two stages of destruction for these false teachers if the Lord

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<sup>29</sup> There is also widespread agreement that, although the apostle Paul used the future tense in 1 Tim. 4:1 (“But the Spirit explicitly says that in later times some will fall away from the faith, paying attention to deceitful spirits and doctrines of demons”) and in 2 Tim. 3:1, 2 (see 2 Tim. 3:1-9), he was not speaking of things limited to the future. He was dealing with serious problems that had already arisen.

I’ll quote part of what Simon J. Kistemaker says here (*Peter and Jude* [Baker, 1987], pages 280, 281). “Just as there were many false prophets in Israel, Peter writes, so ‘there will be false teachers among you.’ Notice that he uses the future tense to warn the people about the coming of false teachers. He is aware of their presence and knows that others will come.”

Peter may have used the future tense to help demonstrate that Christians had been forewarned that these things would come to pass (cf., e.g., Matt. 24:4, 5, 9-13, 24, 25; Acts 20:26-31; and 1 Tim. 4:1). For more on this viewpoint, see the commentaries on 2 *Peter* by Douglas J. Moo and by Michael Green.

<sup>30</sup> “Like newborn babes you should crave—thirst for, earnestly desire—the pure (unadulterated) spiritual milk, that by it you may be nurtured and grow unto [completed] salvation” (1 Pet. 2:2 *Amplified Bible*). The word “completed” in brackets is included in the *Amplified Bible*. Our salvation is (in some very important ways) still future for us; it is not completed yet (cf., e.g., 1 Pet. 1:4-9; 2 Pet. 1:9-11). We must continue to press on in faith to the end.

<sup>31</sup> For more on this important topic, see my paper *Once Saved, Always Saved?* and see the Appendix of this present paper.

<sup>32</sup> Many false teachers can still repent, but Peter seems to consider (at least most of) these particular false teachers to be beyond repentance (cf., e.g., Heb. 6:6).

Jesus didn't return soon to judge the world, which He didn't. By the words *swift destruction*, Peter was apparently thinking of a soon-coming judgment (from God) against these false teachers that would remove them from the earthly scene and leave them prisoners in Hades awaiting their completed *destruction* (the second stage of their destruction) at the time of God's end-time judgment (see 2 Pet. 2:4-22).<sup>33</sup> Because of the extreme seriousness of the sin of these false teachers, including its widespread effect on other Christians, Peter expected *swift judgment*; God may have informed him that their judgment was imminent. Sometimes God delays His judgments, but His judgments will always ultimately come against unresolved sin.] **(2) Many will follow their sensuality** [cf. 2 Pet. 2:7, 10-22; and 3:3], **and because of them the way** [cf. Acts 9:2; 19:9, 23; 22:4; 24:14, 22] **of the truth will be maligned** [Christianity, which is "the way of the truth," will be maligned. Walking in the way of the *truth* includes holding the *truth* (correct doctrine) and walking in the righteousness and holiness of the *truth* (cf. Eph. 4:24). In 2 Pet. 2:21 Peter speaks of "the way of righteousness." "Sensuality" (or any other sin) isn't compatible with the "truth" of God or "righteousness."]; **(3) and in their greed** [Compare 2 Pet. 2:14, 15. Their *greed* at least included using their supposed status as Christian "ministers" to raise plenty of money for themselves.] **they will exploit you with false words** [words that do not square with the truth of God (cf., e.g., 2 Pet. 2:1, 18, 19; 3:3, 4, and 17)]; **their judgment from long ago is not idle, and their destruction** [Greek *apōleia* (used in 2:1; 3:7, 16)] **is not asleep** [see 2 Pet. 2:1, 4-22; 3:7]. **(4) For if God did not spare angels when they sinned, but cast them into hell** ["Tartarus" is a better translation than "hell." The BAGD Greek Lexicon gives "hold captive in Tartarus" as the meaning for the Greek verb used here (*tartarōō*; actually it's an aorist participle formed from this Greek verb). This Greek verb wasn't used anywhere else in the New Testament. A. T. Robertson points out that this verb was derived from the Greek noun *Tartaros*, which "occurs in Enoch 20:2 as the place of punishment of the fallen angels...."<sup>34</sup> I'll also quote a sentence from what the *Exegetical Dictionary of the New Testament* says under this Greek verb, "In Greek mythology Tartarus is the place of punishment of the Titans and disobedient gods and is conceived as a gloomy place deep under the earth...occasionally also as the deepest place in Hades...."<sup>35</sup>

There is widespread agreement that the angels spoken of here (and in Jude 1:6) are the angels that sinned in the way briefly described in Gen. 6:1-7. Jude 1:6, 7, which I'll quote under 2:6, help confirm this interpretation.] **and committed them to pits of darkness, reserved for judgment** [Those angels, like the people now in Hades, are still awaiting their *final* judgment (cf. Rev. 20:5, 12-15).<sup>36</sup>]; **(5) and did not spare the**

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<sup>33</sup> Note that the three past intense judgments against sin mentioned by Peter in verses 4-6 were judgments that removed the sinners from the earthly scene and that they are now awaiting their final judgment at the end of the age. Peter mentions the end-time "day of judgment" in 2 Pet. 2:9 and the end-time "day of judgment and destruction [*apōleia*] of ungodly men" in 2 Pet. 3:7. Destruction on the end-time day of judgment doesn't mean annihilation; it means the eternal lake of fire (cf., e.g., Matt. 25:46; Rev. 20:10, 14, 15).

<sup>34</sup> *Word Pictures in the New Testament*, Vol. 6 [Broadman Press, 1933], page 162.

<sup>35</sup> Vol. 3 [Eerdmans, English translation 1993], page 336.

<sup>36</sup> The final judgment of the men still in Hades at the end of the millennium spoken of in Rev. 20:11-15 (which excludes all the members of God's true Israel; they will be glorified and reigning with Christ

**ancient world, but preserved Noah, a preacher of righteousness, with seven others, when He brought a flood upon the world of the ungodly** [On the flood that destroyed all mankind except for Noah and his family, see Gen. 6:1-9:19; 1 Pet. 3:19, 20.]; **(6) and if He condemned the cities of Sodom and Gomorrah to destruction by reducing them to ashes, having made them an example to those who would live ungodly lives thereafter** [I'll quote Jude 1:6, 7, "And angels who did not keep their own domain [the domain assigned by God], but abandoned their proper abode, He has kept in eternal bonds under darkness ["these he has kept in darkness, bound in everlasting chains" NIV] for the judgment of the great day, just as Sodom and Gomorrah and the cities around them, since they in the same way as these indulged in gross immorality and went after strange [literally, *different* or *other*] flesh, are exhibited as an example in undergoing the punishment of eternal fire." The NIV seems to better communicate the meaning for the last words of Jude 1:7, "They [in that they were judged and destroyed by fire from heaven (see Gen. 19:24-28)] serve as an example of those who [will] suffer the punishment of eternal fire." See Gen. 18:16-19:29; Isa. 1:9; Matt. 11:23; and Rom. 9:29.]; **(7) and if He rescued righteous Lot** [see Gen. 19:10-22, 29], **oppressed by the sensual conduct** [cf. 2 Pet. 2:2, 18; Jude 1:4<sup>37</sup>] **of unprincipled** [cf. 2 Pet. 3:17] **men** [cf., e.g., Gen. 18:20-32; 19:1-14, and 26 (with 19:17).] **(8) (for by what he saw and heard that righteous man, while living among them, felt his righteous soul tormented day after day by their lawless deeds** [Lot was relatively *righteous*, but he had much room for improvement. For one thing, he was not compelled to live at Sodom (cf. Gen. 13:1-13); also see Gen. 19:30-38. Peter undoubtedly wrote these words of verses 7, 8 (starting with the word "oppressed") in a form that his Christian brethren living in the sinful world could identify with. In this context, Peter was undoubtedly zeroing in on the lawless deeds of the false teachers and those following them.]), **(9) then the Lord knows how to rescue the godly from temptation** [The NIV has "trials."], **and to keep the unrighteous under punishment for the day of judgment** [The NKJV has, "then the Lord knows how to deliver the godly out of temptations and to reserve the unjust under punishment for the day of judgment."]

Peter wasn't speaking here, it doesn't seem, of the godly being rescued from trials and temptations by the second coming of Christ and the rapture.<sup>38</sup> (It is true, however, that the godly of the last generation will be rescued from all temptation and trials through the second coming of Christ and the rapture.) He was speaking, it seems, of the godly being delivered from being overcome by trials and temptations,<sup>39</sup> which has some correspondence with Noah and his family's being delivered from his sinful generation by the ark and the judgment of the flood and with Lot's being delivered from the trials

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throughout the millennial kingdom) and of Satan (Rev. 20:10) will not come to pass until the end of the millennium (at the end of God's end-time judgment of the world).

<sup>37</sup> These verses, including 2 Pet. 2:7, all use the Greek noun *aselgeia*, which means *sensuality, licentiousness*.

<sup>38</sup> That viewpoint wouldn't fit well with what Peter goes on to say in the second half of this verse (2:9). Peter couldn't hardly have spoken of the godly being rescued by the second coming of Christ in the first half of this verse and then gone on in the second half of the verse to speak of the unrighteous being kept under punishment for the day of judgment that would begin with the second coming of Christ. In 2 Pet. 3:3-22 Peter shows that the day of judgment will begin when Christ returns.

<sup>39</sup> See 1 Cor. 10:13. Jesus taught His disciples to pray, "And do not lead us into temptation, but deliver us from evil [or, *the evil one*]" (Matt. 6:13).

and temptations of Sodom. Peter may well have included the idea here (in context with 2:4-10) that God would remove the trials and temptations that were being caused by the false teachers by removing the false teachers with swift judgment. Anyway, this wouldn't mean that no more false teachers would arise. False teachers will be here until Christ returns, along with the many other sources of trials and temptations that Christians must confront. However, as 1 Cor. 10:13 (and much other scripture) shows, God's grace always is sufficient to enable believers to walk in victory over all sin.

From Peter's point of view, Christ (and the day of judgment) could come very soon, but He would not necessarily come very soon (cf. 2 Pet. 3:3-18). Peter was speaking here in 2:9 of the *unrighteous* God would remove by judgment *before* the day of judgment and keep under punishment for the day of judgment.<sup>40</sup> Having been judged by God (which includes physical death), they will be kept under punishment (in Hades<sup>41</sup>) for the day of judgment that will begin when Christ returns to the earth.<sup>42</sup>, **(10) and especially those who indulge the flesh in its corrupt desires** [Compare 2 Pet. 2:2, 18-22; 3:3; and Jude 1:16, 18. The Greek noun (*epithumia*) that was translated "desires" here in 2:10 was also used in 2 Pet. 1:4; 2:18; 3:3; and Jude 1:16, 18 (it was translated "lusts" by the NASB in 2 Pet. 1:4; 3:3; and Jude 1:16, 18).] **and despise authority.** [See Jude 1:8-10. It seems clear that these men despised the *authority* of God in general, including His authority in the Christian church, but when Peter used the Greek noun *kuriotēs* translated *authority* here, he may have just been speaking of the authority of the *angelic majesties* that he goes on to speak of in the second half of this verse. Paul's use of this Greek noun in Eph. 1:21; Col. 1:16 (where it was translated "dominion(s)" by the NASB) helps confirm that this could have been what Peter intended.

I'll quote part of what Craig S. Keener says here.<sup>43</sup> "A wide variety of Jewish texts mention those who reviled the stars of heaven or cursed Satan or demons. Peter's opponents have presumably adopted this practice, perhaps as a form of [what they considered to be] 'spiritual warfare.' " **Daring, self-willed** [cf. Titus 1:7], **they do not tremble when they revile angelic majesties, (11) whereas angels who are greater in might and power** [Peter apparently spoke of "angels [like Michael the archangel (see Jude 1:9)] who are greater in might and power" than the evil "angelic majesties."] **do not bring a reviling judgment against them** [against the *angelic majesties*] **before the Lord.** [See Jude 1:8-10. Those verses in Jude indicate that the *angelic majesties* that Peter was speaking of included the devil. (They were undoubtedly headed up by the devil, but God is the ultimate authority.) We don't know exactly what the false teachers were doing (nor do we need to know), but apparently their religious repertoire included putting on a show as they reviled<sup>44</sup> the devil and those under him with great boldness,

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<sup>40</sup> Compare "bringing swift destruction upon themselves" [2 Pet. 2:1] and the judgments just spoken of in verses 4-8.

<sup>41</sup> Compare Matt. 11:23; Luke 10:15; and especially Luke 16:23.

<sup>42</sup> Based on the book of Revelation, we know that the unrighteous dead will not be raised for their final judgment until the end of the millennial kingdom (Rev. 20:5, 12, 13).

<sup>43</sup> *Bible Background Commentary, New Testament* [Inter-Varsity Press, 1993], page 729.

<sup>44</sup> In 2 Pet. 2:11 Peter spoke of "reviling angelic majesties." I'll quote part of what the *Webster's New World Dictionary* says under *revile*, "to use abusive or contemptuous language in speaking to or about; call bad names." The false teachers may have said, for example, that they were using their God-given authority to judge angels (cf. 1 Cor. 6:1-3), but when the apostle Paul spoke of Christians judging angels

thereby supposedly demonstrating their great authority and insight. The false teachers may have thought they knew what they were doing, but Peter considered them to be far out of order here too. In the next verse Peter goes on to say, “reviling where they have no knowledge.”] **(12) But these, like unreasoning animals, born as creatures of instinct to be captured and killed** [or, “destroyed”; *phthora*<sup>45</sup>], **reviling where they have no knowledge** [see 2 Pet. 2:10b, 11], **will in the destruction** [*phthora*] **of those creatures also be destroyed** [The translations and interpretations regarding the second half of this verse vary considerably. In the margin the NASB points out that the literal translation is “in their destruction also be destroyed,” not “in the destruction of those creatures also be destroyed.” With the literal translation, we can see Peter’s intended meaning. The words “in their destruction” refer, I believe, to the destruction caused by the false teachers.<sup>46</sup> A. T. Robertson<sup>47</sup> and the ASV have, “shall in their destroying surely be destroyed.” The KJV and NKJV are similar, “shall/will utterly perish in their corruption.”<sup>48</sup> The *New American Bible* is similar also, “Because of their decadence they too will be destroyed.” The interpretation of the last words of verse 12 that I am presenting here fits perfectly with the first words of verse 13. The *New American Bible* put these words together at the end of verse 12, “Because of their decadence they too will be destroyed, suffering the reward of their wickedness.”], **(13) suffering wrong as the wages of doing wrong.** [The false teachers were headed for destruction by God’s swift judgment (cf. 2 Pet. 2:1). Being removed from the earthly scene by God’s swift judgment was only the tip of the iceberg for them; still to come was God’s eternal judgment/destruction.] **They count it a pleasure to revel** [The NKJV, NIV have “to carouse”; we could also translate “to indulge” (see the BAGD Greek Lexicon).] **in the daytime.** [The false teachers didn’t limit their reveling to the nighttime (cf. 1 Thess. 5:7). Peter gives more information about their reveling/carousing/indulging as he continues.] **They are stains** [or *spots* (Greek *spilos*)] **and blemishes** [Greek *mōmos*. In 2 Pet. 3:14 Peter exhorts his readers to “be diligent to be found by Him in peace, spotless and blameless.” The Greek adjective translated spotless there is *aspilos*; the Greek adjective translated blameless there is *amōmos*.], **reveling** [The Greek participle used here was formed from the verb *entrophāō*, which is closely related to the Greek noun (*truphē*) translated “to revel” earlier in the verse. The NKJV has “carousing” here; the NIV has “reveling.”] **in their deceptions** [The Greek noun (*apatē*) used here (in a plural form) could also be translated “pleasures” with the NIV; the BAGD Greek Lexicon gives “pleasure” as one meaning for this word; it gives “lusts” as the meaning here.], **as they carouse** [The NIV translates “while they feast with you.” BAGD gives

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(1 Cor. 6:3), he was speaking of something that true Christians will do after they are glorified. The false teacher’s reviling the angelic majesties undoubtedly included mocking them and threatening them.

<sup>45</sup> This Greek noun was derived from the verb *phtheirō*, the verb translated “be destroyed” at the end of this verse.

<sup>46</sup> This is very much like 2 Pet. 2:1, “But false prophets also arose among the people, just as there will also be false teachers among you, who will secretly introduce heresies of destruction, even denying the Master who bought them, bringing swift destruction upon themselves.” A different Greek noun (*apōleia*) was used for destruction in 2:1; that noun was used twice in 2:1 (see on 2:1). Those who “secretly introduce destructive heresies” are going to bring “swift destruction upon themselves.”

<sup>47</sup> *Word Pictures*, page 166.

<sup>48</sup> The Greek noun (*phthora*) can also be translated *corruption*; this noun was translated *corruption* by the NASB in 2 Pet. 2:19.

“feast together” as the meaning of this Greek verb, which is only used here and in Jude 1:12 in the New Testament. I’ll quote Jude 1:12, “These are the men who are hidden reefs [or *stains/spots* (a plural form of the Greek noun *spilos* that was mentioned above)] in your love feasts when they feast with you without fear, caring for themselves....” **with you, (14) having eyes full of adultery that never cease from sin** [cf. 1 John 2:15-17<sup>49</sup>; their eyes were filled with the [sinful] things they desired in their adulterous hearts], **enticing** [The Greek participle translated “enticing” here was formed from the verb *deleazō*. This verb is also used in verse 18, “they entice by fleshly desires, by sensuality.” Compare 2 Pet. 2:2, 6-10, 18-22; 3:3; and 2 Tim. 3:6. This Greek verb means to entice with bait (in fishing and in snaring). The bait the false teachers used to entice unstable souls was fleshly desires, sensuality.] **unstable** [cf. James 1:8; 2 Pet. 3:16] **souls, having a heart trained in greed**<sup>50</sup> [cf. 2 Pet. 2:3, 15], **accursed children** [Peter frequently mentions the accursed status of these false teachers in this epistle.]; **(15) forsaking the right way** [Peter speaks of the false teachers as those who had walked in “the right way” at one time (cf. 2 Pet. 2:1, 20-22), not that this was (or is) true of every false teacher in the Christian church.], **they have gone astray, having followed the way of Balaam, the son of Beor, who loved the wages of unrighteousness** [cf. Num. 22:1-24:25; 31:8, 16; Deut. 23:4, 5; Josh. 13:22; Neh. 13:2; 2 Pet. 2:13; Jude 1:11; and Rev. 2:14]; **(16) but he received a rebuke for his own transgression, for a mute donkey, speaking with a voice of a man, restrained the madness of the prophet** [Num. 22:21-35]. **(17) These** [Peter is still speaking of the false teachers.] **are springs without water** [cf. Jude 1:12] **and mists driven by a storm, for whom the black darkness has been reserved** [“for whom the black darkness has been reserved forever” (Jude 1:13). Compare Matt. 8:12; 22:13; 25:30<sup>51</sup>; and 2 Pet. 2:4; Jude 1:6 (the last two verses cited mention the place of darkness in which the evil angels are being kept for the final judgment).]. **(18) For speaking out arrogant** [cf. Jude 1:16] **words of vanity they entice** [cf. 2 Pet. 2:14] **by fleshly desires, by sensuality** [see under 2 Pet. 2:2, 14], **those who barely escape** [On “escape” see 2 Pet. 1:4; 2:20] **from the ones who live in error** [The false teachers entice by fleshly desires, by sensuality, those who have barely escaped from the sinful error(s) of the non-Christians. Some of those being enticed were undoubtedly recently converted (the NIV translates, “they entice people who are just escaping from those who live in error”), but it’s also true that some believers who have been Christians for a long time haven’t really escaped from their sinful non-Christian past. Believers like that have

<sup>49</sup> I’ll quote 1 John 2:16, 17, “For all that is in the world, the lust of the flesh and the lust of the eyes and the boastful pride of life, is not from the Father, but is from the world. The world is passing away, and *also* its lusts; but the one who does the will of God lives forever.” The Greek noun translated *lust(s)* three times in these verses is *epithumia*. See under 2 Pet. 2:10 on this Greek noun.

<sup>50</sup> The Greek confirms that the words “having a heart trained in greed” refer to the false teachers, not to the “unstable souls.” I’ll quote part of what Moo says regarding the word *greed* here (*2 Peter and Jude* [Zondervan, 1996], page 127). “The word ‘greed’ (*pleonexia*) is a broad term. In Ephesians 4:19, for instance, Paul writes about those who have ‘given themselves over to sensuality so as to indulge in every kind of impurity, with a continual lust [*pleonexia*] for more.’ In other words, ‘greed’ need not relate only to money.... ..”

<sup>51</sup> Apparently there isn’t any difference between the eternal “black darkness” and the eternal lake of fire. See the discussion on the “outer darkness” under Matt. 25:30 in my eschatological paper dated November 1998.

a desperate need to submit to the things that Peter said in 2 Pet. 1:3-11 with top priority. There is no excuse for allowing oneself to be enticed.], **(19) promising them freedom while they themselves [the false teachers] are slaves of corruption; for by what a man is overcome, by this he is enslaved.** [Compare, for example, John 8:31-36; Rom. 6:1-22; 1 Cor. 6:12; and Gal. 5:13. Romans 6:16 (speaking to Christians) says, “Do you not know that when you present yourselves to someone *as* slaves for obedience, you are slaves of the one you obey, either of sin resulting in [spiritual] death, or of obedience [to God and the gospel] resulting in righteousness.”

We don't know exactly what *freedom* the false teachers promised, nor is it important for us to know—we know that it was a bogus freedom. Their *freedom* undoubtedly included being free from the requirement to live according to at least part of God's moral law. Their teaching may have included a twisted version of some of the apostle Paul's words about Christians not being under the law (cf., e.g., Rom. 3:8; 6:14; and 2 Pet. 3:16).<sup>52</sup> They may have said that enlightened Christians (like themselves) were so spiritual that it didn't really matter what they did in the natural realm. They may have boasted that they weren't afraid to go on Satan's turf (cf. 2 Pet. 2:10, 11; Rev. 2:24).

Significantly, their false teaching apparently included a denial of the fact that the day of judgment was coming for them (cf. 2 Pet. 1:16-21; 3:3-14). “By removing the sanction of eschatological judgment the false teachers were encouraging their followers to return to the morally lax way of pagan society.”<sup>53</sup> The false teachers may have twisted the Christian doctrine that we have (in some ways) already had our final judgment (e.g., John 5:24) to teach that we have already arrived and need not be concerned about any future judgment (but, cf., e.g., Rom. 14:10-12; 2 Cor. 5:9, 10; and Rev. 22:10-12). They could have put all the emphasis on forgiveness and legal and positional righteousness and denied the need for Christians to actually live in righteousness and holiness; this is a very serious problem in our day.] **(20) For if, after they have escaped the defilements of the world by the knowledge of the Lord and Savior Jesus Christ** [See 2 Pet. 1:1-4. The Greek noun (*epignōsis*) translated “knowledge” here was also used in 2 Pet. 1:2, 3, which further confirms that Peter wrote from the viewpoint that these false teachers had become born-again Christians. We need not assume, however, and I do not assume that these false teachers had all *fully* escaped the defilements of the world at some earlier time.], **they are again entangled** [cf. 2 Tim. 2:4] **in them and are overcome, the last state has become worse for them than the first.** [Compare Matt. 12:45; Luke 11:26; and 12:47, 48. Peter goes on to show what he means by the words “the last state has become worse for them than the first.” The “first [state]” refers to the state the false teachers were in before they became Christians; they would have been better off to never have become Christians than to have become Christians and then fall away from the faith. For one thing, the more light and grace we have received from God, the more responsible we are for our sin (cf., e.g., Heb. 10:26-31; James 4:17).] **(21) For it would be better for them not to have known the way of righteousness** [Compare 2 Pet. 1:2-11. Christianity is the “way of righteousness,” with

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<sup>52</sup> Significantly, Paul also taught that the bottom line of Christianity is that Christians fulfill the Law in their daily lives, being enabled through the atoning death and resurrection of Christ and by the Holy Spirit (cf., e.g., Rom. 2:26, 27; Rom. 8:4; and 1 Cor. 7:19). Christians are not required to keep the ceremonial law.

<sup>53</sup> Richard J. Bauckham, *Jude, 2 Peter* [Word, 1983], page 274.

the emphasis being on the fact that Christians live righteous lives by the grace/Spirit of God, having appropriated the very righteousness of God (cf. 2 Pet. 1:2; see under that verse). Peter mentioned “the right way” in 2:15., **than having known it, to turn away from the holy commandment** [Compare 1 Tim. 6:14; 2 Pet. 3:2. To turn away from *the holy commandment* is to turn away from salvation in Christ Jesus. By speaking of *the holy commandment*, Peter was again emphasizing the fact that a big part of what Christianity is all about is living *holy* lives in accordance with *the commandments* of God’s Law by the grace of God (in Christ Jesus) through faith.] **handed on to them** [cf. Jude 1:3]. **(22) It has happened to them according to the true proverb, “A DOG RETURNS TO ITS OWN VOMIT** [cf. Prov. 26:11],” **and, “A sow, after washing, returns to wallowing in the mire.”** [Although the words of verses 20-22 were aimed (at least for the most part at the false teachers), it was to be understood that the same truth would apply to those Christians who let themselves be enticed to follow the false teachers and their false gospel, thereby denying the Lord Jesus Christ and His salvation.]

## 2 PETER CHAPTER 3

**This is now, beloved** [cf. 1 Pet. 2:11; 2 Pet. 3:8, 14, 17], **the second letter I am writing to you** [The *first* letter Peter wrote to them could have been 1 Peter, but it is also quite possible that we don't have the first letter he wrote to these particular Christians.] **in which I am stirring up your sincere mind** [The NIV has, "to stimulate you to wholesome thinking."] **by way of reminder** [cf. 2 Pet. 1:12, 13], **(2) that you should remember the words spoken beforehand by the holy prophets** [Peter is speaking of the Old Testament prophets here (cf. Luke 1:70; Acts 3:21; 1 Pet. 1:10-12; and 2 Pet. 1:16, 19-21).] **and the commandment of the Lord and Savior spoken by your apostles.** [The *commandment* here (as in 2 Pet. 2:21; cf. 1 Tim. 6:14) includes all that Christ requires of His disciples in accordance with the new covenant. Christians must live in the truth, righteousness, and holiness of God (by grace through faith) in light of the fact that the day of judgment is coming.] **(3) Know this first of all** [cf. 2 Pet. 1:20], **that in the last days mockers will come** [Compare Jude 1:17-19. There is widespread agreement that, although Peter used the future tense here, mockers had already come. They were not unexpected (see under 2 Peter 2:1), and note that Peter goes on to speak of the mockers in the present tense in 2 Pet. 3:5.] **with their mocking** [Peter tells us more about the mockers and their mocking as he continues.], **following after their own lusts** [On the Greek noun used here (*epithumia*), see under 2 Pet. 2:10.], **(4) and saying, "Where is the promise of His coming?"** [The Greek noun translated *coming* here and in 2 Pet. 1:16; 3:12 (and often) is *parousia*.] **For ever since the fathers** [Peter is apparently speaking of the Old Testament *fathers* here (cf. John 6:31; Acts 3:13; and Heb. 1:1).] **fell asleep, all continues just as it was from the beginning of creation."** [The mockers were denying "the promise of His coming" given in God's prophetic word or interpreting it in a way that denied a literal fulfillment (cf. 2 Pet. 1:20).

A primary point that Peter made in the first chapter of this letter was that the Lord Jesus Christ is coming in power (2 Pet. 1:16) at the end of this age. He is coming to save His own and to judge the world. He is coming in accordance with God's prophetic word (2 Pet. 1:19-21). Peter said what he did in 2 Pet. 1:16-21 knowing that some were denying Christ's all-important second coming. Throughout chapter 2, Peter dealt with false teachers and their sinful lifestyle that was characterized by lust. There is widespread agreement that the false teachers of chapter 2 were denying the coming of the Lord to judge sin and that Peter had them in mind when he wrote 2 Pet. 1:16-21. There is also widespread agreement that when Peter spoke of the mockers of chapter 3 who were denying the "promise of His coming" he had the false teachers in mind. The fact that the sinful, lust-filled lifestyle of the false teachers matches that of the mockers fits that viewpoint, but there is no need to insist that the mockers of chapter 3 are to be fully equated with the false teachers of chapter 2.] **(5) For when they maintain this, it escapes their notice that** [In the margin the NASB has, "Or *they are willfully ignorant of this fact, that,*" which is better. The NIV has, "But they deliberately forget that." The NKJV has, "For this they willfully forget: that."] **by the word of God** [cf. Gen. 1:1-10] **the heavens existed long ago and the earth was formed out of** ["out of" (Greek *ek*)] **water and by** ["by" (Greek *dia*)] **water** [The translation and interpretation of these last

words of verse 5 isn't easy, but the overall meaning of verses 5, 6 is clear enough. I don't believe Peter meant to say that God created the solid material of the earth out of water. I prefer a translation like, "and the earth existing<sup>54</sup> out of water [in the sense spoken of in Gen. 1:9, 10: The waters below the heavens were gathered into one place and the dry land appeared] and between [instead of "by"] water [Genesis 7:11 (cf. Gen. 8:2) speaks of the windows of heaven being opened (to release the waters *above* the earth<sup>55</sup>) and of the bursting open of the fountains of the great deep (to release the waters *beneath* the earth) at the time of Noah's flood."<sup>56</sup> The earth, by God's design ("by the word of God"), was created *between* the waters (the waters above and the waters beneath). Apparently Peter was inferring that (at least one reason) God created the world as He did was to prepare for the judgment of the flood]., **(6) through which** [The Greek word behind *which* here is plural. I prefer the viewpoint that it refers to the waters above the earth and the waters beneath the earth that God loosed to cause the flood. The NIV translates, "By these waters."<sup>57</sup>] **the world at that time was destroyed, being flooded with water.** [Compare Gen. 6:5-8:22; 2 Pet. 2:5. The fact that God judged the ancient world with the flood, thereby destroying the ungodly, demonstrates that what the mockers were saying was not true, that "all continues just as it was from

<sup>54</sup> See the BAGD Greek Lexicon on the Greek verb used here (*sunistēmi*).

<sup>55</sup> On the waters above the earth, see Gen. 1:6, 7.

<sup>56</sup> R. C. H. Lenski (*Interpretation of 1 and 2 Epistles of Peter, the three Epistles of John, and the Epistle of Jude* [Augsburg, 1966], pages 341, 342) translates, "there were heavens of old and an earth existing out of water and between water..." I'll quote part of what Lenski says here, "He describes the earth as existing (the second perfect feminine participle *sunestōsa* is to be understood in this sense, B.-P. 268) 'out of water (having risen out of it) and between water' (that above in the clouds, that below in the fountains of the deep). Genesis 7:11: 'The same day were all the fountains of the deep broken up, and the windows (literally floodgates) of heaven were opened.' We translate... 'between water'; see R. 580 [referring to A. T. Robertson's *Grammar of the Greek New Testament in the Light of Historical Research*] for the 'between' idea of *dia*." *Dia* is the Greek preposition that Lenski translates "between."

I'll quote part of what D. Edmond Hiebert says here (*Second Peter and Jude* [Unusual Publications, 1989], page 147). "...it seems simpler to adhere to the usual local force of the preposition [*ek*] as denoting the emergence of the land formerly covered by water. ... The rendering 'amidst [*dia*] water' (ASV) takes the preposition in a local sense as denoting 'amidst' or 'between,' thus indicating that the earth stood between the waters that were around and under it and the waters that were above the firmament. This view is in agreement with the two sources of water producing the Flood mentioned in Gen. 7:11. ... The view that the preposition here means 'amidst' or 'between' seems simpler as explaining the arrangement that made possible the Flood."

I'll also quote part of what Richard J. Bauckham says here (*Jude, 2 Peter* [Word, 1983], page 297). "Some give *dia* a local sense [Bauckham doesn't favor this viewpoint], 'between, in the midst of the waters' (RV, JB [*Jerusalem Bible* "and between the waters"], Mayor, James, Chaine, Wand, Spicq), which accords well with the creation account (Gen. 1:6-7, 9), but would be an unusual use of the preposition..." It is true that "between" is an unusual use for the Greek preposition *dia*. This preposition (when used with the ablative/genitive case as it is here) would normally be translated "through," as it is at the beginning of 2 Pet. 3:6. The *Greek-English Lexicon* by H. G. Liddell and R. Scott ([University Press, Oxford, 1973], page 388) gives "in the midst of, between" as one meaning for the Greek preposition *dia*.

<sup>57</sup> I'll quote part of what Simon J. Kistemaker says here (*Peter and Jude* [Baker, 1987], page 329). "When God commanded the waters to destroy man and beast on the face of the earth, 'all the springs of the great deep burst forth, and the floodgates of the heavens were opened' (Gen. 7:11; also see 8:2). Water came from below and from above and covered the earth so that 'everything on dry land that had the breath of life in its nostrils died' (7:22). Only Noah and his household, along with the animals he had brought on the ark, survived the raging waters of the flood."

the beginning of creation” (2 Pet. 3:4). Also, significantly, the flood foreshadowed God’s end-time judgment of the world (cf. 1 Pet. 3:20, 21).<sup>58</sup> **(7) But [or, And] by His word the present heavens and earth are being reserved for fire** [See 2 Pet. 3:10, 12. The Greek could be translated “are stored up with fire.”<sup>59</sup> If translated that way, the *fire* of this verse would have some correspondence with the waters stored up for the judgment of the flood just spoken of in verses 5, 6. It isn’t difficult to picture fire being stored up for the end-times. We can think, for example, of the fire associated with the sun and stars (atomic energy); of the fire of meteors; of the fire associated with volcanoes and the core of the earth; of the fire of lightning; and of the fire and brimstone like that which God rained on Sodom and Gomorrah when He judged those cities (Gen. 19:24-28).], **kept for the day of judgment and destruction of ungodly men.** [Many verses speak of the day of judgment coming with fire (cf., e.g., Isa. 66:15, 24; Dan. 7:9-11; Mal. 4:1; 2 Thess. 1:7-10; Heb. 10:25-29; 12:29; Jude 1:7; Rev. 17:16, 17; 18:8; 19:3, 20; 20:9, 10, 14, 15; and 21:8). God’s judgment of the present world with fire, which includes the destruction and removal (not annihilation) of the ungodly, will make way for God’s new heaven and new earth that are filled with righteousness, holiness, and eternal glory.] **(8) But do not let this one fact escape your notice, beloved, that with the Lord one day is like a thousand years, and a thousand years like one day.** [Compare Psalm 90:4. What seems like a very long time to us is not a long time with God. (For one thing, He isn’t limited to the time system of our world, which He created.) And, as Peter goes on to show (2 Pet. 3:9, 15), God has reasons for not being in a hurry to send back His Son to judge the world. But He will come, and He will come at the right time. The mockers were/are wrong. The primary thing we need to be concerned about is that we are always ready for His coming (cf., e.g., Matt. 24:45-25:30; Luke 18:1-8; and 2 Pet. 3:9, 11, 12, 14, 15).] **(9) The Lord is not slow about His promise** [He won’t be late/tardy; He will come at the right time, in accordance with His promise. Compare 2 Pet. 3:4 (“the promise of His coming”); Hab. 2:3; and Heb. 10:35-39.], **as some** [The word “some” apparently referred to those Christians who were concerned that the Lord was slow/late in His coming,<sup>60</sup> not to the mockers spoken of earlier in this chapter, who were denying His coming and the day of judgment

<sup>58</sup> 1 Peter 3:18-4:6 are discussed on pages 137-147 of my paper dated November 1998.

<sup>59</sup> I’ll quote part of what Hiebert says under this verse (2 *Peter and Jude*, page 149). “The present heavens and earth ‘have been stored up for fire,’ awaiting a cataclysm of fire rather than water. ... One might also render the words as ‘stored with fire’ (ASV margin).

I’ll quote a sentence from what Kenneth E. Wuest says under this verse (*In These Last Days* [Eerdmans, 1954], page 68). “The present heavens and earth have been stored with fire with the present result that the deposit of fire with which they were stored resides in them as a permanent deposit.”

And I’ll quote a paragraph from what Bauckham says here (*Jude, 2 Peter*, pages 299, 300). He is commenting on the meaning of the words of 2 Pet. 3:7 that he translates, “have been held in store for fire.” “The choice of verb is a little surprising, but may be influenced by the common use of this image, also with the sense of preservation until the Day of Judgment, with reference to the rewards of the righteous and the punishment of the ungodly ‘stored up’ in heaven (*Pss. Sol.* 9:5; 4 Ezra 7:77, 83-84; *Fragmentary Targums* Deut. 32:34; Rom. 2:5; *Clem. Hom.* 16:20). The Hellenistic Jewish writer Pseudo-Sophocles (*ap. Clem. Alex., Strom.* 5:14.121.4), writing of the eschatological conflagration, says that the air ‘will open the storehouse full of fire’ (...cf. Deut. 32:34; Jer. 27:25 LXX).”

<sup>60</sup> Teaching like that contained in Matt. 24:34 (cf. Matt. 10:23; 16:29) led many first-generation Christians to believe that Christ would return within that generation. If 2 Peter was written about AD 65 (see under 2 Pet. 1:14), some thirty-five years had already passed since the new covenant had been inaugurated in the blood of the Lamb and by the outpoured Spirit.

altogether. The mockers undoubtedly contributed to the concern of those Christians.] **count** [Or, “regard.” This same Greek verb is translated “regard” in 2 Pet. 3:15, where Peter says “regard the patience of God *as* salvation.”] **slowness, but is patient toward you** [The word “you” here (which is plural in the Greek) fits the idea that Peter was dealing with the need for (some) Christians to repent.<sup>61</sup> Even if Peter didn’t include the repentance of unbelievers here (which I consider probable), 1 Tim. 2:4 demonstrates that God “desires all men to [repent and] be saved.” The apostle Paul also said, “Therefore having overlooked the times of ignorance, God is now declaring to men that all *people* everywhere should repent, because He has fixed a day in which He will judge the world in righteousness through a Man whom He has appointed, having furnished proof to all men by raising Him from the dead” (Acts 17:30, 31). If Peter was just dealing with the need for Christians to repent here (which he apparently was), it puts much more emphasis on the need for *Christians to repent* before it is too late to repent.

From our perspective (now that more than nineteen hundred years have passed since Peter wrote this epistle), it is all the more obvious that God was leaving time for the salvation of many more unbelievers too, even if Peter didn’t happen to mention the repentance of unbelievers here.

Instead of questioning whether Christ might be slow/late in coming and complaining,<sup>62</sup> Christians should be thanking God for His patience, and especially those Christians who were/are not fully ready for Christ’s return. Those not fully ready for His return must, of course, make it top priority to repent and get ready.], **not wishing for any to perish but for all to come to repentance.** [Compare Ezek. 18:23, 32; 33:11 (“Say to them, ‘As I live!’ declares the Lord God, ‘I take no pleasure in the death of the wicked, but rather that the wicked turn from his way and live. Turn back, turn back from your evil ways! Why then will you die, O house of Israel?’ ” These three verses from Ezekiel deal with the repentance of the people of God (Israelites). The New Testament frequently mentions that Christians who need to repent are in danger of forfeiting salvation (cf., e.g., Rom. 8:13; Gal. 5:4, 19-21; Eph. 5:3-7; 2 Tim. 2:12; 1 Pet. 1:17; Heb. 3:12-4:11; 6:4-8; 10:26-31, 36-38; James 1:21-25; 5:19, 20; 2 Pet. 2:1, 20-22; Rev. 2:4, 5; and 3:2-5, 15-19).<sup>63</sup> To the extent “Christians” are living ungodly lives, they are in serious danger of being swept away on “the day of judgment and destruction

<sup>61</sup> As a powerful illustration of the fact that some true Christians need to do some serious repenting if they want to continue to be Christians, see, e.g., Rev. 2:4, 5, 7, 14-17; and 3:1-6, 15-22. It doesn’t seem that Peter considered the mockers mentioned in chapter 3/the false teachers mentioned in chapter 2 to be true Christians. At least many of them had been true Christians at one time (cf. 2 Pet. 2:15, 20-22), but they had turned their backs on the Lord Jesus Christ and the way of righteousness to such an extent that they were no longer part of the body of Christ. Apparently Peter considered them (for the most part at least) to be beyond repentance. Apostasy is serious business, but (unless God leads us differently) we should always encourage backsliden Christians to repent, no matter how far they have fallen.

I’ll quote part of what Douglas J. Moo says here (*2 Peter, Jude* [Zondervan, 1996], page 188). “...it is God’s patience *toward the believers* to whom Peter writes that is the main idea here. ....”

And I’ll quote part of what Bauckham says here (*Jude, 2 Peter*, pages 313). “...God desires all, without exception, to repent and escape damnation. But... ‘all’ is clearly limited by...‘you.’ ... Here [God’s delay] is for the sake of the repentance of 2 Peter’s Christian readers. No doubt repentance from those sins into which some of them have been enticed by the false teachers (2:14, 18; 3:17) is especially in mind.”

<sup>62</sup> There may be some things that we don’t understand, but it is always wrong to question God’s plans and/or to complain.

<sup>63</sup> See my paper *Once Saved, Always Saved?* and see the appendix of this present paper.

of ungodly men” (2 Pet. 3:7). “Let no one deceive you with empty words, for because of these [sinful] things the wrath of God comes upon the sons of disobedience. Therefore do not be partakers with them [of God’s wrath by living in disobedience]” (Eph. 5:6, 7). First Corinthians 3:10-15 show that Christians can forfeit rewards through fleshiness, which though a serious matter, is far less serious than forfeiting salvation.] **(10) But the day of the Lord will come like a thief** [The day of the Lord will begin when Jesus returns to judge the world. It will come like a thief—at a time not expected—that is, at a time not expected by those (including backsliden Christians) who are not prepared and watching for the coming of the Lord (cf. Matt. 24:43, 44<sup>64</sup>; Luke 12:39, 40; 1 Thess. 5:2, 3<sup>65</sup>; Rev. 3:3; and 16:15). First Thessalonians 5:4 (see 5:1-4) confirms that Christ will *not* come like a thief for those who are living for Him in truth and righteousness, “But you, brethren, are not in darkness, that the day would overtake you like a thief.”], **in which the heavens will pass away with a roar** [This could be the *roar* of fire/burning.] **and the elements will be destroyed with intense heat, and the earth and its works will be burned up.** [Compare Matt. 5:18; 24:35; Mark 13:31; Luke 21:33; Rev. 20:11; 21:1; and Isa. 34:4 with Rev. 6:14. Revelation 20:11 mentions that (at the end of the millennial kingdom) “earth and heaven fled away, and no place was found for them,” and Rev. 21:1 speaks of God’s “new heaven and new earth; for the first heaven and the first earth passed away.” The present heavens and earth must pass away to make room for the new heaven and new earth.

There is much more involved here than a major overhaul of the present heavens and earth. I assume, for one thing, that the *elements* of the new heaven and new earth of Rev. 21:1 will be substantially different than the *elements* of this present physical world. The elements of that new world (including the elements of our glorified bodies) will be appropriate for God’s eternal kingdom—they will be glorified elements.

Peter’s description of the day of the Lord here is quite abbreviated and incomplete, leaving the impression that the Lord will return, the ungodly will be destroyed, and the present heavens and earth will be destroyed, all in a short period of time. I don’t know how much had been revealed to Peter regarding the details of the second coming of Christ and God’s end-time judgment of the world, but I’m quite sure that he didn’t know some of the details that we know (not that all Christians agree on all these details). For one thing, Peter died some thirty years before the all-important book of Revelation was given to the saints. God’s revelation is progressive.

I’ll briefly mention some of the important details that Peter skipped here.<sup>66</sup> (See my previous eschatological writings for detailed discussions of the things mentioned here.) The Lord Jesus Christ will return to the earth in the middle of Daniel’s 70<sup>th</sup> week; at that

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<sup>64</sup> See the discussion of Matt. 24:42-51 on pages 43-45 of *Mid-Week Rapture*.

<sup>65</sup> First Thessalonians 5:1-11 are discussed on pages 37-40 of *Mid-Week Rapture*. The entire book of Revelation has been discussed in my earlier writings.

<sup>66</sup> We cannot assume that Peter didn’t know these details just because he skipped them here. I’m confident, for example, that he knew of the rapture (cf. Matt. 24:30, 31; Mark 13:26, 27; and 1 Thess. 4:16, 17). I’m not at all confident, however, that Peter (or Paul) knew that many will become Christians after the return of Christ and the rapture, or that God will leave a remnant of the nations to enter the millennial kingdom (Rev. 15:4; 20:3), or even that there will be millennial kingdom before God brings forth the new heaven and new earth of the eternal state (Rev. 20:1-21:1). It wouldn’t reflect negatively on Peter (or Paul) if he didn’t know these things—God’s apostles could only know and pass on what God had revealed to them. We are all totally dependent on God!

time the resurrection and rapture of believers will take place and the day of judgment will begin.<sup>67</sup> Many will become Christians after the mid-week rapture, including the end-time remnant of the nation Israel.<sup>68</sup> After God's judgment of Babylon the great harlot and His subsequent judgment of Antichrist and his forces after gathering them to Armageddon (all spoken of in some detail in the book of Revelation), it will be time for the millennial kingdom to begin. Satan will be restrained in the abyss throughout the millennium (Rev. 20:1-3); at the end of the millennium, he will be released to gather a very large number of the peoples of the nations living on the earth to follow him against God. God will destroy those "Gog and Magog" rebels with *fire* from heaven, and He will cast the devil into the eternal lake of *fire* (Rev. 20:7-10), where Antichrist and the false prophet were cast just before the millennial kingdom began (Rev. 19:20).

It will then be time for the great-white-throne judgment (Rev. 20:11-15). All the people who have ever lived on the earth and died will be resurrected (with the exception of the people of true Israel, the believers, who will have all been resurrected by the time the millennial kingdom begins) to stand before God at this judgment seat. Those whose names are not found written in the book of life will be cast into the eternal lake of *fire*. That finishes the 20<sup>th</sup> chapter of the book of Revelation; it will then be time for the full glory of the new heaven and new earth spoken of in the last two chapters of the book of Revelation.] **(11) Since all these things are to be destroyed in this way, what sort of people ought you to be in holy conduct and godliness** [Since this world with its works will be burned up, it is obvious that we must not have our roots, our hearts, our priorities in the things of this world (cf., e.g., Heb. 11:8-10, 13-16; James 4:4; 2 Pet. 1:4; and 1 John 2:15-17). Living for the world involves ungodliness (Satan is the god of this world [2 Cor. 4:4]), and Peter has already informed us more than once that the ungodly are headed for eternal destruction (2 Pet. 2:1-12, 17; 3:7). Our hearts (including our priorities) must center in God and His kingdom, His salvation, His truth, His righteousness, and His holiness. When we stand before God to be judged, it will be all too obvious what things really were important—we must not wait for the day of judgment (or for the day of our death if we should die before Christ returns) to begin to live in the light of this reality—then it will be too late. The bottom line of Christianity is truth, righteousness, holiness, and godliness through the powerful saving grace of God in Christ. Thank God for forgiveness too!), **(12) looking for** [As we live in the light of the second coming of Christ, looking for His coming, we will live in holiness and godliness (by grace through faith); we will have the right priorities. "I have fought the good fight, I have finished the course, I have kept the faith; in the future there is laid up for me the crown of righteousness [The *righteousness* of Christians (which is the *imputed* and *imparted* righteousness of God) will be *crowned* with eternal glory], which the Lord, the righteous Judge, will award me on that day; and not only to me [the apostle Paul], but also to all who have loved His appearing [Those who *love His*

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<sup>67</sup> Christ will return at the mid-week sounding of the seventh and last trumpet of the book of Revelation. The book of Revelation shows that some preliminary judgments will take place before He returns. Especially noteworthy is the judgment associated with the sixth trumpet of the book of Revelation (Rev. 9:13-21), which will sound about a month before the seventh and last trumpet. The sixth trumpet will initiate the warfare of the short great tribulation mentioned, for example, in Matt. 24:21, 22.

<sup>68</sup> See, for example, Rev. 11:13; 12:6, 13-17; 13:7-10; 14:6, 7; Zech. 12:10-13:1; and 14:3-5. (These verses are all discussed in *Mid-Week Rapture*.) Christ, accompanied by the glorified and raptured saints, will come to the Mount of Olives in the middle of Daniel's 70<sup>th</sup> week, not long after the rapture.

*appearing* live in a way which shows that their top priority is to always please God, making every attempt to live in the center of His will, so they will always be ready (fully ready) for His appearing]” (2 Tim. 4:7, 8).] **and hastening** [I suppose (based on what Peter said in verse 9, “[God] is patient toward you [speaking to Christians], not wishing for any to perish but for all to come to repentance”) that he meant that Christians can *hasten* the time of the coming of the Lord by living in holiness and repenting, where repentance is required. In Acts 3:19, 20, not long after the day of Pentecost, Peter exhorted the Jews to repent “in order that times of refreshing may come from the presence of the Lord; and that He may send Jesus, the Christ....”

Although it is true that God includes the free-will acts of men in His overall plans (including the timing of events), I believe the Bible shows that the time of Christ’s return has been fixed, and, in that sense, what we Christians do, or do not do, will not change the predetermined time of His return. I’ll quote part of what Bauckham says here.<sup>69</sup> “Clearly this idea of hastening the End is the corollary of the explanation (v 9) that God defers the Parousia because he desires Christians to repent. Their repentance and holy living may therefore, from the human standpoint, hasten its coming. This does not detract from God’s sovereignty in determining the time of the End...but means only that his sovereign determination graciously takes human affairs into account.”] **the coming of the day of God, because of which the heavens will be destroyed by burning, and the elements will melt** [The Greek verb used here (*tēkō*) means *melt, dissolve.*] **with intense heat!** [See 2 Pet. 3:7, 10.] **(13) But according to His promise we are looking for new heavens and a new earth** [cf. Isa. 65:17; 66:22; and Rev. 21:1], **in which righteousness dwells.** [God hates sin! Righteousness will totally permeate every aspect of His eternal kingdom (cf., e.g., Isa. 60:21; Rev. 21:27).] **(14) Therefore, beloved, since you look for these things, be diligent** [On the need for *diligence*, see 2 Pet. 1:5, 10, 15.] **to be found by Him in peace** [The NIV translates, “make every effort to be found spotless, blameless and at peace with him.”], **spotless** [The Greek noun used here (*aspilos*) was also used in 1 Tim. 6:14; James 1:27; and 1 Pet. 1:19.] **and blameless** [Compare, for example, Rom. 13:11-14; Phil. 2:15, 16; 1 Thess. 5:1-11; 1 Tim. 6:11-19; Titus 2:11-15; and 1 John 2:28-3:3. Many verses demonstrate that Christians are enabled, and required, to live *blameless* lives before God (cf. Eph. 1:4; 5:27; Phil. 2:15; Col. 1:22; Jude 1:24; and Rev. 14:5).<sup>70</sup> In 2 Pet. 3:9-11 Peter included the warning that Christians must live right in the light of the fact that the day of judgment is coming. Here in verse 14 he puts the emphasis on the glory of the inheritance for those who will be ready for Christ’s return. Christians should be motivated by a fear of God (according to the Old Testament and the New Testament), but they should be motivated more by a love for God and a thankfulness for all that He has done for them and given them and for what He will do for them and give them in the near future.

In 2 Pet. 2:13 Peter pointed out that the false teachers were just the opposite of *spotless* and *blameless*. See under that verse in this paper.], **(15) and regard the**

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<sup>69</sup> *Jude, 2 Peter*, page 325.

<sup>70</sup> All the verses just cited use the Greek noun *amōmos* (it was also used in Heb. 9:14; 1 Pet. 1:19), which is closely related to the Greek noun (*amōmētos*) used here in 2 Pet. 3:14. The Greek noun used here was not used anywhere else in the New Testament. Another important cross-reference is 1 Thess. 5:23. The Greek adverb translated “blameless/without blame” there is *amemptōs*.

**patience**<sup>71</sup> **of our Lord as salvation** [In the light of what Peter said in 2 Pet. 3:9, he apparently meant here in 3:15 that God was being patient to give the Christians<sup>72</sup> who needed to repent time to repent so that they might experience *salvation* instead of (in the worst-case scenario) being rejected on the day of judgment. On *salvation*, cf. 1 Pet. 1:5, 9, 10; and 2:2. The Bible doesn't have much to say about how much sin Christians can get by with and still enter God's eternal kingdom. We aren't supposed to think in terms of how much sin we can tolerate/get by with. Our goal must always be to have no sin. If we should sin, we must be quick to ask for forgiveness and to make things right to the best of our ability (cf. 1 John 2:1, 2). God knows our hearts; faith is of the heart.]; **just as also our beloved brother Paul, according to the wisdom given him** [Paul's wisdom came from God; the gospel he preached came by revelation; and he ministered by the Spirit of God, not in the flesh.], **wrote to you** [We don't know exactly what Paul wrote to these Christians; we don't know where they lived for sure or what letter (epistle) of Paul that Peter was referring to here. It's quite possible that he was referring to a letter that we don't have in the New Testament. There's widespread agreement that Paul had written to them about more than the relatively minor point mentioned in the first half of this verse (about regarding the patience of the Lord as salvation). He had undoubtedly written to them about the very important things mentioned in verse 14 (and more than that too). This understanding is confirmed by what Peter goes on to say in verse 16.], **(16) as also in all his letters, speaking in them of these things, in which** [The word "which" refers back to the "letters" of Paul mentioned earlier in this verse.<sup>73</sup> The NIV has, "His letters contain some things that are hard to understand...."] **are some things hard to understand,**<sup>74</sup> **which the untaught and unstable** [On "unstable" compare 2:14.] **distort** [Some of the things that were hard to understand that were being distorted undoubtedly dealt with the return of Christ.<sup>75</sup> We know, for example, that Paul had to deal with Christians who were denying the future literal resurrection of the body (1 Cor. 15:12; 2 Tim. 2:17, 18). That view may have arisen, at least in part, from a distortion of Paul's teaching. He taught, for one thing, that Christians have already been raised from the dead with Christ (e.g., Rom. 6:4; Col. 2:12). That distortion would fit with the idea that Christians have already had their final judgment (which is true in some glorious ways for those Christians who stay faithful to Christ) and they do not have to be concerned about any judgment yet to come for them. They have already arrived, they think.

<sup>71</sup> The KJV, NKJV have "longsuffering" instead of "patience." The Greek noun used here (*makrothumia*) is very closely related to the verb used in 2 Pet. 3:9 (*makrothumeō*) that is translated "is patient" by the NASB and "is longsuffering" by the KJV, NKJV.

<sup>72</sup> As I mentioned under 3:9, it is also true that God was/is allowing time for unbelievers to repent and become Christians.

<sup>73</sup> The word "which" is feminine plural in the Greek in agreement with the Greek feminine plural noun for "letters."

<sup>74</sup> I'll quote a few sentences from what Craig S. Keener says here (*Bible Background Commentary—New Testament* [Inter-Varsity Press, 1993], page 732). "Calling a writer's work 'hard to understand' in antiquity was not an insult (as it often is today); it could mean that it was complex and brilliant. Jewish teachers said that the message of the Scriptures could be 'distorted' by misinterpreting them. Second century Gnostics and many first-century Jewish and probably Christian groups were already distorting the Scriptures, some even to play down a future judgment (perhaps by allegorizing it)."

<sup>75</sup> Regarding the distortion of God's prophetic word, see under 2 Pet. 1:15-21 in this paper.

Some in the early church distorted Paul's teaching to come up with ideas like Christians don't have to have works,<sup>76</sup> and they aren't under God's Law.<sup>77</sup> Compare, for example, Rom. 3:8. The false teachers Peter dealt with so much in this epistle may have been peddling such distortions of Paul's teaching. Such views could have been used to try to justify their lustful, sinful lifestyles. In our day we still hear these same distortions. Some Christians put all the emphasis on being forgiven and having Christ's righteousness imputed to them, as if living in righteousness and holiness were an optional (or, even irrelevant) matter for Christians.], **as they do also the rest of the Scriptures** [At the time Peter wrote this epistle, the completed New Testament didn't exist, but he classified the epistles of the apostle Paul with "the rest of the Scriptures," which includes the Old Testament and apparently includes the other books that eventually became part of the New Testament that had already been written. The gospel that Paul (or Peter, John, etc.) taught came from God (cf., e.g., Acts 22:14, 15; 26:16; Gal. 1:6-12; 2:7-9; and 1 Thess. 2:13 ["For this reason we also constantly thank God that when you received the word of God which you heard from us, you accepted *it* not *as* the word of men, but *for* what it really is, the word of God, which performs its work in you who believe"])], **to their own destruction** [The Greek noun (*apōleia*) translated "destruction" here was also used in 2 Pet. 2:1, 3; 3:7, 16.]. [I'll quote part of what Douglas J. Moo says here.<sup>78</sup> "... Almost certainly [Peter] is referring to the false teachers whom he has been rebuking throughout the letter. ... We know that not too long after this time, various heretics appealed to passages in Paul to support just such unbridled behavior. ... Peter therefore implies that the letters of Paul have a status equivalent to that of the canon of the Old Testament itself." ] **(17) You therefore, beloved, knowing this beforehand, be on your guard so that you are not carried away by the error of unprincipled men** [On "unprincipled men," compare 2 Pet. 2:7. The NIV (here in 3:17) translates "lawless men"; the KJV/ NKJV translate "the wicked." As this epistle (and much other Scripture) shows, Christians must always be on guard lest they be carried away by the error of unprincipled/lawless/wicked men.] **and fall** [cf. Rev. 2:5] **from your own steadfastness** [Our goal must be to live in the center of God's will; we must live (by grace/the Spirit through faith) in the "righteousness and holiness of the truth" (Eph. 4:24) with top priority. In the worst-case scenario to fall means destruction (loss of salvation).

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<sup>76</sup> Paul did teach that we're saved by *faith*, not *works* of the Law, not *works* of the flesh, not *works* that merit salvation (cf., e.g., Rom. 3:27, 28; 4:5; Gal. 2:16; and 3:1-14), but he also taught that Christians are enabled, and required, to live in righteousness and holiness, not leaving room for sinful *works* of the flesh (cf. Gal. 5:19-12) but doing *works* of righteousness through faith in Christ (cf., e.g., Eph. 2:10; Titus 2:14; and 1 Cor. 6:9-11). See my paper *The Christian, the Law, and Legalism*. Section 7 of that paper is titled "Christians Are Enabled, and Required, To Do the Works Required According to God's Word/Law/Commandments by His Grace/Spirit Through Faith; the Works Aren't Optional."

<sup>77</sup> Paul did teach that, in some ways, Christians aren't under the Law (cf., e.g., Rom. 6:14; Gal. 2:19; and 5:18), but he also taught that the bottom line of Christianity is that Christians are enabled (by the grace/Spirit of God), and required, to keep God's moral law (cf., e.g., Rom. 2:26, 27; 8:4; 1 Cor. 7:19; Jer. 31:31-34; and Ezek 36:26, 27). Section 2 of the paper mentioned in the preceding footnote is titled "Christians Are Enabled, and Required, To Keep the Law of God, Including the Law Contained in the Old Testament, Excluding the Ceremonial Law."

<sup>78</sup> *2 Peter, Jude* [Zondervan, 1996], pages 211, 212.

I'll quote part of what Michael Green says under this verse.<sup>79</sup> "There is no excuse for complacency in Christians: error has many attractive faces by which even the most experienced may be beguiled. Jesus Himself had given similar warnings, not least in connection with the second coming: 'take heed, watch and pray,' 'take heed lest any man deceive you,' 'take heed to yourselves' (Mark 13:5, 9, 33). Otherwise it is possible, even after for a while having remained firm, to come to a disastrous end (*ekpiptein*, the verb used here for *fall*, is used of apostasy in Gal. 5:4, 'fall out of grace,' and of shipwreck in Acts 27:26, 29).", **(18) but grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.** [See 2 Pet. 1:2-11. Christians who are *steadfast* (3:17) must do what is required to maintain their *steadfastness*. Such Christians will continue to grow in the things of God (cf., e.g., 2 Cor. 3:18), by the grace of God in Christ. We must always continue to press on in Christ (cf. Phil. 3:14-16). We cannot stand still; the evil currents (of the world, the flesh, and the devil) will sweep us backward if we start coasting.] **To Him be the glory, both now and to the day of eternity** [cf. 2 Tim. 4:18; Rev. 1:6]. **Amen.**

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<sup>79</sup> *Second Epistle of Peter and the Epistle of Jude* [Eerdmans, 1968], page 149.