

The Second Epistle of Peter

Introduction

The authenticity of this Second Epistle of Peter has occasioned a great deal of controversy and many are questioning it, as it has been done in the past. It is true the most ancient sources of post-apostolic writings do not mention this Epistle. What we have pointed out in the introductions of most of the other New Testament books, that their authenticity is confirmed by references in the fragments of the writings of the church fathers, such as Polycarp, Papias, Clement of Rome and others, cannot be done with this Epistle. Some scholars in their research claim that traces of this Epistle are discernable in the testimonies of Polycarp, Ignatius, in the letter of Barnabas and in the testimony of Clement of Rome, but they are so very faint and fanciful, that they are not reliable. But not finding a direct allusion in these sources does not mean anything at all. The greater portion of the writings of the men who were in touch with the Apostles and the direct disciples of the men who knew Peter and Paul, have been lost. If we had all they have written we would probably find in them references to this Epistle.

The Epistle is not found in the Peshito version. According to Bishop Westcott in his Canon of the New Testament there are in existence two classes of manuscripts of this version. Both omit the Second and Third Epistles of John, the Second Epistle of Peter, the Epistle of Jude and the Book of Revelation, but include all the other books. This Canon seems to have been generally maintained in the Syrian churches. It is reproduced in the Arabic version of Erpenius, which was taken from the Peshito. Cosmas, an Egyptian traveller of the sixth century, states that only three of the so-called "Catholic" Epistles were received by the Syrians. Later sources charge the Syrian churches with mutilating the New Testament by not having these books in their Bibles.

The Epistle is also omitted in the Latin version, that is, in the oldest editions. That the Vulgate is unreliable is well known. Westcott makes the following argument about the missing Second Epistle of Peter in the Latin version: "If we suppose that it was once received into the canon like the First Epistle, it would in all probability have been translated by the same person, as seems to have been the case with the Gospel of Luke and the Acts (both written by Luke), though their connection is less Obvious; and while every allowance is made for the difference in style in the original Epistles, we must look for the same rendering of the same phrases. But when on the contrary, it appears that the Latin text of the Epistle not only exhibits constant and remarkable difference from the text of other parts of the Vulgate, but also differs from the First Epistle in the rendering of words common to both, when it further appears that it differs not less clearly from the Epistle of Jude in those parts which are almost identical in the Greek; then the supposition that it was admitted into the Canon at the same time with them becomes at once unnatural. It is indeed possible that the two Epistles may have been received at the same time and yet have found different translators." But this argument does not mean at all that this Epistle is spurious and should be excluded from the New Testament.

But while the Epistle is not mentioned in the Muratorian fragment, in the writings of Polycarp, Papias, Irenaeus and others, and while it is missing in the Peshito and the earlier editions of the Vulgate, Hippolytus (living in the first half of the third century) was evidently acquainted with the Epistle, for in writing on the Antichrist he makes use of 2 Peter 1:21. Eusebius, the church historian, gives incontrovertible testimony that the Epistle was positively known at the close of the second century as the second Epistle of Peter. He shows that Clement of Alexandria (about 190 A.D.) knew the Epistle as the work of Peter and used it. The successor of Clement, Origen, according to Eusebius wrote: "Peter has left one acknowledged Epistle, and possibly also a second, for it is disputed." It was through Jerome's (Eusebius Hieronymus, born 390 A.D.) efforts that the Epistle was added to the Vulgate. He wrote: "Peter wrote two Epistles, which are termed Catholic, the second of which is denied by most to be his, because of the disagreement of its style with that of

the former Epistle." On account of these historical facts opinions among scholars have been very much divided. Many reject the Petrine authorship of this Epistle, but other scholars accept it without any question. Among those who defend the Epistle against those who deny it are scholars of the highest reputation like Alford, Olshausen, Keil and others.

The Sufficiency of Internal Evidence

The fact is that external evidences to confirm the authenticity of Second Peter are not needed, for the internal evidences are beyond controversy of such a nature as to establish the Petrine authorship. The Epistle starts with the name of Peter. In the Greek the name Simon is spelled "Symeon" or "Simeon." If we turn to Acts 15:14 we read that James called Peter "Symeon," the Aramaic form for Simon. Then the writer refers to the fact that he would have soon to put off this tabernacle "even as our Lord Jesus Christ hath showed me." He was now an old man, and the Lord had spoken to him at the lakeside. "When thou art old thou shalt stretch forth thy hands" (John 21). Still stronger is the reference of the writer to the transfiguration, where Peter was present, and he speaks of it as being an eyewitness of His coming and of His majesty And, finally, the writer says: "This second Epistle, beloved, I now write unto you" (3:1).

Critical Claims and Evasions

This internal evidence destructive critics try to evade and offset. They claim that the writer was not Simon Peter, but that some unknown author, using Peter's name, wrote this document. It is the same foolish invention advanced by Old Testament critics as to the authorship of the book of Daniel.

To establish this theory they point to the fact that there was a tendency in the early church to use Peter's name in different pseudo documents, such spurious writings as "The Gospel of Peter; The Revelation of Peter; the Acts of Peter, and the travels of Peter." But the fact of these forgeries, some of which cover some of the text of the Second Epistle of Peter, is an evidence that a genuine writing exists. According to the opinions of the men who reject the authorship of Peter, the writer of this Epistle to give standing to his production thought best to impersonate the Apostle Peter and so he started right in the beginning by saying he is Peter. And he is careful to select the Aramaic form of Peter's name, the name Symeon. Would a forger not rather have avoided that uncommon use of Peter's name? But, furthermore, he also tells us that the Lord had told him about His death; and yet this man was not Peter, nor had the Lord ever told him what He had spoken to Peter about the time and manner of His death. Then the writer of the Epistle claims to have been on the Mount of Transfiguration, that he beheld His glory there and heard the voice of the Father speaking. He is positive that he was present and was an eyewitness, the strongest possible claim.

Yet if it was not Peter who wrote this Epistle, then it must have been either John or James, because there were only three eyewitnesses of the transfiguration. But would John or James write thus, hiding his identity under the name of Peter? Then the writer, assuming the name of Peter, declares that he had written the first Epistle, which Peter beyond doubt wrote, yet he had not written that Epistle. Here are three (in plain English) lies. A man writes an Epistle claiming to be Peter, but he is not Peter at all; hence he is a fraud. The same man claims that he was at the lake of Tiberias, that the Lord told him about His death; yet he was not there, for he was not Peter; therefore this impersonator is a fraud. This is an especially strong point. The fact that the Lord had announced Peter's death was known to but a few at that time, when the Epistle was written, which we take was about the year 65 A.D.

The Gospel of John, where the Lord's prophecy as to Peter's future is recorded, had not yet been written. Furthermore, he says that he saw the transfiguration, which he did not see; hence he lied. The fourth lie is his claim that he wrote the first Epistle, which he did not write. It is astonishing what inventions the enemies of the Bible can bring forth simply to discredit the Word of God and to deny

its authenticity. If Peter is not the writer of this Epistle the whole Epistle is a miserable fraud, a dishonest piece of work, a forgery of the worst kind, which every honest man must despise. The foolish babblings of critics: "it is a useful document and should be read by all Christians, though Peter did not write it himself," is ridiculous. Either Peter wrote it and then it must be accepted; or Peter did not write it and in such a case the whole business is a forgery and a fraud. But would a fraud ever have written such a wonderful message as the one with which this second Epistle begins? Would a conscious fraud have warned against apostasy as found in the second chapter? Would he, could he, have exhorted fellow-believers in the way as it is done in this Epistle? It is a moral impossibility.

The Character of the Second Epistle

One of the critics makes the following statement in denying the Petrine authorship: "The fact that the only allusions to the incidents in the Lord's life found in the Epistle are such as would support the character as one writing as Peter does become, in view of the silence of the Epistle as to the passion, the resurrection, the ascension, and of the absence from it of allusions to the Lord's teaching as recorded in the gospel, are a serious ground for questioning the Petrine authorship of the Epistle" (Chase). Like most critics this one lacks in spiritual discernment. In fact, if critics had some spiritual insight in the majestic scope of God's holy Word, they would not be critics, but worshipers. All second Epistles, except Second Corinthians, have a peculiar character. Second Thessalonians, Second Timothy, Second and Third John, and the little Epistle of Jude are in reality prophetic. They all speak of the future, the coming evils in professing Christendom, the apostasy, and all warn against these things. The Second Epistle of Peter shares the same character with the other second Epistles and Jude's Epistle. There was no need for Peter to refer again to the passion being outside of the scope of this second letter, he had given his witness and testimony as to these facts so abundantly in his first Epistle. The two Epistles harmonize in many ways.

Another Supposed Difficulty

Another supposed difficulty is the similarity that exists between the second chapter of this Epistle and the Epistle of Jude. This difficulty will be taken up more fully in connection with the annotations of the chapter and in the introduction to Jude's Epistle. The learned scholars have spent much time on the question whether Jude copied from Peter or Peter copied from Jude. Some claim that Peter had Jude's Epistle and used it; others claim that Jude imitated Peter. Even so good a scholar as the late Dean Alford says: "It is well known that, besides various scattered resemblances, a long passage occurs, included in the limits Jude 3-19; 2 Peter 2:1-19, describing in both cases the heretical enemies of the gospel, couched in terms so similar as to preclude all idea of entire independence. If considerations of human probability are here as everywhere else to be introduced into our estimate of sacred writings, then either one saw and used the text of the other, or both drew from a common document or a common source of oral apostolic teaching." This in reality affects the truth of inspiration, and leans towards criticism. If Peter sat down and copied Jude, what Peter wrote was not inspired, but copied. And if Jude sat down and wrote after the pattern of Peter, copied him, and worked over his testimony, then Jude is not inspired. But both, Peter and Jude were inspired, and therefore they wrote independent of each other, the Holy Spirit guiding their respective pens, in giving the same testimony of warning.

The Division of Second Peter

This Second Epistle of Peter may be looked upon as an appendix or complement of the First Epistle. It introduces a testimony as to the future, connected with the coming of the Lord, which the First Epistle so frequently mentions. While the First Epistle is silent as to the coming evils preceding the coming of the Lord, this Second Epistle sounds the warning and gives, as already stated in the preceding introduction, a prophetic picture of the conditions of Christendom when the age closes.

Here, too, we find the exhortations of Peter, similar to those in the first letter. Peter himself states the purpose when he wrote: "This second Epistle, beloved, I now write unto you, in both of which I stir up your pure minds by way of remembrance." While the language may differ in some respects from the language of the First Epistle, the style and development of the Epistle is just like the first, which is even noticeable in our English version. He writes first of the gracious provisions, which are made for those of like precious faith through the righteousness of God and our Saviour Jesus Christ, which includes present provisions in precious promises, and the gift of all things that pertain unto life and godliness, as well as the gift of the Word of Prophecy.

The second chapter unfolds the coming dangers of the last days of this age. The false teachers and their pernicious doctrines are revealed with the corresponding warnings to beware of them. The concluding chapter is prophetic; it reveals the future, including the coming great transformation when the physical earth will pass through a judgment by fire, to come forth in an eternal resurrection glory as a new earth, surrounded by new heavens. We follow, therefore, in our annotations the division of the Epistle in three chapters as we have it in our Bibles.

I. THE GRACIOUS PROVISIONS OF GOD (chapter 1)

II. THE EVILS TO COME THROUGH FALSE TEACHERS (chapter 2)

III. THE FUTURE OF THE EARTH AND THE CONCLUSION (chapter 3)

Analysis and Annotations

I. THE GRACIOUS PROVISIONS OF GOD

CHAPTER 1

1. God's gracious provisions in Christ (1:1-4)

2. The development of the divine nature (1:5-11)

3. The promises of prophecy (1:12-21)

Verses 1-4

We are not left in doubt who the writer is, not a pseudo Peter, but Simon Peter, the fisherman of Galilee. With this second Epistle he finishes the task given him by the Lord "to strengthen his brethren." The opening verse of the third chapter shows that the Epistle is addressed to the same persons to whom he wrote the first Epistle. He gives his old name, Simon (or as in the Greek, Symeon), followed by the new name given him by the Lord, Peter. He calls himself a servant first before he mentions his apostleship. The word servant is the same as the word by which Paul designated himself, that is, a slave. Evidently Peter estimated his servanthip higher than his apostle ship.

He addresses his brethren no longer as he did in his first Epistle as strangers and elect by the foreknowledge of God. His purpose is a different one. No longer does he mention their trials, sufferings and persecutions; this was done abundantly in the preceding document. He addresses them instead as those "that have obtained like precious faith," that is, the faith in the Lord Jesus Christ, the Son of God, Saviour and Lord. This faith is obtained "through the righteousness of God and our Saviour Jesus Christ." In Romans the righteousness of God is the great theme as the ground of the believer's justification. (See annotations on Romans 3.) Here it has a somewhat different meaning. It is not the question of justification, but the question of God having been righteous, that is, faithful to His promises by Him who is Jehovah, their own promised Messiah. It was the faithfulness of the God of Israel which had bestowed upon them as a believing remnant this

faith, which was now so precious to them, the faith in Jehovah-Jesus as Saviour.

Then follows the greeting: "Grace and peace be multiplied unto you through the knowledge of God, and of our Lord Jesus Christ." This form of greeting using the word "multiplied" is confined to the two Epistles of Peter and the Epistle of Jude. It is not without significance. When believers suffer, as seen in the First Epistle of Peter, they can count on God, to multiply grace and peace. But Second Peter and the Epistle of Jude look forward to the last days, the end of the age, with its predicted apostasy, and for those days God promises to multiply to His own grace, peace and mercy. But it must be noticed that this multiplication is "through the knowledge of God, and of our Lord Jesus Christ." It is not independent of a real heart knowledge of God and His Son, our Lord. There may be a head knowledge of God and of Christ, a barren knowledge which brings no fruit unto God. Of this we read in chapter 2:20-22 of our Epistle.

The knowledge of God is in Jesus Christ; through Him we know God in all His gracious fullness. (See 1 John 5:20.) The real heart knowledge of Him produces fruit because it carries with it divine power, which has given to the believer "all things that pertain to life and godliness, through the knowledge of Him that hath called us by glory and virtue." Life and glory are the gifts of grace; life is bestowed in the new birth which fits for glory, but godliness and virtue are the practical results of that grace in the life of the believer. The divine power for godliness and virtue which are to be manifested in the believer's life, that power which is able to act in us and give us the victory, must be laid hold on by faith. "How precious it is to know that faith can use this divine power, realized in the life of the soul, directing it toward glory in the end! What a safeguard from the efforts of the enemy, if we are really established in the consciousness of this divine power acting on our behalf in grace! The heart is led to make glory its object; and virtue, the strength of spiritual life, is developed on the way to it. Divine power has given all that is needed" (Synopsis of the Bible.)

Having called us by glory and virtue, He has in connection with it given us exceeding great and precious promises. These promises relate to both, glory and virtue. Through these promises we are made partakers of the divine nature, by the divine power acting in us, with the glory as the blessed goal. But by the same power promised unto us, we escape and are delivered from the corruption that is in the world through lust. Here is the real victorious life of a believer. It is not in some kind of a fixed "holiness experience" by which the old nature is eradicated, a teaching which is altogether against Scripture. The heart must be occupied with Christ and the glory by which we are called, as a result the divine power, the Holy Spirit in us, acts and victory over sin results.

Verses 5-11

While God promises to His people to add, that is, to multiply, daily grace and peace, they themselves in the faith which realizes the divine power and the glory to come, must add to that faith virtue, and that is to be done "by giving all diligence." The divine nature which the believer has received loves the will of God; it is a holy nature, and therefore abhors the corruption which is in the world by lust. But that divine nature is subject to growth and development in the life of the child of God, and that requires all care and diligence. If Christians say that they possess a new nature, are born again, saved by grace, and continue to live according to the old nature, enjoying the world and its sinful pleasures, without manifesting godliness and virtue, they are not only in a very unscriptural attitude, but on dangerous ground. It would prove that they belong to the class of professors described in chapter 2:20-22.

Seven things are to be added to faith. "Add to your faith virtue." This word means something different from its general meaning in English. It means moral courage, a courage which refuses the gratification of the old nature. It is the soldier's courage, who stands manfully against all opposition. It is an energy by which the heart is master of itself, and is able to choose the good, and to cast aside the evil, as a thing conquered and unworthy of one's self. Such courage to stand and withstand, this energy to deny one's self, makes full communion with God possible. If such virtue is added to faith it leads to knowledge, the next thing. The truth of God and the things of God are

known and learned by obedience, by walking in them. Knowledge gained, without virtue practised, only puffs up and leads to hypocrisy.

A true knowledge of God is heart acquaintance with Him. This knowledge leads to temperance, which means self-restraint. And self-restraint, the government of the will, must be followed by patience, which means endurance. How easy it is to endure reproach, wrongs inflicted by others, sufferings--to endure it all in patience when faith looks to Him Who endured more than we are ever called upon to do. If such is the case, godliness will not be lacking. It is a walk with God, communion with Him, child-like trust and obedience and reverence. Out of such a heart of faith, which has moral courage, practises self restraint, knowing God, endures and is godly--affections towards fellow-believers flow forth and brotherly love is added. This is what the knowledge of God teaches, "Ye yourselves are taught of God to love one another" (1 Thess. 4:9).

But there is something still higher than brotherly kindness and affection, and that is "love." It means divine love, which is the very nature of God Himself. "If divine love governs me, I love all my brethren; I love them because they belong to Christ; there is no partiality. I shall have greater enjoyment in a spiritual brother; but I shall occupy myself about my weaker brother with a love that rises above his weakness and has a tender consideration for it. I shall concern myself with my brother's sins, from love of God, in order to restore my brother, rebuking him, if needful; nor, if divine love be in exercise, can brotherly love be associated with disobedience. In a word, God will have His place in all my relationships" (John N. Darby).

Here, then, is food for self-examination and self-judgment. Does my faith in Christ, in whom all things are freely supplied pertaining to life and godliness, produce moral courage--does it produce heart knowledge of God, self-restraint, endurance in meekness, godliness and brotherly love and is all governed in me according to love, the very essence of God Himself. These things should be not only in us, but abound. It will not leave us barren or unfruitful. "But he that lacketh these things is blind, and cannot see afar off (short-sighted) and hath forgotten that he was cleansed from his former sins." There is not only the blindness of the natural man, but there may be a blindness and short-sightedness of a believer. It means that a believer whose new nature does not develop and manifest itself in these things, is short-sighted in respect to the heavenly things, the seen things which surround him are the objects which absorb his mind. Such a one forgets that he was cleansed from his former sins. The joy and peace in the Holy Spirit are no longer a present possession; his own heart condemns him and he lacks the reality of His salvation; the joy of it is gone, he has forgotten his cleansing from his former sins. When a believer remembers what God has done for Him in redemption, he will also long for a practical manifestation of that salvation in a godly life and walk.

He speaks next of making our calling and election sure. But is this not sure already? As far as God, who has called and elected us, is concerned, it is sure. To have a consciousness of our calling and election, the sureness of it, requires diligence to walk in the path which the Holy Spirit through the pen of Peter has so beautifully described. Those who walk thus will not stumble, and, finally, "an entrance shall be ministered unto you abundantly into the everlasting kingdom of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ."

Verses 12-21

Having mentioned the coming kingdom of Christ, the Holy Spirit now enlarges upon this. We pointed out in the first Epistle that salvation to be revealed, as repeatedly stated, means the visible and glorious appearing of our Lord to establish His kingdom on earth. Peter does not teach the coming of the Lord for His saints at all. He knew it, of course, for the Lord had revealed it through Paul. Inasmuch as Peter writes to this remnant of believing Jews, and that remnant is also representative of another remnant, which will, during the great tribulation, suffer and wait for the coming of the King, the second half of this chapter is therefore taken up with the kingdom in manifestation, as revealed in prophecy and foreshadowed by the transfiguration.

He speaks first of His coming departure; the Lord had told him about that long ago. But there was no doubt a special intimation from the Lord that this event would now soon be and he would have "to put off this tabernacle. So before his departure he was anxious to give them instructions by the Spirit of God, so that they might have these things always in remembrance. This makes it clear once more that Peter did not look for a chain of successors to become guardians and instructors of the faith.

He and the other apostles had not followed cunningly devised fables when they made known the power and coming of the Lord Jesus Christ. They had been eye witnesses of His majesty. But where and how? He speaks of the scene on the holy mount, when the Lord Jesus Christ was transfigured before them, when they heard the voice of the Father from the excellent glory. He stood upon that mount clothed with the glory of the Father; with Him Moses and Elijah, the one who had died, the other who went to heaven without dying. It was a foregleam of His coming glory and a fulfillment of the promise given in the last verse of Matthew 16. As He stood upon that mountain, so He will appear in His glory on earth again, bringing His saints with Him. It is His visible and glorious appearing to which Peter refers, and which was foreshadowed in the transfiguration, and not that coming promised to His own in John 14:1-3, to take them into the Father's house. "We have also a more sure word of prophecy" should be rendered, "We have the word of prophecy made more sure." The Word of prophecy is, of course, in the Old Testament. But is not this sure enough? Why should it be made more sure? It must be understood in the sense of attesting, or confirming the word of prophecy. The transfiguration confirmed the prophecies in the Old Testament. The prophets describe such a scene like the transfiguration, when the Son of Man comes from heaven in power and glory; hence the word of prophecy has been confirmed, made more sure, by the scene on the holy mount. Let it be stated again that the Old Testament prophetic Word does not reveal that coming for His saints, which is for the Church "that blessed Hope." When Paul speaks of it in 1 Corinthians 15 he speaks of it as a mystery; it was hidden in former ages (1 Cor. 15:51). Yet in the verse before us Peter alludes to it when he speaks of the morning star.

There is a difficulty connected with this verse, and some have read it as if it meant that the morning star must arise in the heart of the individual, as it has been stated in the following comment: "The day star arising in our hearts will be the inner premonitions which announce the coming, as the day star heralds the dawn; such premonitions might be occasioned by observing the various signs of the coming." But it does not mean this at all, nor does it mean that prophecy is only to be used for encouragement till we possess the proper Christian hope. The suggested rendering in the Numerical Bible removes the difficulty. "We have also the prophetic Word confirmed, to which ye do well in taking heed (as to a lamp that shineth in an obscure place, until the day dawn and the morning star ariseth) in your hearts." It does not mean that the morning star is to arise in the heart of the believer; it means that we should take heed to prophecy in our hearts. And how the entire prophetic Word, that blessed lamp, is needed in these darkening days!

The day dawn is preceded by the rising of the morning star, or day star, and the morning star is the blessed emblem of the coming of the Lord for His saints. He is both the morning star and the sun of righteousness. He appears as the morning star for His saints and afterward in full glory as the sun of righteousness.

The closing statements of this chapter are also of much importance. "Knowing this first, that no prophecy of Scripture is of private interpretation. For no prophecy ever came by the will of man; but men spake from God, being moved by the Holy Spirit." Prophecy never could be produced by the will of man; only God knows the future and He has spoken concerning the future.

The fact of prophecy is one of the great evidences of the supernaturalness of the Bible. The men who were used to communicate prophecy spoke from God; they were moved by the Holy Spirit. For this reason the pernicious school of destructive criticism has always aimed at the prophetic Word, for if they concede that there is prophecy, they acknowledge their defeat. What denials and theories they have used in order to get rid of prophecy we cannot follow here. The next chapter shows what

results have been brought about through the rejection of the truth stated by Peter, that God hath spoken. Of equal importance is the divine statement, "that no prophecy of Scripture is of private interpretation."

Rome has used the word "private" to uphold its awful lie, that Scripture should never be interpreted by a private individual. As a result Rome discourages in every way the reading of the Word of God. In the past that system burned the Bibles, often chaining the Bible to the martyr at the stake, burning the hated Book with the hated witness. Give Rome her old time power and she will do it again. The prophetic Word only is here in view. Prophecy shows a divine unity that is wonderful. Some have said that history must interpret prophecy, but that is not so. History is predicted in advance by prophecy. In interpreting prophecy, prophetic Scripture must be compared with prophetic Scripture. Prophecy must be taken as a whole. We have no business to say, as it is often done, "I think it means this or that." Prophecy starts in Genesis 3:15. The consummation of all prophecy is the kingdom of Christ, the victory of God in His Son, the complete defeat of Satan. Every prophecy is a part of prophecy, having one and the same object and can, therefore, not be interpreted by itself, independent of the rest of prophecy. All the confusion which is in the professing church today as to the prophetic forecasts of the Word of God is the result of having ignored this important injunction.

II. THE EVIL TO COME THROUGH FALSE TEACHERS

CHAPTER 2

1. The source of the evil (2:1-3)
2. The lessons from the past. (2:4-10)
3. The description of the apostates (2:11-22)

Verses 1-3

The Apostle Peter is now being used by the Spirit of God to prophesy. He predicts the coming evil for the professing church, that apostate teachers would do their vicious work. As pointed out in the introduction every other writer of the Epistles bears the same witness and that witness is mostly found in the second Epistles and in the Epistle of Jude. (See 1 Tim. 4:1-2; 2 Tim. 3:1-5; 4:1-4; 2 Thess. 2; 1 John 2:18-23; 4:1-6; 2 John, verses 7-11; Jude.) He reminds them that among their own nation Israel there were false prophets. The false prophets appeared mostly, if not Altogether, when judgment was impending for the nation, as we learn from the prophecies of Jeremiah and Ezekiel. These false prophets opposed the true prophets of God, who preached the God-given message, while the false prophets rejected the Word of the Lord and belittled it. They spoke out of their own hearts and spoke vanities and lies (Ezek. 13:2, 8). Their message was "peace" when there was no peace. As a result the people of Israel did not believe the Lord and His Word; they rejected Him.

The same, it is predicted, would be repeated in this Christian age, only with this difference, that not false prophets should appear, but "false teachers." And as this dispensation draws to its close apostasy would set in. (Consult annotations on 2 Thess. 2.) These false teachers, like the false prophets, reject first of all the Word of God; they, too, speak out of their own hearts, that is, vanities and lies. As a result they bring in "privily destructive heresies." All heresies have but one goal, and that is the denial of Christ and the gospel. Therefore Peter predicts "denying even the Master, who bought them."

This is the way of destructive criticism. One looks in vain among the many preachers and teachers who deny the virgin birth and with it the deity of Christ, for one who believes that the Bible is the inerrant Word of God. All those who deny the Master who bought them began with criticism of the Bible, rejecting first the writings of Moses, casting doubt upon other books, and finally abandoning

any kind of faith in the Bible as the Word of God. Well is it called "the destructive criticism," for it is in the end destructive of everything. It is this which is poisoning everything in Christendom today and there is no denomination in which this leaven is not at work. Thus Peter's prediction is increasingly fulfilled in our days and will be much more as this age draws rapidly to its close.

We must also notice that it does not say that they deny "the Lord who redeemed them"; but "the Master who bought" or purchased "them." The difference between "purchase" and "redemption" is, that purchase is general, while redemption is limited to those who believe on Him and are thus redeemed by His precious blood. These false teachers never believed on Him as Lord, and, therefore, they are not redeemed by Him, though He paid the purchase price in their behalf. By denying Him they disowned the purchase. And for such there is in store swift destruction. This pronounces the sentence of eternal doom upon all false teachers, upon destructive criticism as well as upon the cults which teach damnable heresies and, by doing it, deny the Master who bought them.

Here is also a prediction of the wide-spread success of these false teachers. "Many shall follow their pernicious (dissolute or lascivious) ways, through whom the way of truth shall be blasphemed." They speak of making the world better, they pose as teachers of morality and righteousness, but their ways are branded as pernicious. How can they be righteous when they deny that which alone can give righteousness to man? How often it has been brought to light that those who deny the truth and yet claim to be teachers of morality, were miserable hypocrites. Unbelief produces worldliness and immorality. Then the way of truth is being blasphemed and "that worthy Name" is being dishonored.

"And through covetousness shall they with feigned words make merchandise of you; whose judgment now from of old lingereth not, and their destruction slumbereth not." The people of God are their prey. They are covetous, seeking their own gratification in money, social standing, fame and everything else that the natural heart loves and desires. All is abundantly verified in the conditions about us. But retribution will surely come upon them.

Verses 4-10

Here we reach the section of second Peter, which is so much like the greater part of Jude's Epistle, that critics have claimed that one must have copied from the other. We have shown in the introduction that Peter and Jude wrote independently of each other as the direct instruments of the Holy Spirit. The correspondence of Peter's testimony with Jude's Epistle is more fully examined in the introduction to Jude.

The Spirit of God calls attention through Peter to that which happened in past history, showing that God deals with apostates who defy Him and are disobedient, while the godly He delivers. In Jude we shall find out, that while there is much similarity, the purpose of the testimony is quite different from that of Peter. First, mention is made of the angels who sinned and who are cast down to hell, the word being Tartarus (the very lowest pit), where they are kept in chains of darkness for the coming judgment. It is evident that this passage does not mean Satan and the angels who joined in his rebellion before ever man was created. Satan and the fallen angels are not now in the lowest pit awaiting there in a helpless condition the judgment; they are not in chains, but loose, and Satan, as the prince of this world, uses his angels in the pursuit of his work. Who, then, are these angels? They are the beings described in Genesis 6:1-4 as the "sons of God" (a term which in the Old Testament means angels) who came down and mingled with the daughters of men. These angels, as Jude tells us, did not keep their first estate, left their assigned place, and by their disobedience became the means of corrupting the race in such a manner that the judgment of God had to act in the deluge.

God has not been pleased to give a complete revelation of this sinister event. That it means this episode is learned that Peter at once speaks of the old world, which was not spared by God, "but saved Noah, the eighth person (with seven others), a preacher of righteousness, having brought in

the flood upon the world of the ungodly." This testimony is closely linked with what Peter had written in the first Epistle (1 Peter 3:19-20). And here we are told that Noah was a preacher of righteousness. He and his house had found grace in the sight of the Lord, while the mass of the ungodly world who rejected His truth and His Spirit, who strove with them, were not spared but dealt with in judgment. It is so now. Another day is coming in which the Lord will judge the ungodly and unbelieving, while His people will be saved.

Sodom and Gomorrah are cited also as examples of God's holy judgment. These cities were turned into ashes, as an example of all those who live ungodly. The awful fruit of sin in the most terrible, unutterable corruption was manifested in these cities; the same corruption is found still in the world, and that mostly in the great centers of Christendom. (Romans 1:27 mentions the same corruption so often referred to by classic writers of Rome and Greece .) Lot, who was in Sodom, though not of Sodom, is called, nevertheless, righteous, was vexed from day to day with their lawless deeds. The Lord delivered him. It is another warning to the false teachers with their denials and heresies, for the rejection of God's Word brings in the flood of immorality, licentiousness, and lawlessness.

The God who turned Sodom and Gomorrah into ashes, by raining upon them fire and brimstone, will also deal with the apostasy at the close of this age, and with the teachers who deny the Master who bought them, in spite of their self flattery that they are moral. That judgment comes "when the Lord Jesus shall be revealed from heaven with His mighty angels, in flaming fire taking vengeance on them that know not God and that obey not the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ; who shall be punished with everlasting destruction from the presence of the Lord and from the glory of His power" (2 Thess. 1:7-9). These false teachers sneer at these words of Paul and call them quotations taken from the apocalyptic literature of the Jews, or something else; but the day will surely come when the Lord will vindicate His truth. In the meantime He knows the righteous, watches over them and knows how to deliver them.

Verses 11-22. This is one of the most solemn portions of the Word of God. It is prophetic, for here we have a description of the false teachers of the last days. Here is a startling picture of the baptized infidels of Christendom. It corresponds in a measure with 2 Timothy 3:1-5. They are bold (daring), self-willed, and tremble not to rail at dignities. They are unbridled in their talk and in their conduct. They are daring enough to assail every part of the truth of God, they call His revelation a myth, the virgin birth a legend, and despise the atoning work of the Son of God; they do what angels would never do, railing at dignities. (Jude has more to say about this; it is a well-known fact that some of the liberal theology leaders have joined hands with socialism in its worst form, that is, the anarchistic side of it. They speak of helping the masses and they rail against existing law and order, and advocate their overthrow. The ringleader of an attempt in Western Canada against the government was an apostate preacher of an honored denomination. The so-called "parlor-bolshevists" belong to this class.)

As we read on let us remember that not Peter, but the Holy Spirit speaks. They are compared to beasts, just born to be caught and to be destroyed; they speak evil of the things of which they know nothing whatever. The meaning is that they were never born again, and therefore follow the flesh, though it may be under the guise of culture and learning. They shall perish in their own corruption. They count it pleasure to revel in the day-time, they delight in luxurious and sinful pleasures. More than that, they claim a Christian profession and fellowship, by attending the love feasts of believers, which they dishonor by their presence as spots and blemishes, while at the same time they glory in their deceivings, their false teachings and denials of the Master. The right (or straight) way which they professed to have taken, when they took the name of Christ upon themselves, they have now left, having gone astray. Therefore they have eyes full of adultery and cannot cease from sin; they entice unstable souls, leading them astray as they have gone astray themselves.

They are also following in the way of Balaam, who was rebuked for his iniquity by the speaking of the dumb ass. The love of money controls them, as it controlled the heathen prophet. Verses 17 and 18 give additional descriptions of the character of these false teachers. They are springs

without water, men look to them for the refreshing water of life, because they profess to be teachers; "the hungry sheep look up and are not fed." They know nothing of the water of life. They are nothing but obscuring mists driven by the tempest of their natural hearts. The great swelling words are the divine estimate of empty, human rhetoric by which thousands are swayed, but they are words of vanity, instead of bringing souls to Christ and the knowledge of redemption, they allure them through the lusts of the flesh, while they promise liberty to others, they are themselves slaves of corruption. Such is the character of the false teachers, who deny the Master that bought them.

"For if, after having escaped the pollutions of the world through the knowledge of the Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ they are again entangled therein and overcome, the latter end is worse with them than the first. For it had been better for them not to have known the way of righteousness, than, having known it, to turn back from the holy commandment delivered unto them." Does this mean that these persons were at one time really begotten again, having received life and the Holy Spirit by trusting on Christ? These false teachers certainly were never born again; the description which we have of them is the proof of it. The last verse of this chapter gives the conclusive evidence. Believers, true Christians, are never compared to dogs or swine; they are the sheep of His flock. A sheep cannot be transformed into a dog or a swine, nor will a sheep do what a dog or a swine does. They were therefore never the true children of God. They had escaped the outward pollutions of the world, which is a different thing from the escape of the corruption which is in the world by lust; the latter stands for the inward deliverance by the new birth, the former for an outward reformation which had taken place when they professed the knowledge of the Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ, when for a time forsaking their evil ways so that they escaped the pollutions. But not having a new nature they became entangled therein and overcome, so that it was worse with them than in the beginning, before they had made a profession. They had known the way of righteousness as made known in the gospel of Christ, but the life which is offered in that way of righteousness, with the fruits of righteousness which follow, they had never accepted by a living faith. And this seems to be the case with the vast majority of the false teachers of today, the destructive critics, and those who deny the deity of our Lord. They were never born again; they never had a true experience of real salvation, hence they are but natural men, not having the Spirit.

III. THE FUTURE OF THE EARTH AND THE CONCLUSION CHAPTER 3

1. Mocking at the Lord's coming (3:1-7)
2. The future of the earth (3:8-10)
3. Exhortation and conclusion (3:11-18)

Verses 1-7

The opening statement shows conclusively that Peter is the author and that this second Epistle was sent to the same believers to whom the first Epistle was addressed. The critics claim that this chapter marks a separate Epistle in itself and that it was combined by mistake with the preceding two chapters. Like so much else the critics put forth this is a foolish speculation wholly unwarranted. Peter states the reason for this second Epistle "to stir up their pure minds by way of remembrance." He had already used a similar statement in the first chapter (1:12), but now exhorts them to be mindful of the words which were spoken before by the holy prophets and the commandment of the Lord and Saviour through the apostles. The evil had been prophetically pictured by Peter and now he charges them to use the Word of God in the coming days of peril and apostasy, and remember especially its prophetic forecast. The apostle Paul did the same after he had given the warning of

the coming of grievous wolves and false teachers (Acts 20:30).

Such is the resource of the true Church today, and in the degree, as we remember the words spoken by the prophets and by the apostles, give heed to them, we shall be kept in the perilous times. Both the prophets and the apostles warned of the evil to come as each age closes with apostasy and judgment; so did the Lord Himself when He predicted the future of the age and the conditions which precede His physical and glorious return. All have given the warning. Enoch was a prophet, as we learn from Jude; he prophesied about the coming of the Lord to execute judgment. There were apostates in his day who ridiculed his testimony and who spoke against him (Jude, verse 15).

Noah was a preacher of righteousness; he built the ark and sounded the warning, but no one paid any attention to him, and "as it was in the days of Noah so shall it be when the Son of Man cometh," said our Lord. The prophets warned of the judgment in store for Jerusalem; the warning was not heeded, and such a great one as Jeremiah was not believed, and cast into the dungeon. The prophet Amos speaks of those who "put far off the evil day." There were mockers and unbelievers each time an age ended. As already shown, the combined testimony of the apostles is on the same lines. Peter then writes: "Knowing this first, that in the last days mockers shall come with mockery, walking after their own lusts, and saying, Where is the promise of His coming? for, from the day the fathers fell asleep, all things continue as they were from the beginning of the creation."

While before Peter had shown the quality of the false teachers, he now points out by the revelation given unto him, that there would be unbelief and outright mockery touching the visible return of the Lord Jesus Christ. In both Epistles this great coming event, the coming of the Lord in the clouds of heaven, has a prominent place. The false teachers, whose doom will be sealed when Christ comes again, also ridicule and scoff at the idea that He will ever show Himself again. And why do they mock and sneer? It has its source in unbelief. These men are infidels. Every destructive critic is an infidel. The records of the past embodied in the Holy Scriptures are denied to be authentic and reliable. The prophets of God were Jewish patriots who dreamt of a great Jewish future. The magnificent prophecies as to the coming kingdom and the rule of the King of Kings are classed with the apocalyptic ramblings of the "Sibylline writings." The Lord Jesus Christ is even impeached as to His knowledge and is regarded as being under the ignorant prejudice of the times in which He lived. It all emanates from the rejection of the Bible as the inerrant revelation of God.

Never before has this prophecy been so literally fulfilled as now. The Holy Spirit has revived the study of prophecy. The midnight cry has gone forth. The blessed hope has been restored to the Church, and the forgotten prayer, "Even so, Come, Lord Jesus," is being prayed by the members of the body of Christ as never before. There is more preaching and teaching going on today on prophecy than ever before in the history of the church. It is one of the signs that the end of the age is very near. But the revival of prophecy has resulted in the activity of Satan. He both perverts and ridicules the coming of the Lord, and as that blessed event draws near, there will be increasing ridicule and mockery from the side of the apostates. (Of late certain presses of "evangelical denominations" have turned out tons of literature warning against the premillennial teachings. The Methodist church of Canada circulated a series of 5 pamphlets which attacked the blessed hope. They were the production of an infidel. The Chicago University and similar institutions also fight prophecy. Sneers and ridicule about His coming, the end of the age, the increase of evil and the coming are constantly multiplying. It is all a fulfillment of what Peter has written.)

The apostates dream of human progress, for they are "evolutionists." Their pet law, "the survival of the fittest," must work on till the last vestige of the beastly in man has worked itself out by a natural process, for they deny the need as well as the power of redemption. They call a belief in the coming of the Lord "pessimism," and have even attempted to brand those who believe in a catastrophic ending of this present evil age "enemies of civilization and human progress." What God hath spoken, what the mouth of all His holy prophets have declared, that the hope of the world is the

coming and the enthronement of the Lord Jesus Christ, is extremely distasteful to them, for it conflicts with the program they have invented, a program which has no scriptural support whatever. They take the ground of an assumed unchangeableness of the world, that a sort of cycle governs nature, and thus they deny the positive statements of the Word of God and exclude God from His own creation. Science, meant to be a helpmeet to faith, is used by them to uphold their infidelity. They constantly speak of science contradicting revelation, which is not true.

The deluge which Peter mentions as an evidence of a past catastrophe, when the world was overflowed with water, they wilfully forget or, as it is now generally done, class it with myths of other nations, though science has abundantly proven that there happened such a judgment. But they do not want to believe that there can be a supernatural interference with the world. They believe in things continuing as they are and steadily improving. Up to the very time when the predicted sudden destruction shall come upon them, they say "Peace and safety" (1 Thess. 5). It was so, no doubt, when the deluge swept the unbelieving and secure generation of that time to eternal doom.

(Some apply the words relating to a past judgment to the judgment which passed over the original earth on account of Satan's fall. That there was such a judgment the second verse of the Bible teaches and geological facts confirm that the earth passed through a prehistoric destruction. But the reference is to the deluge. Almost every nation on earth has traditions of the deluge, though often in a perverted form. While the apostates and sneerers make everything of historical evidence and tradition, they ignore the universality of traditions concerning the flood.)

Verses 8-10

A great revelation follows. The heavens that are now, and the earth by the same word have been stored up, reserved for fire against a day of judgment and destruction of ungodly men. Then in verse 10, "But the day of the Lord will come as a thief; in which the heavens shall pass away with a great noise, and the elements shall be dissolved with fervent heat, and the earth and the works that are therein shall be burned up." As the earth was once judged by water so shall it be judged by fire in the future, and not the earth only but also the heavens, that is the heavens surrounding the earth. Years ago infidels used to ridicule the statement of Peter that the earth and the surrounding heavens would be consumed by fire. They spoke of it as an impossibility that the earth with its rivers, lakes and oceans could ever pass through such a conflagration, so that all is consumed. Well informed infidels no longer ridicule this statement, for astronomy with the help of the spectroscope has revealed the fact that other bodies in the heavens have passed through great conflagrations, that other globes have been burned up, and not a few astronomers have advanced the theory that this will be the fate of the earth on which we live. Peter had no telescope, nor did he know anything about astronomy. How did he find out that the earth would be destroyed by fire? It was the Spirit of God who revealed it to him.

The question arises what event is it of which Peter speaks here? He speaks of "the day of the Lord." What phase of that coming day is it? It certainly is not the coming of the Lord for His saints as revealed in 1 Thess. 4. Nor is it the day of the Lord in its beginning, when the Lord appears in power and great glory. Now it is still "man's day," and when He appears the Day of the Lord begins. One day, Peter tells us, with the Lord is as a thousand years, and a thousand years as one day. From Revelation we learn that Christ will reign over the earth with His saints for a thousand years and that is "the Day of the Lord." The beginning of it will be as a thief, and it will bring fiery judgments, for He will be revealed "in flaming fire." But what Peter speaks of is not so much the beginning of that day of the Lord as it is the end, when the thousand years have expired.

When the thousand-year reign of Christ as King is over there follows a little season during which Satan is loosed from his prison; the revolt of which Revelation 20:8 speaks is followed by fire falling down from God out of heaven, and after that we see the great white throne, the judgment of the wicked dead. "And I saw a great white throne, and Him that sat on it, from whose face the earth and the heavens fled away, and there was found no place for them" (Rev. 20:11). It is this of which

Peter writes, when the day of the Lord is ended, the earth and the surrounding heaven will pass away; it will be through a mighty conflagration from beneath and from above.* When Peter writes in verse 13 of new heavens and a new earth, he states what John beheld in his vision of chapter 21:1. "And I saw a new heaven and a new earth; for the first heaven and the first earth were passed away and there was no more sea."

*"It will be observed, that the Spirit does not speak here of the coming of Christ, except to say that it will be scoffed at in the last days. He speaks of the day of God, in contrast with the trust of unbelievers in the stability of the material things of creation, which depends, as the apostle shows, on the word of God. And in that day everything on which unbelievers rested and will rest shall be dissolved and pass away. This will not be at the commencement of the day, but at its close; and here we are free to reckon this day, according to the apostle's word as a thousand years, or whatever length of period the Lord shall see fit." (Synopsis of the Bible).

Some of these Jewish believers were evidently thinking that the Lord was slack about the fulfillment of the promise concerning that day. The apostle tells them that the Lord's slackness is His long-suffering, "He is not willing that any should perish but all should come unto repentance."

Verses 11-18

In view of such a future the apostle exhorts once more to holy living and godliness, "waiting for and earnestly desiring the coming of the day of God." The thought which is often expressed in the words "hastening the coming of the day of God," that we might act and serve, sending the gospel to the heathen, and do other things, thus hastening the coming of the Lord, is not warranted by the text, nor is it true. God cannot be hastened by the creature, nor can He be delayed in the execution of His eternal purposes.

As stated in the preceding annotations, the fiery ending of the Day of the Lord, and with it the Day of God, the eternal Age, when God is all in all, is what Peter teaches. "But we, according to His promise, wait for new heavens and a new earth, wherein dwelleth righteousness." The promise is found in Isaiah 65:17, "For, behold, I create new heavens and a new earth; and the former shall not be remembered, nor come to mind." This is not the millennium, which in this chapter of Isaiah is described in verses 18-25, but that which comes into existence after the earth and the surrounding heavens have passed through the great conflagration. Once more Isaiah speaks of the earth and heavens which will remain forever. (See Isaiah 66:22.) This new earth and the new heavens will be the glorious and eternal dwelling-place of the redeemed, for the new Jerusalem comes finally out of the highest heaven to find its eternal resting place there (Rev. 21). "Wherefore, beloved, seeing that ye wait for these things, be diligent to be found in Him in peace without spot and blameless."

in conclusion, Peter refers to Paul as "our beloved brother Paul." The Epistle to the Galatians was then in circulation and everybody could read there of Peter's failure in Antioch (Gal. 2:12-16). The loving remark by Peter shows that he had readily seen his mistake and that there was no clash between the two servants of the Lord Jesus Christ. The Epistle which Paul had written to the same Jewish Christians to whom Peter wrote is without question the Epistle to the Hebrews. (See Introduction to Hebrews.)

The Second Epistle of Peter ends with another warning, so well suited for our times, "Beware, lest, being carried away with the error of the wicked (destructive critics and deniers of Christ), ye fall from your own steadfastness." And the safeguard is "Grow in grace and in the knowledge of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ."

"To Him be Glory both now and forever, Amen."