



**THE SECOND
EPISTLE OF
PETER**

AND

JUDE

.....
**LUTHER E.
SCHWARTZKOPF**

**LIVING WAY
BIBLE STUDY**

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walk in His Living Way!*

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- 3. THE MESSAGE** The lecture or message is given by a pastor or layperson who has researched the material and presents the study, giving personal insight and augmenting, but not duplicating, the author's comments.
- 4. THE NARRATIVE** The author's comments or narrative, along with the P.A. questions for the next lesson, are given out at the end of the class. At the next class meeting, before answering the P.A. questions, the small groups may choose to review the author's comments of the last lesson, and share what each has highlighted as meaningful or important.

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2 Peter & Jude (9)	<i>Rev. Luther Schwartzkopf</i>
1 John, 2 John & 3 John (8)	<i>Dr. Robert Holst</i>
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Called to Glory - May 13, 2006

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*“There is great similarity between the two letters
in the purpose for which each was written.”*

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A MANUAL FOR SPIRITUAL FITNESS TRAINING

In the past several decades, the physical fitness movement in our country has grown by leaps and bounds. It has become “big business” all over the world. Even small communities now have “gyms” and aerobic workout centers. Videos and manuals are readily available for people to use within the privacy of their own homes. Physical fitness is important to many people.

The apostle Paul often made references to athletics (2 Timothy 4:7-8). He may very well have been part of a fitness movement. When he wrote to young pastor Timothy, “Physical training is of some value” (2 Timothy 4:8); it was not his intention to “put down” fitness training. What he was saying is: “As important as physical fitness is, there is another kind of fitness which is even more important, and that is godliness.” This has “value for all things, holding promise for both the present life and for the life to come.” Paul is encouraging all Christians to have a clearly defined spiritual training program that we are committed to and participate in regularly.

This concept provides us with a theme around which we may be able to organize the truths, which the Holy Spirit has for us in 2 Peter and Jude. Here we have our God-given: “Manual for Spiritual Fitness Training.”

AUTHOR OF SECOND PETER

In the very first verse of the letter the author says he is “Simon Peter, a servant and apostle of Jesus Christ.” For a variety of reasons, the majority of Bible scholars do not think that the apostle Peter could have been the author of this letter. They believe it was written by a church-man in the 2nd century. He wanted to invoke the authority of the apostle, to help him in dealing with the difficulties and problems confronting the Church then. It would have been his way of saying, “This is what Peter would say if he were here now.”

In spite of the many arguments which are brought forward against the idea that the apostle Peter was the author of this letter, fair-minded scholars will have to admit that this is not “the final answer.” There are still some rather powerful reasons for holding to the idea that the author was indeed, Simon Peter, a disciple of Jesus.

One of these is a recent discovery among the Dead Sea Scrolls. Michael Green calls attention to this “find” in his commentary on 2 Peter, which was published in 1999. Tucked into an ancient manuscript of the Gospel of Mark, scholars have found a fragment, which appears to be a verse from the second letter of Peter (1:15). Considering the relationship between Peter and Mark, some think it may even have been part of a “cover letter” for the Gospel of Mark. If this can be substantiated, it would be, says Green, unimpeachable and very early evidence that 2 Peter was written some time before A.D. 68. This eminent scholar goes on to say: “Nothing has been demonstrated in language, style, or content of 2 Peter which falsifies the claim that it is a mid-first century letter derived from Peter.” We’re on solid ground, then, if we take verse one as it stands and consider Simon Peter as the author.

Peter has outstanding credentials for such a work. With this letter he is doing precisely what His Master charged him to do. In Luke 22:32, Jesus told Peter that it was to be his special ministry to “strengthen” his brothers and sisters in the faith.

ORIGINAL INTENDED READERS OF 2 PETER

In chapter 3:1, Peter writes: “Dear friends, this is now my second letter to you.” If this is a reference to the first epistle of Peter, then we know that it was written to the

churches in Asia Minor (modern Turkey), which are listed in 1 Peter 1:1. In this reference, Peter goes on to describe the previous one as a “reminder” letter. From the epistle itself we know that the intended recipients are people to whom the author had personally written and ministered (1:16, 3:1) and who had received at least one letter from the apostle Paul (3:15).

Although it is listed with “The General Epistles” of the New Testament, it seems more likely that 2 Peter was written to a particular congregation (or cluster of congregations) about which the author knew that there was a serious problem. This could very well have been in Asia Minor, which was one of the main “seed-beds” for the issues, which the letter takes on. At any rate, there is historical evidence that the letter was received in Asia Minor at an early date.

DATE AND PLACE OF WRITING

There is nothing in the letter that gives us even the slightest hint as to the place from which 2 Peter was sent. Assuming that Simon Peter is the author, then it was very likely written in Rome shortly before his martyrdom (1:15) which happened sometime prior to A.D. 68.

CANONICITY

The record shows that Peter’s second epistle has the dubious distinction of being the last book to gain entry into the New Testament canon. It didn’t happen until the fourth century. The epistle has really had a “rough go of it” down through the centuries. It is not even cited by name until the time of Church Father Origen, at the beginning of the third century. Origen quoted it as Scripture at least six times. Luther considered it “second-rate,” while Erasmus rejected it “out of hand.” On the other hand, there is no positive evidence that it was ever rejected anywhere in the Early Church as “spurious” (i.e., of questionable origin and unworthy of a place in the canon of sacred Scripture). The fact that it was questioned and tested, only adds to the validity of its claim to be an authentic book of the Holy Bible.

PURPOSE OF THE LETTER

The letter is often called “The Epistle of Knowledge.” The word “knowledge” occurs quite often. False teachers were spreading the false notion that as long as one had knowledge of Christian belief, it really didn’t matter how

they lived. Hence, Martin Luther's observation that the letter was "written against those who think that the Christian faith can be without works." In a positive way, it emphasizes the importance of knowledge of the truth for the purpose of strengthening the Christian hope and defending it against the wicked propaganda of false teachers.

AUTHOR OF THE EPISTLE OF JUDE

In verse one, the author identifies himself as "Jude," which is another form of the Hebrew name for Jacob's fourth son, the founder of the tribe of Judah. The name was quite popular in the New Testament period, but usually in its Greek form, "Judas." The name gained added luster from the Jewish hero Judas Maccabeus who had led the revolt against Antiochus Epiphanies in the second century B.C., and whose exploits are celebrated in the festival of Hanukkah.

The author calls himself, "a servant of Jesus Christ and a brother of James." He doesn't refer to himself as an "Apostle." In fact, in verse 17, he makes it quite clear that he is not one of them. He introduces himself as the "brother of James." There is only one James, who was so well-known at that time, that he could serve as a reference like this, and that is James, the brother of Jesus. James was head of the Jerusalem Church at that time. He was the author of the epistle that bears his name, (Galatians 1:19, 2:9; 1 Corinthians 15:7; James 1:1). Jude, like the other brothers of Jesus, had rejected the Messianic claims of their brother during His earthly ministry (John 7:5). It was after Jesus rose from the dead that they were led by the Holy Spirit to embrace Him as the Promised One.

It is interesting to note that neither James nor Jude ever refer to themselves as "brothers" of Jesus. Perhaps, they considered it privilege enough to be "servants" of Jesus.

OCCASION AND PURPOSE OF JUDE

In verse three, Jude writes that he had intended to write a letter, which would celebrate the great truths and blessings of the Gospel. He was led to postpone this kind of letter because somehow he had learned about a very serious threat to their faith. There were some very influential people in their midst who were coming up with false interpretations of things which the apostle Paul had written. Specifically, they held to the notion that God's grace allowed them to indulge the urges and drives of their human nature. "God likes to forgive; we like to sin — Nice arrangement!"

Jude felt a great urgency to warn them how disastrous it would be for them to accept these ideas. He wanted to show them how they could be not only strong enough to resist, but to be aggressive in doing battle with the proponents of these insidious ideas.

TIME AND PLACE OF WRITING

Bible scholars pretty much agreed that because we know so little about the life and work of Jude, it would be pure conjecture to try to reconstruct such details.



The commonly accepted view, which holds that 2 Peter makes use of materials in Jude would require that Jude was written prior to 2 Peter. Accepting our premise that 2 Peter was indeed written by Simon Peter, this would place the date of writing somewhere before A.D. 68, perhaps as early as A.D. 65.

CANONICITY OF JUDE

Although the epistle of Jude is an antilegomena (not wholeheartedly accepted as genuine), biblical history shows that it was incorporated into the earliest official New Testament in the West. By the end of the second century, it was in general circulation in both the East and the West. Early on there were some who questioned Jude's use of apocryphal writings, such as the book of Enoch. One explanation for Jude's use of such materials is the possibility that some of the non-canonical writings were being used by the false teachers.

VALUE OF JUDE FOR TODAY

Jude refutes the very modern careless assumption that a man's beliefs really aren't all that important. Unthought-out religion has an insecure footing, and the body of doctrine that was set forth by the apostles provides a solid foundation for our personal faith today. In contrast to the religious ideas of our postmodernism world in which people are building their own belief system by "picking and choosing," Jude emphasizes the relevance of sound theology for sound morality and true godliness.

RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN 2 PETER AND JUDE

There is a close relationship between 2 Peter and Jude. Of the twenty-five verses in Jude, no less than fifteen appear in whole or in part in 2 Peter. While many insist that Jude used 2 Peter, others feel it is more reasonable to assume that the longer letter incorporated much of the shorter Jude. As far as the lessons taught in both letters, this doesn't really matter.

There is great similarity between the two letters in the purpose for which each was written. Both of them deal with the problem of false religious ideas which were being promoted very aggressively and which could undermine the faith of the people and bring them to spiritual ruin. Both of them are aimed to help ordinary people of God become morally fit and spiritually strong. Spiritually healthy people will develop internal resistance to the virus of false teachings. They will be enabled to live spiritually vigorous lives to the glory of God. Both letters sound a clarion call to that generation of believers and to ours, that what you believe and how you live are vitally important.

Simon Peter, the apostle, and Jude, the brother of Jesus, have given us a manual for moral and spiritual fitness loaded with tried and true principles that we will do well to study and then put into practice as we seek to live our lives to the glory of our God and Savior. The Holy Spirit invites you to become part of this moral and spiritual strength and fitness training. Resolve to put your heart and soul into it. It offers tremendous benefits for this life and for all eternity! To Him be the glory now and forever. Amen!

PERSONAL APPLICATION – 2 PETER 1:1-11

Heavenly Father, Thank You for Your Holy Word, especially for the Gospel which tells me about all You have already done for me through Jesus. Through the working of the Holy Spirit in my heart and mind, please make it come alive for me as I study it today. May it inform, inspire, and enable me to live a life that honors You in every way. Amen.

.....

2 Peter 1:1

1. In addition to being “a servant and an apostle,” what else gave Peter special qualifications for writing a manual for “Spiritual Fitness Training”? (Lesson 1 and Luke 22:32)

What does the nickname that Jesus gave Peter mean in English (John 1:42; Matthew 16:18)? Do you think he “lived up” to it?

When Peter lists his credentials he puts “servant” first. Why do you think he does this?

What important religious truth did Peter illustrate by identifying himself as a “slave”? (1 Corinthians 6:20; 1 Peter 1:18-19; Romans 6:22)

Does this apply only to Peter? Explain.

Does this “slave” metaphor suggest that we ought to be ready to serve God because we have an obligation to do so?

What is the only motivation acceptable to God?

In his television special, “The Search for Jesus,” Peter Jennings interviewed so-called scholars who said that the concept of Jesus’ deity was a later development. What do you see in verse 1 which disproves this?

2 Peter 1:2

2. List the personal benefits which will be ours if we embark on a program to become more spiritually fit.

Using the dictionary, pick a definition of “grace” which you think comes closest to what Peter had in mind.

Write the Hebrew word for “peace.”

2 Peter 1:3-4

3. If our response to Peter’s challenge is that we just don’t think we’ve “got it in us” to live spiritually strong lives, what does he say to us?
-

What other encouragement does he offer? (v. 4)

2 Peter 1:5-9

4. A servant relationship with God begins when we receive by faith His gift of forgiveness through Jesus Christ, which brings us the hope of eternal life in heaven. Is this all there is to the Christian life? Peter says: “_____ to your faith.” Which words (v. 5 NIV) show how important Peter considers this?
-

Compare other versions to see how they translate his exhortation to make this a priority. Make note of any that you think express Peter’s sense of urgency in a more powerful way.

Peter lists seven personal qualities we should seek to cultivate. Match the list with the names of people who demonstrated the virtue in an outstanding way.

___ Goodness	A. Genesis 39:1-20
___ Knowledge	B. Luke 23:34
___ Self-Control	C. John 1:47
___ Perseverance	D. 1 Kings 3:9
___ Godliness	E. Acts 4:32ff
___ Kindness	F. Acts 7:54ff
___ Love	G. 1 Samuel 3:4-10

According to verse 8, what encouragement does Peter give to those who make a determined effort to develop such qualities and make them more evident in their lives?

2 Peter 1:10-11

5. When Peter urges “...be all the more eager to make your calling and election sure,” is he implying that there is something left for us to do, before we can be sure that we are saved? How does the rest of verse 10 help you to understand what he meant?
-

What is the final incentive (v. 11) Peter gives them for making every effort to “add” these seven qualities and characteristics (vv. 5-9) to their faith?

THE BENEFITS OF SPIRITUAL FITNESS – 2 PETER 1:2	8
WE HAVE MORE THAN ADEQUATE RESOURCES! – 2 PETER 1:3-4	9
SPECIFIC AREAS OF PERSONALITY TO WORK ON – 2 PETER 1:5-9	9
IT'S DECISION TIME! – 2 PETER 1:10-11	10
PERSONAL APPLICATION – 2 PETER 1:12-21	11

• • • • •
“You will receive a rich welcome into the eternal kingdom of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.”

• • • • •
THEME: “GOD EXPECTS US TO BE CONCERNED ABOUT SPIRITUAL GROWTH AND FITNESS”

WE SHOULD LISTEN TO PETER!

2 PETER 1:1

Peter explains why he is “in the business” of promoting moral and spiritual fitness. He calls himself “a servant and apostle of Jesus Christ.” These are his credentials for his role as spiritual “fitness trainer.” He is an apostle, schooled by the Master Himself.

LIKE PETER, WE BELONG TO GOD

More important for Peter was the title “servant.” The word for “servant” (doulos) refers more specifically to the role of a slave, a person who belonged “body and soul” to his master, who had “paid a price” for him (1 Peter 1:18-19; 1 Corinthians 6:20). When he refers to himself as a “slave,” Peter also wants to identify with his readers. All believers have this in common with the apostles and all the great heroes of the Christian faith. All of us belong to God because He paid a price for us. The price He paid wasn't gold or silver, but His Son's “holy precious blood.” (1 Peter 1:18-19)

WE HAVE POTENTIAL FOR TRUE SPIRITUAL GROWTH

Peter continues, “To those who... have received a faith as precious as ours.” With this greeting the apostle Peter says, that in this spiritual quest, it's a “level playing field” for all participants - the apostle included! With the Greek word which he uses for “precious,” he points to another important concept. This word was associated with the civil ceremony in which newly-freed slaves were granted full citizenship. In one sense we are slaves, but by God's grace we are first-class citizens in His Kingdom. He has set us free to serve Him.

All of this, says Peter, is ours “because of the righteousness of our God and Savior, Jesus Christ.” Because of what God has done for us in Jesus, we have the potential to develop a spirituality that is acceptable to our God. This statement makes crystal clear what our reason for wanting to please God should be. Our motive should not be to try to win God’s favor with our fine performance. Because of His fine performance we already have God’s favor. It is because of our love for Him “who first loved us” that we are concerned about our spiritual health and well-being. This is the only motive that is acceptable to God.

Incidentally, we don’t want to miss the significant nuance which Peter includes in his reference to Jesus. He boldly takes the Old Testament name for Yahweh and applies it to Jesus. The deity was taught from the beginning!

THE BENEFITS OF SPIRITUAL FITNESS

2 PETER 1:2

Fitness “buffs” like to talk about the personal benefits they receive. Peter knows from personal experience that spiritual fitness brings the blessings of “grace and peace.” It was his hope and prayer that this will happen for them “in abundance!” “Grace” usually refers to God’s disposition of undeserved love for people, which moved Him to work out a plan of salvation and offer it to all people, even though they are in no way deserving of it (Romans 5:8). Spiritually fit people will “catch” this God-like love. It will enable them to “do away” with the sins others commit against them, as we pray in the Lord’s Prayer. In this way, they can keep themselves free from the usual destructive emotions of resentment and hatred and be able to concentrate on doing the will of God.

The gift of grace is essential before they can experience the blessing of “peace.” The word “peace” is a translation for the Hebrew “Shalom.” To get a little deeper into the profound meaning of “Shalom,” think of a fine Swiss watch. The skilled watchmaker carefully assembles the finely crafted parts so that they function in perfect harmony. “Shalom” is that state in which a child of God has all of the complicated components of human personality functioning smoothly and in total harmony with God, giving the individual a deep sense of direction and purpose. What a great blessing that is!

BOTH DEPEND UPON A PERSONAL RELATIONSHIP WITH GOD!

Unlike the other world religions, which use a variety of rituals and ceremonies through which their followers hope to attain such blessings, Peter says that “grace and peace” can be ours only “through the knowledge of God and Jesus our Lord.” It is very likely Peter used the word “knowledge” because it was a “buzz-word” among the false teachers. Peter says: “Yes, the secret of true spirituality is knowledge — the knowledge of God and Jesus Christ.” For Peter, the word “knowledge” meant more than just knowing information about God. It meant to “know” God and Jesus Christ in an intimate and personal way. For this, we need to spend “quality time” with the Word and Sacrament, through which He personally comes to us and becomes a powerful force in our life.

WE HAVE MORE THAN ADEQUATE RESOURCES!*2 PETER 1:3-4*

Peter writes (v. 3): “His divine power has given us everything we need for a godly life and through our knowledge of him who called us by his own glory and goodness.” The “divine call” is the basis for Peter’s appeal for godly living. He declares that the One, who calls, also enables. Because of our calling, the way is open for us to develop and grow in “true godliness and to participate in the divine nature of God.” He wants all of us to be involved in living our lives as He had in mind with His creation. He wants to see us restored into the very “image” of Him (2 Corinthians 3:18). What He expects of us, He also makes possible. Peter says God will give us all the help we need in this endeavor.

WE ALSO HAVE HIS PROMISES!

Not only do we have the resources we need for this exciting challenge, Peter tells us that Christ has also given us “great and precious promises.” One of them (Matthew 28:20) says He will be with us every step of the way. Isn’t that good news? The devil, the world and our sinful inclinations conspire to throw us off track and divert us from the primary purpose for which God has called us. Peter uses the word “escape” when he speaks about our vulnerability to the “corruption in the world caused by evil desires” (v. 4). The word “escape” aptly depicts the process of temptation to sin. The forces of evil are very aggressive. Yet, with God-given determination and the spiritual strength God supplies, we will make progress in the exciting venture to be “walking reflections” of God.

SPECIFIC AREAS OF PERSONALITY TO WORK ON*2 PETER 1:5-9*

Peter uses the popular literary form of a list to highlight seven areas of character and behavior, which we should focus on; like body-builders work on certain muscle groups. He introduces the list with very strong words about their importance. He says, “Make every effort.” The godly life is not something we will just drift into without any real effort on our part. As “people of faith” we are to be as focused, determined, and single-minded as Olympic athletes. We need to strive with all that is in us to make it our “personal best” in the arena of life under the banner of God’s Kingdom (Philippians 2:12-13).

At the head of the list is “goodness” (Greek - “aretee”). Literally, the word meant the “proper fulfilling of anything.” For example, a knife is meant to cut. It is a “good” knife if it cuts well. Similarly, a horse is supposed to run. It is a “good” horse if it runs well. Our life on this earth will be “good” if it is a reflection of the very nature of God. He created us to be in His “image” and shows us, in the person of Jesus, what that means.

Next, Peter lists “knowledge.” “Knowledge” deals with the intellectual aspect of our human make-up. The Christian life is not a “no-brainer.” It takes time and effort to use our mental capacities to seek out the will of God as we make our choices in today’s complicated world.

High on the list is the virtue of “self-control.” It means controlling our drives and passions instead of being controlled by them. Peter uses a concept which must have cut the false teachers like the lash of a whip. The chief item in their propaganda was that their “special knowledge” released them from the need for self-control (2:10, 3:3). “Self-control” does not mean that “people of faith” are to disown or suppress the reality of all passion and pleasure. Rather, it actually authenticates these drives as God-given. God included them in His pronouncement that all He had created was “very good” (Genesis 1:31). They can be a blessing to us, and even support us in our Christian life, but only when they are under control and in keeping with God’s will.

Another quality of the “good life” is perseverance. On this topic the author of Hebrews writes (Hebrews 12:1-2), “fixing our eyes on Jesus, the pioneer and perfecter of faith. For the joy set before him he endured the cross, scorning its shame.” The same word was also used to describe the spirit of the Christian martyrs who remained unswerving in their loyalty to God and His will, even as they felt the searing flames at their feet, ready to turn their bodies into flaming torches to illuminate Roman games. This perseverance had its roots in the conviction that their God is ultimately in control and He will “have the last word!”

The Greek word for “godliness” is the primary word for “religion” in popular pagan usage. The “religious” person is always careful to appear as one who respects the rituals

and rules of divinity. Peter takes great pains to emphasize that true “knowledge” shows itself in a genuine reverence toward God and great respect for fellow human beings. The false teachers taught that their secret knowledge enabled them to live as they pleased without any concern for the effect it would have on others. Peter reminds us that our relationship with God also has to do with how we relate to those with whom we are sharing this short trip on planet earth (Mark 12:28-31).

As Peter comes close to the end of his list, you can sense that he is building up to a climax. The Greek word he used is the same word which Wm. Penn picked for the city he founded, Philadelphia. He wanted it to be a city of “brotherly (sisterly) love.” Without this basic attitude of love and kindness, true godliness will be stunted. The apostle John couldn’t have said it any more precisely: “If someone says ‘I love God’ and hates his brother, he is a liar” (1 John 4:20). This is a simple “litmus test” anyone of us can use to check the genuineness of our religion.

The six prior qualities are consummated in the seventh: Love. The word for love is the familiar Greek: “agape.” The concept embodied in the word is that of unconditional love and concern for the well being of those who touch our life to one degree or another. Although emotion is involved, it is primarily an over-riding principle which guides our behavior. Without this we will fail at being a reflection of God, because this is the very essence of God (1 John 4:8).

Peter makes the point (v. 8) that if we will work at doing the things that encourage growth and improvement in these areas, we can’t help but come closer to the goals God has in mind for us. On the other hand, he adds that failure to give these priority in our life would show that we have really “missed the boat” about the meaning of the Christian life. In verse 9 he says that we would be “short-sighted, blind, or forgetful.”

IT’S DECISION TIME!

2 PETER 1:10-11

The last two verses (10-11) in this opening section are Peter’s appeal for his readers to stop being spiritual “couch potatoes” and make a commitment to this “spiritual strength training” program. The word “therefore” has the force of saying: In the light of these preceding truths, is there any good reason why you shouldn’t give top priority to these things? The question is hypothetical.

Peter gives additional incentives. He tells them that if they respond to his encouraging words they will make their “calling and election sure.” This seems to be saying that there is something left for us to do before we can be sure that we have been saved. We know that this simply can’t be true. Once again, the original gets us closer to Peter’s intended meaning. The Greek word for “make sure” is a legal term which means “to validate.” When we live a life that reflects the nature of God, it shows that our religion is authentic and genuine! We not only claim to be children of God, we actually reflect the nature of our heavenly Father. Furthermore, says Peter, the person who is spiritually “in good shape, will be less likely to stumble or be tripped up by the devious ways of Satan.”

Peter wraps it up by calling to mind another exciting blessing they can look forward to: “You will receive a rich welcome into the eternal kingdom of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.” The metaphor of “entry into the kingdom” may go back to one of the honors paid to a victor in the Olympic Games. The people of his home-town welcomed him back not through the usual town gate, but through a part of the wall especially broken through to afford him entrance! People who are victorious in living their lives to the glory of God can know when their life on earth is done, a great eternity awaits them (Revelation 2:10).

Don’t put off getting enrolled in this fitness program which will give direction and purpose to your life here on this earth, result in spiritual health and strength, and bring promise of wonderful eternal blessings.

PERSONAL APPLICATION – 2 PETER 1:12-21

Lord God in Heaven, please help me to have a clear realization of the truth that my life on this earth is not only temporary, but that it could come to an end without warning. Help me then to give top priority to preparing for the life which I know goes on forever. Through Jesus Christ, my Savior. Amen.

Review

1. In our previous study, we looked at the “pep talk” with which Peter began this letter (vv. 1-11). What was he trying to motivate them to do (v. 10)?

What is the special blessing he points to (v. 11) as a powerful incentive to do this?

Do you think this could still be a powerful incentive for Christians today? Why or why not?

Does it work for you? Explain.

2 Peter 1:12

2. Do you have moments when you wonder about the value of regular participation in worship and Bible class?

Do you see anything in verse 12 which might be helpful for you at times like this?

Complete this sentence: “I want to hear God’s Word over and over again because

2 Peter 1:13-15

3. Peter speaks about his impending death. How did he know he would die soon?

To what does he compare his physical body (NIV)?

What does this tell us about his view of life?

What does it say about his view of death?

What effect did his impending death have on Peter in terms of what he considered important to be doing in the days he had left?

Is there a lesson for us here?

The Greek translated “departure” in verse 15 is “exodus.” How is death for the believer like the original EXODUS?

2 Peter 1:16-18

4. What climactic future event does Peter say he had told them about?

What actual event in his life as a disciple does Peter refer to here which gives authenticity to the message?

Can you think of a special reason that Jesus arranged to have this dramatic disclosure take place for Peter and the rest of the disciples just a few days before Holy Week?

-
5. Matthew’s account (17:1-9) mentions the “bright cloud” from which came the voice of the Father. What is the significance of this? (If you have a concordance, check the other references for cloud.)

2 Peter 1:19

6. What does Peter say the spectacular experience of The Transfiguration did for him with regard to his view of Holy Scripture?

At this time, where would the people find the “word of the prophets”?

Do you sometimes wish God would give you a special vision or spectacular experience to make you a little more certain about your faith?

What was Jesus’ opinion about this as expressed in His Parable of the Rich Man and Lazarus? (Luke 16:19-31)

To what does Peter compare the Holy Scripture?

What do you suppose is the meaning of the imagery?

2 Peter 1:20-21

7. In these verses Peter gives the basis for his complete confidence in the dependability of Scriptures.

What does this rule out in verse 20-21a?

Although the prophets set forth God's revelations in their own style and vocabulary, who was vitally active in the entire process?

How does Paul say the same thing in 2 Timothy 3:16?

LESSON 3 2 PETER & JUDE

2 PETER 1:12-21

THEIR EXPOSURE TO THE “VIRUS” OF FALSE TEACHING 2 PETER 1:12	15
THE UNCERTAINTY OF LIFE ADDS TO THE URGENCY 2 PETER 1:13-15	15
THE CERTAINTY OF THE SECOND COMING 2 PETER 1:16-17	15
THE TRANSFIGURATION — GOD’S AUDIO-VISUAL 2 PETER 1:17-18	16
THE SCRIPTURES—OUR SOLID BASIS FOR TRUTH 2 PETER 1:19-21	17
PERSONAL APPLICATION – 2 PETER 2:1-9	18

• • •
“For spiritual health and strength, Peter recommends a personal regimen which includes regular intake of energy which the Spirit makes available for us in God’s Word, a diet of real ‘Soul Food.’”

• • •
THEME: “THE IMPORTANCE OF REPETITION AND GOOD SOUL FOOD”

During the Olympics, we are reminded of the intensive regimen of training that these superb athletes put themselves through for many months leading up to the games. Divers and gymnasts repeat the same routines over and over again — sometimes for eight or nine hours a day. Repetition! Repetition!

In this section, Peter emphasizes the importance of repetition in connection with our quest for spiritual fitness. He had given them a list of seven spiritual “muscle groups” to focus on (1:5-7). They would need to work on these regularly if they ever hoped to progress in their quest to be the kind of people God wanted them to be.

THE URGENCY OF THIS ADVICE

2 PETER 1:12-15

Peter explains why he had taken such great pains to go through this program step by step. He displays his trust in them by acknowledging, up front, that they already know this very well (v.12). Then he makes

the point that this is something they can't be reminded of too often. Anyone who cares about physical health and fitness knows that haphazard stabs at fitness "just don't cut it." It has to be a way of life!

THEIR EXPOSURE TO THE "VIRUS" OF FALSE TEACHING

2 PETER 1:12

Peter knows that his readers are being exposed to insidious and dangerous religious ideas. False teachers were promoting the idea that God's grace gave them the license to live as they pleased. His readers needed to know how disastrous it would be for them if they succumbed to the debilitating false teachings. He also wanted to make sure that they had a good understanding of what they could do to build up their resistance to this deadly "virus" and stay spiritually healthy.

Peter's words sound a solemn warning to all of us. It is all too easy, for those of us who have been Christians as long as we can remember to drift into an attitude of complacency. In that state, we become "sitting ducks" for those who manipulate Bible truths to suit their pre-conceived ideas. Aggressive cults, such as Jehovah's Witness and Mormonism, can lead ungrounded Christians on paths that take them away from basic Bible teachings.

Ultimately, they will deny the deity of Christ and nullify the atoning work of Jesus on the Cross. The only personal safeguard against this is for them to make a consistent effort to stay with the program, which is able to establish them in true spiritual fitness!

THE UNCERTAINTY OF LIFE ADDS TO THE URGENCY

2 PETER 1:13-15

It is a spiritually strong Peter who writes that he considers it of compelling urgency that he brings this reminder and warning at this time. His sense of responsibility was heightened, he explains, because God had told him he would soon die. He eased into the topic of his imminent demise with a general statement which clearly reflects his view of death. He referred to transiency of his life on earth as living in the "tent of this body." This picture may have been a deliberate tie-in with the journeys of the patriarchs of the Old Testament. They had no permanent homes.

They were on their way to The Promised Land. The very first name for Christians was people of "The Way" (Acts 9:2). They were people who followed Jesus, who is "The Way" to the Promised Land.

I have heard grief counselors say that along with expressions like "passing on" or "going home" this concept is just a euphemism to help people cope with the reality of death. To the contrary, as far as Peter was concerned, this metaphor points to the true reality. It reminds us, too, that our existence on earth is only temporary. Someone has pointed out, that for our generation; death has replaced sex as a forbidden topic. The fact is that the person, who has not factored death into his equation of life, is not really prepared for life itself.

Peter's sensitivity to the transitory nature of his life on earth was heightened by the knowledge that his "tent" would soon be set aside. Some say that Peter may have been thinking about the statement made in John 21:18-19 where Jesus prophesied a drastic end to Peter's life by crucifixion. Surely this must have been in the back of his mind. The words, "as our Lord Jesus Christ has made clear to me," seem to refer to a special revelation received only recently.

In verse 15, Peter refers to his death with another figure of speech. He calls it "my departure." He uses the familiar Greek word: "exodus." This immediately calls to mind the journey of Israel to the Promised Land. Peter likely found the concept very appropriate for describing how he felt at the end of his own pilgrimage. Not a bad way to picture what happens when we die!

Peter says that before his "exodus," he is going to do whatever he can to make sure that after he is gone they "will always be able to remember these things." He probably meant that through strong emphasis and repetition his message would be written indelibly in their minds and always be in the forefront of their thinking.

THE CERTAINTY OF THE SECOND COMING

2 PETER 1:16-17

In contrast to the impermanence of our sojourn on earth, Peter emphasizes the certainty of the "power and coming of our Lord Jesus Christ" (v. 16). The Second Coming of

Jesus would introduce the final chapter in God's great plan of salvation. Peter and the other apostles considered this the culmination of everything that had gone on before. It is without question the centerpiece of Peter's message. The false teachers, on the other hand, insisted that the Second Coming, along with the Incarnation and the Resurrection were simply myths, or "cleverly invented stories."

THE TRANSFIGURATION — GOD'S AUDIO-VISUAL

2 PETER 1:17-18

In his defense, Peter uses their word and declares that he did not use "cleverly invented stories." The teaching about the "coming and power of our Lord Jesus Christ," has its basis in an actual historical event: "We were eyewitnesses of his majesty." Note that throughout this passage Peter uses the plural pronoun "we." This strikes at the false teachers' claim that Peter might have been dreaming or hallucinating. In Peter, James, and John, the glorious event of "The Transfiguration" had more than the legally required eyewitnesses attesting to the reality of an event (Deuteronomy 19:15; Matthew 18:16).

There may have been a special reason that Peter chose "epoptai" as his word for "eyewitnesses." This is the only place in the New Testament where it is found. It was commonly used to denote a person who was being initiated into the "mystery religions." The ceremony informed them that they now "had their eyes opened." Peter uses one of their favorite words to make the point that he and the other disciples had their "eyes opened" to something really grand that day!

Their eyes were opened to see the "true majesty" of Jesus (v. 16). Peter doesn't recount all of the details of the Transfiguration; however, in verse 18, he does lift out the key point for the message of this letter. He mentions the "voice which came to him [Jesus] from the Majestic Glory." This is Peter's term for the "bright cloud" of the accounts in Matthew, Mark and Luke. For people of Jewish background, the "bright cloud" was just another way of saying: "God is present!" (Exodus 24:17; Numbers 14:10; Ezekiel 1:4).

For clarification, as well as for emphasis, Peter identifies the voice that came from the "bright cloud" as the voice of "God the Father." All by itself, the majestic bright cloud must have been mind-boggling for the disciples. How even more exciting and dramatic it must have been for them to hear this voice (a thousand times richer than actor James Earl Jones!) reverberating across the heavens: "This is my Son, whom I love; with him I am well pleased." The voice of God the Father gave unqualified endorsement to the claims of Jesus. The term "beloved one" was one of the early titles for the Messiah. The phrase "with whom I am well pleased" could be considered a rough translation of Isaiah 42:1 and gives us another title for the Messiah.

This "Transfiguration" was an experience which would remain indelibly impressed in their minds, as Jesus had intended it to do. It happened only a few days before the earth-shaking events of Holy Week. This personal

experience would still be firmly imbedded in their psyches as they were rocked to the very core of their beings by the horrible things that people, under the influence of Satan, did to their Lord. We know how frightened they were, with minds in turmoil, after the events of Good Friday. However, when they saw their Risen Lord on Sunday that scene on the Mount of Transfiguration must have done an “instant replay” in their conscious minds. Without hesitation they recognized Him for Who He was! They fell on their knees and worshiped Him as God.

In addition to impressing upon the disciples the truth about Jesus’ divinity, The Transfiguration also pointed to the “Parousia” or the Second Coming, when a similar scene will take place (Mark 13:26; Revelation 1:7). There will be no doubt in anyone’s mind about Christ’s identity then! You and I don’t have to wait until then when it is too late! We have the unimpeachable testimony of Peter and the rest of the disciples as a solid foundation for our faith.

THE SCRIPTURES—OUR SOLID BASIS FOR TRUTH 2 PETER 1:19-21

As powerful and impressive as the disciples’ experience of The Transfiguration was for them (and can be also for us), Peter has something else to say: “And we have the word of the prophets made more sure” (v. 19a). Some interpret this to mean that the Transfiguration experience somehow corroborates the prophecies of the Old Testament. In the light of what he writes in the rest of this paragraph, Peter is really saying that we already have, in the Holy Scriptures, a very reliable source of truth: “You will do well to pay attention to it, as to a light shining in a dark place” (v. 19b).

This suggests the idea that our life on this earth is a journey. We are surrounded by spiritual darkness. God has graciously provided us with a powerful light which can guide us safely through it - His Holy Scriptures. We should let the whole course of our life be guided by what God tells us in His Word. If we use it for guidance, warning, reproof and inspiration we won’t get tripped up or follow the wrong path. We will reach the Promised Land, where we will spend a blessed eternity with our God and with loved ones who have gone ahead.

This will need to be our daily concern, Peter says, “until

the day dawns and the morning star arises in your hearts.” When Peter uses the term “Day” it is obviously a reference to the “Parousia” or the Day of our Lord’s Second Coming. Only then will we no longer need the light of the Word. Then the “Morning Star” will rise in our hearts. Most often, the “Morning Star” is thought to be the planet Venus. At certain times of the year it “rises” in the eastern sky and is still visible for a time after sunrise. When John the Baptist’s father, Zechariah, got his “tongue back” he praised God with a song which we call “Benedictus” (Luke 1:67-79). In the “Benedictus” he made reference to the coming Messiah, by using similar imagery. He calls Him “the rising sun from heaven” (v. 78). As the sun rises in the morning sky and gives life to the world, so the “Son” will come from the heavens and usher in the new endless “day” of life eternal for all who look to Him.

However, until that time comes, they (we) have the Holy Scriptures to light the way and bring spiritual life and health. Once again, Peter seizes the opportunity to stress the value of God’s Word. He gives his reason for such utmost confidence. “You must understand that no prophecy of Scripture came about by the prophet’s own interpretation” (v. 20). God had His hand even in the phase of how the Scriptures “came about.” God saw to it that they selected the precise words to express the ideas which God put into their minds. However, they were not robots. The truth which God revealed through their words still reflected their human personalities and personal style which they expressed in the linguistics of their time and place in history.

Yet, Peter says in verse 21, its essence came from God: “For prophecy never had its origin in the human will, but prophets, though human, spoke from God as they were carried along by the Holy Spirit.” Here Peter uses a fascinating metaphor from ships of the sea. It suggests the scenario of the prophets raising their sails for the Holy Spirit to fill them and carry the craft of their minds along the direction He wished. The result was unquestionably the truth which God wanted to share with His people in words and symbolism which they could readily understand.

For spiritual health and strength, Peter recommends a personal regimen which includes regular intake of energy which the Spirit makes available for us in God’s Word, a diet of real “Soul Food.”

PERSONAL APPLICATION – 2 PETER 2:1-9

Thank You, Lord Jesus, for leading me to a proper understanding of the Bible as Your Divine Word. I am especially grateful that through this Word I have come to know and believe in You as my Savior. Please help me to cherish every truth which You reveal to me as I study 2 Peter. Amen.

Review

1. To whom did Peter (2 Peter 1:21) ascribe the authorship of the Old Testament? How did the prophets know what God wanted them to write? What imagery did Paul use in 2 Timothy 3:16?

In the light of this, which do you think would be the most accurate statement to describe what Peter is saying? “The Bible contains the Word of God.” or “The Bible is the Word of God.” What is the difference?

From what you already know about Peter’s reason for writing this letter, why was it important to establish this point?

2 Peter 2:1

2. What does Peter say could even happen when people are careless with the revealed Word of God?

Why is this bad for them?

What does “swift destruction” refer to?

How do false teachers go about it when they try to promote unscriptural ideas?

What is the test that we should give every religious idea?

2 Peter 2:2

3. What is Peter referring to with the term “the way of truth”?

Why was Peter concerned about the reputation of the fellowship of believers?

What kind of damage do you think the church suffers when members are involved in scandal?

Any examples come to mind?

2 Peter 2:3

4. What does Peter say is the motivation for these false teachers when they try to win followers for their new religious ideas?
-

Whose interests do they have in mind?

Do you have any idea what they expected to gain personally?

In addition to being “exploited” or used, what other reason does Peter give for being careful not to let yourself be “taken in” by false teachers?

2 Peter 2:4-6

5. To show that God will definitely pass judgment on human false teachers and their followers, what does Peter call to their attention?
-

What is his point?

How does the story of Noah support this?

Why were Sodom and Gomorrah destroyed?

Dr. Billy Graham’s wife, Ruth, was quoted as saying: “If God doesn’t do something soon about the wickedness in our land today, He will have to apologize to Sodom and Gomorrah.” (Genesis 19). What did she mean?

What are specific points of similarity between the sins of Sodom and Gomorrah and our time?

What should we learn from these three O.T. stories?

What “encouraging word” does Peter give us with the rescue of Noah’s family and the family of Lot?

2 Peter 2:7-9

6. With which two words does Peter describe how Lot felt about the wickedness around him in Sodom and Gomorrah?

Is this the common “gut reaction” that “church people” have to the wickedness going on in our time? Why?

This coming week, as you watch some television shows, make a list of scenes or dialogues which really “distress” you. Check those that really “torment” you.

THEY ARE SNEAKY – 2 PETER 2:1	22
THERE IS A LOT AT STAKE – 2 PETER 2:2	22
FALSE TEACHING DAMAGES THE CHURCH – 2 PETER 2:2	22
REMEMBER, FALSE TEACHERS DON'T CARE ABOUT YOU!	
2 PETER 2:3A	23
REMEMBER, THEIR DOOM IS ALREADY SEALED	
2 PETER 2:3B	23
HEAVENLY BEINGS ARE JUDGED – 2 PETER 2:4	23
THE UNBELIEVING OF NOAH'S TIME PERISHED	
2 PETER 2:5	23
THE PEOPLE OF SODOM AND GOMORRAH – 2 PETER 2:6-8	24
SOMETHING TO REMEMBER – 2 PETER 2:9	24
PERSONAL APPLICATION – 2 PETER 2:10-22	25

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“Implied in all this is the thought that the more deeply our faith is rooted in the Word of God, the more resistant we will be to the insidious virus of false doctrine.”

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THEME: EXPOSURE TO THE VIRUS OF FALSE TEACHING IS INEVITABLE, SO BE CAREFUL!

Maybe you have read, or at least heard of, the book titled “Hot Zone.” It is a documentary about the “Ebola” virus. When the virus finds a “host” human body, it begins to destroy body tissue with lightning quick speed. Within a few hours the patient dies a horrible death. In chapter 2 of 2 Peter, the author describes a deadly virus which attacks the soul; the virus of false teachings.

GOD’S PEOPLE WILL BE EXPOSED TO THIS VIRUS!

In the closing verses of chapter 1, Peter had set forth a classic description of the divine origin of the Old Testament Scriptures. He declared that “men spoke from God as they were carried along by the Holy Spirit” (v. 21). With this lofty concept still hanging as a backdrop in their minds, Peter feels the need to remind them of a sad truth. Along with the men of God who faithfully spoke the truth, there were those who spoke ideas which had their origin in

the will of man (1:21). As it was back then, Peter says, “there will be false teachers among you” (2:1). It is of interest to note that when Peter refers to these purveyors of false ideas here, he does not call them prophets, as he did for those who promoted false teachings in the Old Testament. Apparently, the people who were responsible for departures from the Word of God did not claim to have gotten their ideas from God.

PETER’S SOLEMN WARNING

2 PETER 2:1-3

Peter realized the seriousness of the situation. He felt a strong need to let his readers know that this was not something they should take lightly. They needed to be on constant alert if they hoped to stay free of the deadly virus of false teaching.

THEY ARE SNEAKY

2 PETER 2:1

First of all, Peter warns them that they will have to be extra careful because of the slick way in which these teachers operate. They do not come right out and openly challenge the teachings of the apostles. Rather, they “secretly introduce destructive heresies.” The Greek word for “secretly introduce” seems to have a double connotation. It suggests that they would try to bring a cloak of legitimacy to ideas which they had come up with by placing them right “alongside” apostolic teachings. The other nuance is that they did this in a sneaky way so as to avoid stirring up suspicion. One modern translation reads “they smuggled them in.”

This brings to mind a picture of drug traffic in our own country today. Narcotics officers use trained dogs to “sniff out” ordinary looking cargo for the presence of hidden drugs. In the same way, false teachers try to smuggle in their ideas. Often it will take careful scrutiny on our part, plus the help of the Holy Spirit, to “sniff out” the presence of insidious false ideas. The example of the Berean Christians comes to mind. In Acts 17:11, Luke reports that when the apostle Paul came to the synagogue in Berea, the people “received the message with great eagerness.” Then he adds that they “examined the Scriptures every day to see if what Paul said was true.” The lesson is: You can’t be too careful! You will need to check out every religious idea to see how it squares with what was written

by men who “were carried along by the Holy Spirit.” The more we know our Bible, the less vulnerable we will be to the virus of false teaching.

THERE IS A LOT AT STAKE

2 PETER 2:2

Peter says carelessness in regard to the truth can be spiritually devastating. Once the virus of false teaching gets into the spiritual “system,” it will eat away at the tissue of faith and quickly bring spiritual death. First, it leads to “denying the sovereign Lord who bought them” and thus puts them in line for “swift destruction.”

This was a solemn warning for the people of Peter’s day and it is most appropriate for Christians today. Our present culture insists that we must give approval to all religious beliefs, no matter how contrary to Scripture they may happen to be. Like the false teachers of Peter’s day, they take the biblical exhortation for tolerance toward their fellow human beings and twist it to mean tolerance of their beliefs as well. Our secular world would have us place them alongside the truths revealed in the Scriptures and give them equal status. The premise upon which this is based is that there is no such thing as absolute truth. If we aren’t careful, we may very well find ourselves buying into such a notion. We must be intolerant of any departure from the God-given truth which Jesus spoke: “I am the way, the truth and the life; no one comes to the Father, but by me” (John 14:6).

FALSE TEACHING DAMAGES THE CHURCH

2 PETER 2:2

People who follow these false teachers and live out their teachings with immoral behavior, says Peter, “will bring the way of truth into disrepute.” The false teachers in the group of recipients of Peter’s letter misinterpreted the words of the apostle Paul. Paul clearly taught that in Christ we have freedom from the law. These people changed the words to fit their own sinful passions and desires. They claimed it meant that they could live as they pleased, without the constraints of the moral law.

Peter knew that such a teaching would appeal to the unregenerate human nature in people and quickly gain quite a following. He could foresee some of the dire consequences of such a movement. It would not only

lead to the displeasure of God upon the individuals who listened to the false teachers; it would severely damage the reputation of the church which Peter identified as “followers of the Way.”

Before the early Christians had an official name they liked to be identified with this meaningful term. It is a dynamic name which expressed beautifully how they thought of themselves. It linked them to the people of the Old Testament who had been delivered from slavery in Egypt and followed the way that God was leading them to the Promised Land. It also very aptly described their concept of the Christian religion. They thought of it as a Way of Life.

REMEMBER, FALSE TEACHERS DON'T CARE ABOUT YOU!

2 PETER 2:3A

Consider the motives of these false teachers, Peter cautions. “In their greed these teachers will exploit you!” We aren’t exactly sure how there would be financial gain for them. Peter doesn’t say. If they were like “pastors,” perhaps it meant that the more followers they had, the bigger their salaries could be. We do know that financial gain was a consideration at that time. The apostle Paul included a note along the same line when he wrote to young Pastor Timothy (I Timothy 6:5)! Maybe he meant “gain” in terms of popularity or prestige. Whatever it was, Peter saw it as “trafficking” in the Christian faith. The people were being exploited! They were being used!

REMEMBER, THEIR DOOM IS ALREADY SEALED

2 PETER 2:3B

God’s judgment upon false teachers and upon those who are duped into following them is a sure thing, Peter writes. It has already been pronounced. The delay in Christ’s “Parousia” (Second Coming) probably created a false sense of security with the false teachers. Don’t be fooled: “Their condemnation has long been hanging over them, and their destruction has not been sleeping.” Three times in three verses Peter uses “apooleia,” the Greek word for destruction. This awaits them with “unsleeping eyes.” With this expression Peter probably wants to rebut the false claim that God’s judgment is “nodding off to sleep.” Not so, says Peter!

LOOK AT THE OLD TESTAMENT RECORD!

HEAVENLY BEINGS ARE JUDGED

2 PETER 2:4

The first example of God’s intolerance of evil has to do with the heavenly beings upon whom God did not hesitate to pass His judgment, “God did not spare the angels” (v. 4). We can’t be absolutely sure what Peter is referring to here. Some think that this may refer to Genesis 6:2ff which tells how sons intermarried with the “daughters of men.” The children of such unions produced a super race of people called the Nephilim. This story is highly developed in the book of Enoch, which had widespread circulation at that time.

Whatever the reference, the point that Peter wanted to make was that God did not hesitate to pass divine judgment, even upon higher beings like the angels. If this is the case you can be absolutely certain that lesser beings — like earthlings — will not be spared.

The seriousness and the certainty of God’s Judgment is emphasized by the description of the place to which these fallen angels have been committed. They were sent to hell, putting them into gloomy dungeons to be held for judgment. This does not seem to be a Hebrew concept, but rather Greek. The Greek word for “gloomy dungeon” is tartaroosas. In Greek mythology, Tartarus was the lowest hell. It was thought of as being “as far beneath Hades as the heaven is high above the earth.” Peter wants to convey the idea that the fallen angels suffer as they await the Day of Judgment, from which there is absolutely no escape.

THE UNBELIEVING OF NOAH’S TIME PERISHED

2 PETER 2:5

Next, Peter calls as witness, the story of The Great Flood (Genesis 6:5ff). This was a good example to illustrate the truth that you can count on God’s Divine Judgment to come upon those who disregard the Truth. God destroyed the entire world of “ungodly people” at the time of Noah. The word that Peter uses here for “ungodly” suggests that they were aggressively anti-God. Their response to Noah was to poke fun of him and ridicule his God. Peter calls Noah “a preacher of righteousness.” The Old Testament story doesn’t mention this specifically. One thing we do

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Again, Peter reminds his readers that God intervenes for those who remain faithful.

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know is that Noah's devotion to God and his own righteous living were powerful sermons to the wicked people around him. Because they didn't listen to Noah, they were destroyed in the Great Flood. Peter wants us to know that God's judgment upon unbelievers is sure. But, then he adds the comforting word that Noah and his family (8 in all) were spared. He does this to reassure us that God knows how to take care of those who remain faithful to Him and His Word.

THE PEOPLE OF SODOM AND GOMORRAH

2 PETER 2:6-8

Peter recalls a third incident from the Old Testament to reinforce his point that you can count on God's judgment on the unbelievers and you can also count on God to rescue the faithful: the story of Sodom and Gomorrah. These cities were notorious for their wickedness, and especially sexual immorality of all kinds. God's divine judgment fell upon these cities in a spectacular way (Genesis 19:24-25). Again, Peter reminds his readers that God intervenes for those who remain faithful. That truth was dramatized by the death of Lot's wife who must have had second thoughts about leaving that den of iniquity and did not value the deliverance God had provided. Her backward glance seemed like such an insignificant thing but God's instruction had been clear. Lot's wife took it upon herself to evaluate the importance of God's explicit directive and she paid the price. What a striking warning to his readers and ourselves to not even think about being careless with regard to any aspect of God's Word.

It may surprise us to read what Peter says about Lot. He calls him a "righteous man" (v. 8). He says that Lot was

"tormented in his righteous soul by the lawless deeds he saw and heard." This is a bit different from the Lot we learned to know in Bible History (Genesis 13:10-13, 19:8). The characterization Peter gives of Lot may reflect extra biblical sources or oral tradition. For example, in the "Wisdom of Solomon," Lot is called "the just one." Maybe we need to adjust our impression of the man to fit what Peter reports. Peter says he was "distressed" and "tormented" by the veil around him in his adopted home town. Like Lot, we live in a godless society where just about anything goes. Is it possible that we are no longer shocked or even bothered a little bit by the sinful things which we see and hear? Do we find ourselves sitting through a television program in our own home which presents stuff which a generation ago we would never have contemplated watching in a theater?

SOMETHING TO REMEMBER

2 PETER 2:9

In verse 9, Peter recapitulates the two thoughts he wants us to take away from this excursion into the Old Testament. First, he wants us to see the wisdom of remaining faithful to God and His Word. If we do, we can definitely count on God to see us through to life eternal. Second, when we are tempted to accept any new religious ideas, we need to make sure that they really come from God. If we remember God's judgment upon earthly and higher beings who were careless with God's Word, we won't take this lightly.

Implied in all this is the thought that the more deeply our faith is rooted in the Word of God, the more resistant we will be to the insidious virus of false doctrine.

PERSONAL APPLICATION – 2 PETER 2:10-22

Thank You, heavenly Father, for using the words of the apostle Peter to bring me the assurance that as long as I remain faithful to You, You will always be there for me. Help me to live responsibly, always on guard against ideas and influences which will weaken my commitment to You. Keep me steadfast in the faith; through Your Son Jesus. Amen.

Review:

- 1. Imagine that you are a Christian in Sudan in Africa, subject to vicious persecution by the Muslim dominated government. What comfort and assurance could you find in the section of 2 Peter which we studied in Lesson 4?

Have you ever had an experience in which your faith was challenged and you wondered if it really is worth it to hold on to your convictions as a Christian? Briefly describe what happened and how you got through it.

How could 2 Peter help you turn such an experience into a positive one?

2 Peter 2:10-13a

- 2. What does Peter say (v. 10a) is one of the most common personality traits of these false teachers who simply follow where their lust leads them?

What two adjectives describe them? (v. 10b)

Against whom do they freely slander?

What examples does Peter use to show how inappropriate their behavior was (v. 11)?

To what does Peter compare these arrogant people?

What happens to them (vv. 12-13)?

2 Peter 2:13b-14

- 3. For which accepted social taboo did “these men” show utter disrespect?

On what special occasions in the life of the local church did they misbehave?

Who were “targets of choice” for their lust?

Peter called them “an accursed brood.” What did Jesus call the Pharisees (Matthew 23:33)?

In what ways were these “lust driven” people like “vipers”?

2 Peter 2:15-16

4. What infamous false prophet might very well have been their “patron saint”? (Numbers 22:1-24 to 24:1-25)

What were the “wages” which motivated the behavior of the false teachers in Peter’s day?

What was it that led Balaam to prostitute his high position as a prophet of the “Most High”?

How did Peter describe Balaam’s erratic behavior?

2 Peter 2:17-19

5. What two metaphors does Peter use to describe the emptiness of the promises which these false teachers made?

How does Peter state the reality that they will not get away with the evil they are doing?

What does verse 18 tell us about the heretical teachings which these bogus leaders were promoting?

Which church members would be “push-overs” for their seduction”? Why?

Can you think of examples from the world today where vice is dressed up as a virtue?

What does Peter say that a life of unrestrained sexual behavior really amounts to and why (v. 19)?

2 Peter 2:20-22

- 6. In verse 20 Peter introduces a thought which he hopes will serve as a warning to his readers. What does he say about these false teachers in this verse?

How do the two proverbs found in verse 22 apply here?

What will happen to the people who had been brought to faith and later fell away?

State the comfort and assurance Peter has given us in 2 Peter 1:10-11.

LESSON 5 2 PETER & JUDE

2 PETER 2:10-22

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• • •
*“You determine to live cautiously and realistically.
Make certain you use all the resources that God puts
at your disposal to keep you spiritually strong and fit.”*

• • •
*THEME: “SURE-FIRE CLUES FOR
RECOGNIZING FALSE TEACHERS!”*

In the first nine verses of chapter two, Peter warned his readers to be on their guard against becoming infected with the “virus” of false beliefs. He presented examples from the Old Testament to show how God dealt with people who “played fast and loose” with the Word of God. At the same time, these stories showed that people who remained faithful to God and His Word were always taken care of by the Lord.

In the remaining verses of this chapter, Peter gives them some sure-fire clues for recognizing people they should watch out for.

WATCH FOR IRREVERENCE TOWARD THINGS SACRED

2 PETER 2:10-13A

One of the most prominent characteristics of these misleading teachers is that they have absolutely no respect for authority. Peter’s choice of words suggests that it is not merely a lack of respect. It is an utter disdain for any authority outside themselves. They don’t want anybody to tell them what to do or not to do, not even God! These false teachers followed the dictates of their unregenerate lusts and passions. They nonchalantly shrugged off the idea that they would have to answer to God for their wrongdoing.

They even slandered celestial beings, Peter says in verse 10b. If they had no respect for God, it should come as no surprise, to us, they had even less respect for God's messengers, His holy angels. What Peter had in mind here isn't clear. Since the topic is the disregard of God's will, it may have been a reference to a legend, with which they were familiar. There was a Jewish legend that angels assisted God in transmitting the Ten Commandments to Moses on Mt. Sinai (Galatians 3:19; Hebrews 2:2). These false teachers of Peter's day showed total disregard for what the angels had brought them. Specifically, they were scornful of the commandment, which clearly established God's will with regard to their sexual behavior. They preferred to "follow the corrupt desire of their sinful nature" (v10a). It was as though they "thumbed their noses" at the angels, as well as the commandments they brought.

In verse 11, Peter continues this thought. In contrast to the frivolous disrespect, which false teachers showed toward things sacred, he points out that higher beings, like the angels of God, do not show disrespect to other higher beings, not even those who had been cast from the presence of God because of their rebellious spirit. Some scholars see this as a generalization of what Jude mentioned in (v. 9) when he writes about Michael and Satan arguing over who gets the body of Moses. The archangel Michael showed restraint even toward the Prince of Darkness. Instead of cursing him, he said simply "Let the Lord judge!" (Zechariah 3:1-2).

If the Prince of Angels showed respect for another "celestial being," how much more should mortals! The irreverence displayed by the false teachers was a symptom of their spiritual degradation and their total disregard of the will of God. They simply went "with the flow" of their natural drives and instincts. In this they are really no different from "brute beasts" (v. 12), which exist from day-to-day without any conscious sense of things sacred. If they live like animals, they should expect to perish like animals.

What a powerful message this is for our time! We live in a time when respect for God and His commandments is at an all-time low. Like the false teachers of Peter's day, a large percentage of people today are dominated by lust.

Their passions are given full-sway, with the result that they behave like animals, while the mental and spiritual sides of their humanity suffer atrophy. The inevitable judgment which Peter mentions awaits them.

In contrast to what happens to the brute beasts for whom death is the end, Peter says death doesn't end it for the false teachers. Peter says they will be punished in the hereafter: "They will be paid back with harm for the harm they have done." Peter uses a highly evocative commercial metaphor to stress that their immoral conduct is not a good investment. We would call it a "scam!" One day these irreverent people will wake up to discover that the philosophy of life, which they felt would purchase for them unending joy, was just "a bill of goods." Instead of exciting dividends of pleasure, they came away with only the agonizing and unending realization their lives had been a total waste. They had been swindled by their own sinful flesh!

ANOTHER CLUE: THEIR IMMORAL BEHAVIOR

2 PETER 2:13B-16

Nothing was sacred in the eyes of these lust-driven men. "Their idea of pleasure is to carouse in broad daylight. They are blots and blemishes, reveling in their pleasures while they feast with you." Their minds were so given over to the fulfillment of their lustful desires that even the sacred "love feasts" weren't off limits for them.

These "love feasts" ("Agape meals") had come into being in the early years of the church as an occasion to celebrate the love which bound them together in Christ. Appropriately, this meal was usually tied in with the Lord's Supper which celebrates the ultimate expression of God's love which they shared in common. It was also a gracious way for the well-to-do members to provide food for those in the fellowship who weren't doing so well. To avoid slanderous rumors about what was going on at these gatherings, the Christians held their "Agape" meals in the daytime, hence the reference to "carousing in broad daylight" (v. 13b).

History informs us that daylight debauchery was considered disgraceful in Jewish society (Acts 2:15) and even in permissive Roman culture (1 Thessalonians 5:7). These lustful men had no respect for this social taboo

either. Peter never misses a chance to use a “play on words” to make a point. He says that they perverted the “Agape” (love) meal into an “Apate” (dissipation) feast. Only two letters make the difference between worshipping and carousing. Incidentally, because of this and other abuses (1 Corinthians 11:20-22), Agape feasts were soon discontinued. Satan could chalk up the destruction of another beautiful and godly thing.

In verse 14, Peter describes the utter depravity of these false teachers. It wasn't just a passing notice of the beauty of women at this “love feast.” It was full-blown lust, which set in motion a strategy to “score.” For them, women were simply sex objects, to be exploited, at all cost. Some Bible scholars feel that this behavior may have been a carryover from pagan ceremonies where having sex was a “part of the liturgy,” in a manner of speaking. It might have been a key ingredient, in their seduction strategy, to hoodwink women into accepting the idea that “making out,” was an appropriate way of celebrating God's love. If they had ever heard God's commandment, which puts a protective “hedge” around this important aspect of human life, they must have twisted it to the extent that it was totally irrelevant for them. They engaged in the age-old scam of parading vice as a virtue. An example of this in American society today is the very common practice of trial marriages and “living together” as an acceptable procedure to lessen the possibility of divorce.

Peter makes the comment that these false teachers are “experts in greed.” The word for “experts” in Greek is the word from which our “gymnasium” is derived. He implies that they “train” hard to be adept in the art of seduction; the way dedicated gymnasts work out to perfect their routines. And, like a pack of hungry wolves chasing a herd of deer, these evil men go after the most vulnerable; they “seduce the unstable.” Here again, the comparatively rare word for “unstable” (*asterictoi*), is a poignant reminder to Peter, of a time when he was “unstable.”

Peter doesn't mince words in his condemnation of the people who wanted to change meaningful “Agape” meals into a time for lust! He called them “an accursed brood!” He doesn't say ‘what’ they were a brood of. However, he may have remembered how Jesus called the hypocritical Pharisees “a brood of vipers” (Matthew 23:33).

Peter then goes on to compare these misguided teachers to the false prophet “Balaam, son of Beor.” Check out the story of Balaam in Numbers (chapters 22-24). It was for personal gain that Balaam prophesied messages, which did not come from God. God reprimanded him in a strikingly powerful way. The rebuke came from the mouth of a lowly donkey, which did a better job of faithfully communicating God's Word than Balaam did. How disgraceful that must have been for Balaam! Humiliating! Peter implies that one day these false teachers will be shamefully humiliated and disgraced to a greater degree even than Balaam; and so will all who follow in their ways.

STAY AWAY FROM BOGUS TEACHERS LIKE THIS! *2 PETER 2:17-22*

They are handing you a line. At first the kind of life the false teachers promote could be very alluring, especially to our human nature. It might seem pretty exciting to think of living without any moral restraint. Here, Peter uses verses, also found in Jude, to pass judgment upon the bogus claims of these influential people in their midst. He writes that “these men” promise great things but they are like “springs without water and mists driven by a storm.” This describes the cruelest type of deception. Imagine you are a tired and thirsty traveler in the desert. You see an oasis and your hope is built up! You can almost taste the “cool, clear water.” When you finally get to the oasis, to your dismay you find it dry as a bone! It's the same with a waterless cloud. It seems to offer the prospect of meeting your need, but it doesn't! This is what you will get from following these people - nothing but excruciating disappointment and eternal regret! For, if you insist on following them, you will end up sharing with them “blackest darkness” (v. 17).

See their propaganda for what it is. Verse 18 describes their style. They use over-blown, bombastic verbiage in their effort to hook the attention of their victims and then as “bait” on their hook; they appeal to the lower passions of people while they reel them in. They are completely unscrupulous, most often targeting neophytes in the faith, people who are “just escaping from those who live in error.” This is not only a judgment upon these people; it is a warning, especially for those who may not be well-founded and grounded in their Christian faith.

One of the enticements that these teachers use is that if you follow their precepts and give in to your desires, you will gain total freedom! Peter says it's just the opposite. You will become a slave of "depravity." You will be a slave to your own perverse human nature and all of its drives. You will live under the delusion that you are free to do as you please, but in reality you are in bondage to your depraved flesh.

In the closing verses of this chapter, Peter points to another serious consequence of not being watchful and allowing one's self to be led astray. Peter says that people, who have had faith in Jesus as Savior and Lord and then fall away, will be "worse off at the end, than they were at the beginning. It would have been better for them not to have known the way of righteousness, than to have known it and then to turn their backs on the sacred command that was passed on to them."

Some serious questions come to mind as we try to understand what Peter has written here. Is he saying that ignorance of the way of righteousness is preferable to an apostasy from it? Is there some kind of God-imposed special penalty for those who fall from the faith? Peter might very well be declaring that there is a special punishment on the Day of Judgment for those who once had the privilege of being part of God's family. The greater the privilege, the greater the responsibility.

Another interpretation suggests that, perhaps, Peter may simply be pointing to a reality. It may mean that people who once were in a saving relationship with God, through Jesus, are going to have a tougher time getting back and staying on track, if they fall away. In the process there is a hardening of the heart. Even if we don't understand every nuance of the truth Peter had in mind, the "bottom-line" for us, is that we should strive to do everything possible to remain faithful, so that we don't have to deal with the consequences described above, no matter how we interpret it.

In the last verse, Peter reminds them of a couple of proverbs with which they probably were familiar. "A dog returns to his vomit" and "a sow that is washed returns to her wallowing in the mud." This behavior you expect. Both dogs and pigs were "unclean" animals for the Jews. Jesus put them together in Matthew 7:6 as a metaphor for people who were incurably out of touch with God. The way Peter uses the proverbs here, what he says above, applies especially for the false teachers. They were outwardly professing believers, but their real nature never changed. They reverted to life styles, which were typical of their unregenerate nature.

The lesson to take seriously is that you determine to live cautiously and realistically. Make certain you use all the resources that God puts at your disposal to keep you spiritually strong and fit. In this way, your spiritual immune system will be strong enough to repel the assaults of false teaching. You will be perceptive about where temptations lurk. And, you will be on your way to becoming a productive member of the body of Christ on earth! (2 Peter 1:8)

PERSONAL APPLICATION – 2 PETER 3:1-10

Lord Jesus Christ, please give me a clear understanding of what Peter teaches about your Second Coming. Then, help me to keep these truths in mind at all times, so that they will be reflected in the way I live my life. Give me the faith which helps me to look forward to that Great Day with happy anticipation. Thank You! Amen.

Review

1. Suppose you are on a committee of your church which is discussing the problem of “delinquent” members. What serious warning (2 Peter 2:20) might be appropriate for you to keep in mind?

Using 2 Peter 1:10-11, how might you suggest the committee proceed?

2 Peter 3:1-2

2. How does Peter communicate to his readers how much he cares about them and their eternal welfare?

What does he call them in verse 1?

How many times does he use this term in chapter 3?

What extra effort had he put forth?

To what does he point them in verse 2 which can help them get their “thoughts and beliefs” straight?

What do you think Peter had in mind with the word “command” given by Jesus and the apostles?

2 Peter 3:3-7

3. What did Peter tell them they should expect in the period he referred to as “the last days”?

What was the focus of their scoffing?

What mind-set was the underlying cause of their scoffing?

What does “last days” refer to?

4. What “scientific” argument do these scoffers put forth to support their denial of the teaching that God will hold a “Day of Reckoning”? (v. 4)

What important truth had they forgotten (v. 5)?

Was this just a “memory lapse?” What does Peter say about it?

Why do you think they “deliberately” put this out of their minds?

Have you ever done this with a biblical teaching, that you thought might restrict your behavior in some way? Explain.

What did Peter want them to realize?

Do you hear many people today being really “vocal” about their denial of a universal Day of Judgment?

How do they show their denial?

5. What does Genesis 6:5-8 say was God's reason for breaking into the created world and causing The Deluge?

By whose power is the world still functioning?

What is it being “reserved” for (v. 7)?

2 Peter 3:8-10

6. In his effort to reassure the faithful that their belief in the Second Coming of Jesus is well-founded, Peter points out the fundamental mistake being made by those who felt God was “dragging His feet” about keeping His promise (v. 4). What was the glitch?” (v. 8)

What mistake do some people make with regard to the “poetic” numbers Peter uses here?

What do you think Peter really wanted to convey with this reference of Psalm 90? (v. 4)

7. What important characteristic of God does Peter say explains, at least in part, the apparent delay of our Lord's Return? (v. 9)
-

What is He waiting for?

What did Jesus give as one of the factors which will determine God's "time-table" for the Day of Judgment? (Matthew 24:14)

8. How does the metaphor in v. 10a clearly discourage us from becoming pre-occupied with trying to compute the precise date for Jesus' return to "judge the living and the dead"? (Luke 12:39-40; Revelation 16:15)
-

How will people on earth know that the Day of Judgment has arrived? (v. 10)

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“Peter’s “bottom-line” message to the skeptics (of then and now) is simple. The Great Day of the Lord is going to take place, no matter what they think. However, it will happen only when God is good and ready.”

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*THEME: BELIEF IN THE SECOND COMING
AND SPIRITUAL HEALTH*

In an issue of “The Voice of the Martyrs” it told about the plight of Li Dexian, pastor of a so-called “unregistered” Christian church in China. He has experienced constant harassment, and even imprisonment, at the hands of the local government. The “official explanation” for his imprisonment was that he had been publicly promoting “heretical” ideas, such as the “Doomsday Theory.” “Doomsday” is how they refer to the biblical teaching of Christ’s Second Coming.

As it is in our world today, so it was back in Peter’s day. The idea of our Lord’s Return simply did not fit in with the way the false teachers had things figured out. The final section of his second letter deals with this topic. Peter wants his readers (and us) to recognize that not only is the Second Coming clearly set forth in Scripture; he especially wants us to realize how crucial it is for us if we hope to have a healthy view of what our “life in God” is all about.

PETER REALLY CARES ABOUT THIS

2 PETER 3:1-2

The beginning of chapter 3 marks a decided shift in the tone of this short letter. Up until this point, Peter was relentless in his criticism of the heretics who were endangering the faith and hope of fellow-believers in various parts of Asia Minor. He begins with a very special term of endearment, “Dear friends” (NIV). The Greek word he uses for “friends” is related to the term “agape.” It is a word which describes the quality of love that is unique to God.

We can be quite sure that Peter used this special term not only to let them know how dear they were to him, but also, and especially, how dear they were to God. He also reinforced the notion of how much he cared about them by reminding them “this is now my second letter to you.”

Peter explains that he wrote both “reminder” letters “to stimulate you to wholesome thinking.” The Greek word for “wholesome” is another “picture” word. It is made up of the two ordinary words; “sunlight” and “judgment.” The way in which Peter uses it here suggests the concept that you know you’ve got it right, if your ideas hold up under the bright “sunlight” of God’s Word.

It was the apostle Peter’s sincere hope that they would be completely open to the idea of holding up their personal beliefs to the scrutiny of “the words spoken in the past by the holy prophets and the command given by our Lord and Savior through your apostles.” By “holy prophets” he means the Old Testament prophets, which foretold the truth; this truth was “personified” by the Lord Jesus and it was recorded and expounded by the apostles. Note how Peter once again tries to convey the idea of how important they are to God. He calls the New Testament writers “your apostles,” suggesting that when they read the epistles, they consider them as having been written “just for them.” Wouldn’t this also be a helpful mindset for us when we read our Bible, to think of them as having been recorded “just for us”?

For people who are used to making a distinction between “Law and Gospel” messages in Scripture, it may strike us as a little strange that Peter uses the word “command of God” to refer to the message of salvation proclaimed by Jesus and the holy writers. One possible explanation is that when the word in the original text is used in connection with God, it refers to anything and everything that God has spoken. Some interpret it with a tighter focus on the “command of God” which Peter, wants to emphasize - that it is God’s will for His people to live holy lives (Leviticus 11:44; 1 Peter 1:15-16), especially as they look forward to the Great Day of Reckoning.

DON’T LISTEN TO THE SKEPTICS

2 PETER 3:3-7

Having hammered home again the crucial point regarding the unquestionable “validity and reliability” of the Old and New Testament Scriptures, Peter draws from it to help his readers to hold tightly to these basic truths no matter how much they might be ridiculed by people around them.

The phrase “first of all” was Peter’s way of getting their undivided attention. It implies that he was about to give them some advice that was of utmost importance. Then he tells them to realize that it was predicted that “in the last days, scoffers will come.” It is something they could count on.

As used in the Bible, the term “last days” doesn’t refer to a string of 24-hour

days which take place immediately preceding the actual Parousia or Second Coming. Rather, it is the entire period of time between Jesus' first coming as a child at Bethlehem and His return as Judge. We can expect, of course, that the Satan-inspired intensity of the scoffing will increase the closer we get to that Day. The point is that scoffing will be present throughout the "last days," as defined above. In an oblique way, the scoffers, by their scoffing, are actually validating the truth about Christ's Coming, as they fulfill prophecy (Acts 20:29-31).

Peter's observation that the "naysayers" will come "scoffing and following their own evil desires," encapsulates a profound "truism!" People who are cynical about the truth are invariably people who want to live their own lives, without any interference by anyone else, not even God. They are unable on their own to surrender their wills to a higher being. Their unregenerate human nature, by which they prefer to be governed, stubbornly refuses to move over and let God call the shots for how they believe and live.

From another point-of-view, maybe it is also true that people, who live only for the gratification of animal drives and selfish pleasure, simply cannot tolerate, for even a moment, the idea that someday they will have to answer to a higher authority. For people such as this, it's a "knee-jerk" reaction to scoff at the very idea! Being able to scoff without fear of punishment might even give them a false sense of security about it.

Peter reports that the skeptics think they have, in the natural world around them, some "scientific" support for their skepticism. "Where is this 'coming' he promised? ...everything goes on as it has since the beginning of creation" (v. 4). Notice that they did not deny the existence of God. This reminds us of recent polls taken in our country, which show that belief in God still runs high among our citizens, in the 90% column! However, when it comes to letting God be part of their life on a daily basis that number is cut in half!

The skeptics' reference to the death of the "fathers," may reflect a common misunderstanding about Jesus' return to earth, which was prevalent in the early days of the church. Many of them were convinced that Jesus would come

back to earth in just a matter of months; surely during their lifetime. But it didn't happen that way. Even some prominent leaders in the church had already died - and still no Second Coming!

For the skeptics it seemed logical to conclude that such an idea probably was just one big mistake after all. That conclusion was reinforced by their "scientific" observations about the stability of the universe. Things had been going quite well for centuries, was there any reason not to expect it to continue in the same way? This, too, is an argument which lulls people into false security. Peter questioned their so-called "scientific" data. The history of the world included information which, in skepticism, they had overlooked. "But they deliberately forget" that not only was the almighty God involved in the Creation to which they had referred, He continues to be in charge. They had closed their eyes to the historical event of The Great Deluge at the time of Noah. Holy Scriptures taught clearly that this had taken place when God interrupted the normal functioning of nature and adapted it to His divine purposes. God wanted to make the powerful statement that wickedness will not go unpunished (Genesis 6:6-8).

The Lord of the creation, and the Lord who caused the Great Flood, says Peter, was keeping the "present heavens and earth... for the day of judgment and destruction of ungodly men" (3:7). Peter's "bottom-line" message to the skeptics (of then and now) is simple. The Great Day of the Lord is going to take place, no matter what they think. However, it will happen only when God is good and ready.

And it won't be pretty! "By the same word the present heavens and earth are reserved for fire." The concept of "fiery" judgment is not unique to Peter. It is to be found throughout the Old Testament. Moses told the people, "your God is a consuming fire" (Deuteronomy 4:24), implying that He will for sure come on the Day of reckoning to consume what is wicked and refine what is good. This truth was kept alive in the Psalms (e.g., Psalm 97:3-5). It was elaborated in the Major Prophets; Isaiah 9:5, 30:30, 66:15-16 and Ezekiel 38:22, as well as several of the Minor Prophets; Joel 2:30; Amos 7:4; Nahum 1:5-6; and Malachi 4:1, to mention a few.

WORDS OF ASSURANCE FOR THE FAITHFUL

2 PETER 3:8-10

Peter now turns his full attention to the faithful. He had no intention of using “fire and brimstone” to generate the emotion of fear as their motivation for trying to please God. He wasn’t interested in trying to “scare them straight.” He calmly appeals to them, hoping to help them work through any lingering doubts, but especially to promote a sense of commitment to the truths set forth in Scripture.

If they might still be wondering about the apparent inconsistency between the Lord’s promise to return soon, and His failure to show up, remember this, says Peter: God’s way of reckoning time is not the same as ours as it says in Psalm 90 and 2 Peter 2:8: “With the Lord a day is like a thousand years, and a thousand years are like a day.” Neither the Psalmist who originally penned these words, nor Peter, intended to give this as a mathematical formula for calculating the precise date for our Lord’s return. He had no intention of encouraging people to be involved in futile and pointless “date-setting.” He simply wanted his readers to realize, that time is not the same to God, as it is to us. One thing that we can be absolutely sure of, however, is that we are closer to “the Day” than we have ever been before!

It is clear that Peter brought this up for discussion to show the faithful, the foolishness of trying to calculate precisely when the Second Coming will take place. However, he had something else he wanted to accomplish. He wanted to give them some insight into the mind and heart of God. God has a deep concern which will always override any earthly schedule. For God, what we call “time” is essentially that period during which human beings have the opportunity to hear the Gospel, and do something about their all-important eternal relationship with their Maker. His apparent delay is not a delay at all. It is rather an extension of the time of opportunity for earthlings to find salvation (v. 9). Another reason not to become engrossed in the “when” of His Second Coming, according to Peter, is that any effort to pin down a date is a sheer waste of time. Peter clearly establishes the truth that the coming will be completely unexpected, “like a thief,” echoing what Jesus had said earlier (Matthew 24:36-44). Jesus also told us that with all of His access to the wisdom

of His heavenly Father, as Son of Man even He did not know when it would happen (Mark 13:32).

Acts 1:7 gives us a clear mandate to refrain from pre-occupation with the “when” of the Last Day, as it says, “It is not for you to know the times or dates the Father has set.” Enough said?

Peter writes, one thing you can be certain of you will know when The Day has taken place. He piles up metaphors in his attempt to describe the indescribable. The first one is “roizeoo” — an onomatopoeic word, which attempts to mimic the sound it describes. We can imagine the heavens as a great big old-fashioned window shade on a spring-loaded roller. It is jerked by an unseen power which causes it to start to wind up with a loud roar and a final crack. You’ll know when it takes place!

Peter describes the extent of the happenings as a worldwide cataclysm. The elements will be destroyed by fire. The elements from which all things earthly are made up will be totally consumed. “The earth and everything done in it will be laid bare.” Clearly, Peter declares that there is not going to be anything left. This, in itself, begins the agony of the scoffers. They will see everything that they considered of value and to which they dedicated their energies, all of it “going up in smoke!”

Incidentally, Peter’s picture of the devastation of the created world, in an astonishing degree, corresponds to what could someday happen according to modern theories of the physical universe. But even if it didn’t fit current scientific ideas, this is God’s description of how it will be on the Day of the Lord’s return. Pretty awesome, isn’t it?

May the Good Lord help us to accept this dynamic truth about the end of things and firmly resolve to give it a prominent place in the body of personal beliefs. Then we will be able to make appropriate correction to our vision of what life is all about. It will enable us to “think more clearly and live more nearly” the vision which God Himself has for us in these “last days,” until Christ comes to “take us home,” either at the end of our time on earth, or at the end of time itself. “Even so, come, Lord Jesus!” Revelation 22:20 (KJV).

PERSONAL APPLICATION – 2 PETER 3:11-18

Heavenly Father, Thank You for this second letter from the apostle Peter, and the important truths about the end of time. Help me to grow in grace and in the knowledge of Your Son, my Savior and Lord, so that I will be secure in my faith until He comes. In His precious Name. Amen.

Review

1. Prior to the beginning of the new century, Newsweek reported that a minister from Brooklyn, NY had sold everything he had to buy an airline ticket to Israel. He and his followers wanted to be there when the Millennium came, so that they could greet Jesus at His Second Coming.

What important truth were they forgetting according to 2 Peter 3:10?

Why do you suppose God doesn't give us a specific date? (Luke 12:31-40; Matthew 25:1-13)

2 Peter 3:11-13

2. What ought to be our reaction to the news about the end of the world? (v. 11)
What should be our foremost concern?

Considering Jesus' words in Matthew 24:14, what can we do to "speed up" the coming of Jesus?

In which petition of the Lord's Prayer do we pray for the Day of the Lord to come?

What should be our attitude as we await our Lord's return? (2 Peter 3:12; 1 John 2:28; Luke 21:28)

3. Although it will be the end of planet earth, what can believers look forward to (v. 13)?

How does Peter make clear that this is not a new idea?

How does Peter know about it? (Acts 3:19-24; Isaiah 65:17, 66:22)

What will be the "order of the day" in this new world? (v. 13)

Put into your own words what you think this means.

2 Peter 3:14-16

4. In the light of what he says about the culture of the new world, what does Peter tell us “ought to be” our primary focus of our daily life on earth?

Who could be our model for being “spotless” and “without blemish” (1 Peter 1:19)?

What does John say will also “pass away” when the physical world “melts away” (1 John 2:15-17, 28-29)? Pick out three key thoughts.

What is his point?

How can we be “at peace with God” as we wait for the Day of Judgment? (Romans 5:9-11).

5. How does Peter show that he regarded the writings of the apostle Paul to be the inspired Word of God?

What did he say about Paul’s teachings on the topics covered in this letter?

What observation does Peter make here about some of the passages in Paul’s writings?

What could account for some of the difficulty people might have with these passages (1 Corinthians 2:11-14)?

What is the ultimate risk we take when we try to draw conclusions from unclear passages in Scripture?

How can we check out the teachings we come up with?

2 Peter 3:17-18

6. Peter’s “wrap up” includes what warning (v. 17)?

Do we need to be concerned about this today? Why or why not?

What is the “secure position” which is at risk?

- 7. What does Peter imply will be the best way for them to maintain their “secure position” and who should get all the credit? (v. 18)

What title does Peter give Jesus? (2 words)

What does “Amen” mean?

Write what “Amen” means to you.

LESSON 7 2 PETER & JUDE

2 PETER 3:11-18

WE CAN EVEN HELP ESTABLISH GOD'S TIMETABLE	
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“Our goal is to strive to experience the love of Christ on an intimate and personal level. This calls for spending “quality time” with Him through meditation, prayer, and especially the Means of Grace, Word and Sacrament.”

• • •

THEME: “APPROPRIATE RESPONSE TO THE TRUTH OF THE SECOND COMING!”

Prior to the beginning of the 21st century, an issue of Newsweek featured a special article entitled, “What the Bible Says about the End of the World.” The article reported: “There are already about 100 Christians living on the Mount of Olives ... an American named Brother David once had a ministry in Brooklyn, NY, but he sold everything to launch his House of Prayer group in Jerusalem, where he expects to be on hand for the day of days.”

Well, Y2K came and went, but Jesus was a “no show!” And so it has been for the many people down through the ages who have responded similarly to biblical information about the Last Day. In the final verses of his letter, Peter spells out clearly what our response should be as we hear what the Bible says about our Lord’s Second Coming.

A RADICALLY DIFFERENT “WORLDVIEW!”

2 PETER 3:11-12

In these verses Peter tells us that belief in the revealed truth about the impermanence of the world will require all of us to adjust our way of

looking at life. “Since everything will be destroyed in this way, what kind of people ought you to be?” (v.11)

Lately, we’ve been hearing the advice that if we want to find peace and contentment, we need to try harder, to be like children and just “live in the moment.” Peter says here that if we want our lives to have meaning and purpose, we need to “live in a future moment.” The moment when our Lord returns is when the moments on earth will come to a screeching halt.

Peter describes what this will mean for us. “As you look forward to the Day of God, you ought to live holy and godly lives.” A composer of fine music introduces his theme, or “motif,” in the opening measures and then skillfully weaves it in throughout the musical number. Peter does the same. Peter picks up the motif of his composition, set forth earlier (1:3-4). There he reminds us that God is ready to help us live godly lives so that even during our earthly life we can begin to “share in his divine nature.”

One aspect of God’s help is to give us this “sneak peek” into the future, specifically, the “Day of God,” as Peter refers to it here. It’s like letting us open the “Book of This World” to the last chapter so that we can see how everything turns out. He does this for a purpose. He wants us to keep this reality in the forefront of our thinking and always “factor it in” as we make our choices and decisions in life.

WE CAN EVEN HELP ESTABLISH GOD’S TIMETABLE

2 PETER 3:12

Under inspiration of the Holy Spirit, Peter gives us insight into another exciting concept. He says that if we look forward to the Second Coming with the proper attitude, we will actually enter into a unique partnership with God; by how we live and what we do, we can actually “speed up” the date of Jesus’ Return. In a certain sense, God invites us to have “input” on when the world will end. Imagine that! In the light of one of the criteria which God considers, according to Jesus (Matthew 24:14), there is something quite specific each of us can do to speed up that Coming of Jesus. In addition to living holy lives, we should consider it a high priority in life to support the proclamation of the Gospel throughout the world.

This was not a new idea for Peter. Jesus included the concept in the prayer which He taught the disciples and us. Sandwiched in between the petition that God’s name be regarded as holy and that His will would be done more completely by people on earth, is the prayer “Thy Kingdom come.” For people to give honor to God and do His will on earth they need to hear the Gospel (Romans 10:17). When we sincerely pray these petitions, aren’t we telling God that we want these things to happen? Would God be wrong in assuming that He can count on us to do whatever we are able to do to make this happen? Through our support of local ministry and missionary work around the globe, as well as our own personal witness, we can show that we have the same thing on our mind that God does. The only thing that is keeping God from giving Jesus the “nod” to begin His return to earth is that the Gospel hasn’t reached far enough. Think of it! The comparatively small boost we give to the cause might just be all it would take to bring about “The Day of God!”

WE LOOK FORWARD TO A NEW WORLD

2 PETER 3:13

Admittedly, Peter says in the last part of verse 12, the great Day of Our Lord will include some pretty awesome and even horrifying events: “That day will bring about the destruction of the heavens by fire, and the elements will melt [liquefy] in the heat.” But Peter implies that we really shouldn’t let our minds dwell on this. There is something else for us to think about: “...in keeping with his promise, we are looking forward to a new heaven and a new earth, the home of righteousness”(13).

The descriptive word “new” means much more than just a replacement in kind. It clearly implies the concept that it will be superior to the one replaced. One of the points of superiority will be that in contrast to the old world where wickedness runs rampant, the new world will be “the home of righteousness,” a new Eden impervious to machinations of the “old evil foe” and his cohorts. God will finally have His wish - people created in His divine image, people He can live with, people who will really be HIS for all eternity!

We probably would like to know a little more about what life in this new heaven and earth is going to be like. Neither Peter nor the other apostles give a whole lot more

for us to go on. The author of the book of Revelation lifts the curtain of heaven for us a few times, but always in figurative and poetic form. Peter asks us to trust God that it will be completely “new” and superior to anything we know or can even imagine. That should be enough! In His wisdom, God knows that because of our limited and earth-bound mental capacity, whatever description He might come up with, it would go right over our heads. Parents don’t give their kindergarten age children a graphic description of all that’s involved in a marriage. At their level of age and experience, they can’t handle it. Those who think they can map out a detailed description of all that will take place when our Lord returns, should remember that in spite of the many clear prophecies of Old Testament Scripture, nobody really got the details of Christ’s First Coming right! Maybe it’s best to not even start to speculate. Rather, let us, in child-like faith, simply trust God and look forward to a “big surprise.”

FOCUS ON BEING READY FOR THE NEW WORLD!

2 PETER 3:14

The words “So then,” which begin verse 14, introduce the key thought that Peter wants to emphasize. The expression echoes the word “therefore” in his introduction (1:10). Here it sets forth what should be the only logical conclusion to which anybody in his right mind can arrive, in the light of predicted annihilation of the world, as we know it. It is also tied to the new dimension of the superior world, which God will bring into being. It is a world in which the “order of the day” will be righteousness and righteousness alone! Since it is only righteousness which will survive and be carried over into the new regime, doesn’t it make sense that believers should “make every effort to be found spotless, blameless, and at peace with Him!” Peter says we should strive, with all that is in us, to be and remain spiritually strong and healthy, in the time that we still have on this “old” planet!

THE APOSTLE PAUL HAD THE SAME UNDERSTANDING

2 PETER 3:15-16

Peter’s personal experience gave him the insight to realize that they needed one last word of encouragement which would enable them to handle any impatience which might sneak into their thinking as they considered the tremendous blessings they could look forward to in God’s

new world. He reminds them again, to always think of what seems like God “dragging His feet” as a demonstration of His patience. What if God hadn’t been patient? He probably would have ushered in the “New Age” before they had been reached with the Good News of salvation. We should think about that, too!

In this emphasis, Peter says he had the support of his colleague, Paul. Apparently, his readers had access to some of Paul’s writings. Peter doesn’t say exactly which words of Paul he had in mind. Some think it was probably Romans. Or, maybe it was just the example which Paul had set. Paul exemplified the spirit which Peter wanted to instill in his readers. Spreading the Gospel of God to every corner of the then-known world was Paul’s top priority in life. Even while under “house arrest” in Rome, it couldn’t stop him. With the executioner’s sword figuratively poised to behead him, Paul gave persuasive witness to his guards. Somehow, the Gospel “percolated upward” to the people in the very household of the emperor. Some of them became followers of the Christ.

Peter attests to the truth that Paul didn’t just write his own opinions. He refers to Paul’s letters as the “wisdom that God gave him” (v. 15). If they would check out all that Peter had written about the Second Coming, they would know that the apostle Paul endorsed every bit of it.

Almost as a parenthetical remark, Peter admits that Paul’s writings contain some statements which are “hard to understand.” Anybody who has studied the book of Romans knows how true this is. He knew the limitations of human words to convey divine truth in a way that everybody can understand it. This doesn’t mean Paul was not a good communicator. The problem wasn’t with the words, it was, rather, the loftiness of the concepts that was the essence of the problem, combined with the inadequacy of the human mind to grasp heavenly truth (1 Corinthians 2:14). The false teachers were not content to accept the idea that the problem was on their end — the limitations of the human mind to grasp spiritual truth — (particularly that of the Parousia). Their denial, says Peter, led “to their own destruction” (v. 16).

Peter referred to them as “ignorant and unstable.” They were ignorant because they apparently quoted Scripture

“out of context” and without considering the clear passages of the Bible. An important principle of Bible study states that if there are hard to understand passages, whatever ideas are drawn from them must fit in with the statements in easily understood passages. Let the Scripture interpret Scripture.

ENCOURAGEMENT TO REMAIN STRONG TO THE END

2 PETER 3:17-18A

Remembering his own experience (Mark 14:27-29) probably prompted Peter to add a final warning for them to “be on their guard” against being misled by false teachers (v. 17). Peter admonishes them (and us) to never “let down our guard.” The forces of evil will use every trick in their bag of insidious tactics to hoodwink believers and lead them astray. One of the most effective is to lull people into a sense of complacency. Complacency allows the “old evil foe” to set up his “staging area” right in the vestibule of our heart and mind. Peter reminds them that having been warned, they now have the responsibility to keep from “falling from your secure position” (v. 17b).

One sure way to keep this from happening, says Peter, is to have a well-planned spiritual fitness program for your life. “Grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ” (v. 18a). Someone has compared the Christian life to riding a bicycle. Unless you keep moving forward, you’re going to fall down. This thought is suggested with Peter’s word “grow!” We all need to keep moving forward in the development of our spiritual life and strength. Once we stop making progress, we start to wobble and before long we are an easy “pushover” for the forces of evil. As long as we are still on earth, we will always be a “work in progress.”

We need to keep on growing, Peter writes, “...in grace and knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.” He puts “grace” first because it is so basic for us. It is God’s grace, in Christ Jesus, which alone enables us to be in a secure relationship with God. It is His grace, which reaches out to us with the Good News that God loved us, even when we were not very loveable. His grace nourishes that relationship on a daily basis. We also need to “grow... in knowledge,” Peter coaches us. Please note that he doesn’t say “knowledge of the facts about Jesus.” It says “knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.” Our goal is to strive to experience the love of Christ on an intimate and personal level. This calls for spending “quality time” with Him through meditation, prayer, and especially the “Means of Grace,” Word and Sacrament. This is the program Peter says we need to follow for spiritual growth.

Peter closes this letter with a “doxology,” which many believe came from an early Christian hymn. Peter probably chose it because it clearly equates Jesus with God. He gives all glory to Jesus, because He is divine, and because it is Jesus, who makes it all happen. It is thanks to the Holy Spirit whom He sent, that we have been led to saving faith. It is He, who puts into our hearts, a desire to keep on growing spiritually. And, He is the Source of energy, which can keep us spiritually healthy and fit until the Last Day.

Peter puts a final “Seal of God’s Approval” on the doxology and, for that matter, the entire epistle, with the word “Amen,” which, simply put, means ‘THAT’S FOR SURE!’

PERSONAL APPLICATION – JUDE 1-16

Thank You Dear Lord, for the amazing love, which led You to send Your Son, Jesus, to be the Lamb of God, sacrificed on the altar of the Cross for me and for all people on this earth. Thank You for calling me to be part of Your family. Keep me on the right track, which leads to eternal life with You. Amen.

Jude 1-2

1. Whose brother does Jude say he is?

To who was he also related? (Lesson 1 notes)

Does Jude tell us where the intended recipients of his letter lived?

How does he “profile” the people for whom he wrote this letter? (3 things)

Do you fit the profile? (Explain)

2. What three spiritual blessings does Jude hope will be “in abundance” in the lives of all his readers (v. 2)?

Jude 3-4

3. What kind of letter had Jude been planning to write?

Why did he change his mind?

What did he feel he needed to urge them to do?

What basic Christian truth were they twisting so that it would make it okay for them to live sexually unrestrained lives? (Lesson 1)

Jude 5-7

4. What is Jude’s purpose in listing these three examples from the Old Testament, especially the first two?

How does the example of Sodom and Gomorrah relate to the situation his readers faced?

Jude 8-10

5. In verse 8, Jude says these false teachers have a bad “attitude” toward God. What is it?

How does Peter describe these false teachers? (2 Peter 2:1-3)

What else in their mind-set is a road-block for God’s message? (v. 10)

To what does Jude (v. 10) compare these people who are without a sense of reverence for sacred things?

Is rejection of things which the mind can’t grasp still a problem in our society? Is it a problem for you? (Explain)

Jude 11

6. What expression does Jude use here to portray what is in store for those with this attitude?

Who else used it? (Matthew 18:7, 23:13ff)

Jude says that the false teachers had “taken the way of Cain.” In what way might the false teachers be thought of as murderers?

Besides the lack of love for his brother, what else did Cain lack, according to Hebrews 11:4?

What obsession led to Balaam’s downfall? (Lesson 5 of 2 Peter 2:15)

What else did he do? (Numbers 31:16)

What did Korah do that was wrong? (Numbers 16)

How were the false teachers like Korah?

Jude 12-13

7. Do you recall what led Peter (2 Peter 2:13-15) to call the heretics “blots and blemishes” at their agape meals? (Lesson 5)

What kind of shepherds were they?

How are they like “clouds without rain”? (Jude 12; 2 Peter 2:17)

What does Jude want to convey with the image of the “autumn trees”?

How does Isaiah 57:20 help you to pick up on the meaning of Jude’s pen-picture of the “wild waves of the sea”?

What astronomical phenomenon depicts the fleeting nature of these false teachers?

Jude 14-16

8. What kind of man was Enoch? (Genesis 5:18-24)

What did he predict? (v. 14)

What was the single purpose of the Lord’s Coming? (v. 15)

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“As Peter did in his second epistle, so Jude holds up the great Day of Judgment as a backdrop against which to urge diligence and caution for the followers of Christ in his day.”

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THEME: “ALL-OUT WAR AGAINST THE FORCES OF EVIL!”

Peter's second epistle and the epistle of Jude were both written because of a deep concern for the spiritual well-being of God's people who lived under the threat of “spiritual terrorism.” Peter's emphasis was to show these young Christians what they could do to protect themselves from being misled by false teachers. Against a similar background, Jude adds a new dimension. He strongly urges Christians to go on the offensive, and “contend for the faith.” (v. 3)

JUDE: AN AGENT OF JESUS FOR GOD'S PEOPLE

JUDE 1

Jude identifies himself as “a servant of Jesus.” Please refer to Lesson 1, page 3 for more on Jude.

There is nothing, at the beginning of this letter, to give us any hint that Jude wrote to a group of people in a certain location. The problem he addresses was quite wide-spread at this time. And yet, in another sense, Jude does give us a fairly precise profile of the people he had in mind.

First, in his triad of distinguishing characteristics, is that they were people “who have been called.” Among other things, this phrase makes one thing very clear. His intended readers had not arrived at their status by dint of

their own spiritual search for God. God had taken the initiative. Like God's people of the Old Testament, they (and we) were sought out and called by God (Exodus 6:7; Leviticus 26:12).

The second distinguishing feature, says Jude, is that they "are loved by God the Father." It was the infinite love of God the Father, which moved Him, to call Old Testament Israel to be His "very own people." Through the rituals and ceremonies, which He directed the people to participate in, He let them know what it would cost Him to make them "His People" (Hebrews 9:22). In the fullness of time, He sent His Son Jesus to be the "Lamb of God," who would shed His blood on the altar of the cross to pay for the sins of the whole world. We, who have experienced the Father's love, are included as intended recipients of this letter.

The third thing that is true of believers is something that is often overlooked. Jude says that we are also being "kept by Jesus Christ." He wants us to realize that even though we will have to deal with some pretty insidious and powerful forces of evil, we can still feel secure, because we know that Jesus Christ will be at our side all the way. He will guard and keep us (1 Peter 1:3-5).

JUDE'S WISH FOR HIS READERS

JUDE 2

Having identified himself and the people for whom his letter was intended, Jude continues with a spiritually loaded "Salutation." His "wish list" for them was entirely for spiritual blessings.

"Mercy" is first in his triad of wishes for them. Incidentally, this is rather rare in a greeting. There are only three other places in the entire New Testament where "mercy" is used like this (1 & 2 Timothy; 2 John). This is the only place where it is given the preeminence of first place. Surely, Jude had a good reason for doing it this way.

The mercy of God, which provides forgiveness, surely plays a prominent role when we are brought to faith. And, as long as we live, we will need to draw on that mercy of God. This concept of mercy, however, goes far beyond the idea of receiving forgiveness, as important as that is. It includes just about everything that we need in life,

including good mental, physical and spiritual health. When we are filled with a sense of God's ongoing mercy toward us, we have the capacity to be "mercy-full" to those with whom we live.

Jude's second wish is that his readers will have an abundance of "peace." We would be hard-pressed to improve upon the explanation given in the notes of the Concordia Self-Study Bible for the word peace: "It is the profound well-being of soul that flows from the experience of God's grace" (Philippians 4:7).

The third part of Jude's wish is for them (and us) to experience an abundance of God's love. He had just identified them as people who were "loved by God the Father." This was an objective statement. When Jude expresses the wish that this love would be theirs "in abundance," he is speaking about their personal experience. God's infinite love obviously can't get any bigger, but their personal appreciation of God's love can and should increase. As it grows, so will their own capacity to love others become greater.

JUDE'S CALL TO RALLY AGAINST THE ENEMY

JUDE 3-4

Using a special term of endearment (Lesson 6, pg.1), Jude tells his readers about a letter he had intended to write to them. It was to be a letter celebrating the "salvation we share." He explains that he had to change his plans because of something more urgent. Jude used this short letter to arouse the people of God to unite in the struggle against false teachers.

The way Jude speaks of it, apparently the body of Christian doctrine had become fairly well formulated by this time (Acts 2:42). There were "these men," who like current terrorists, had "fake ID's," pretending to be Christians, but promoting religious ideas which were contrary to the teachings of the apostles and prophets. This was serious, because it would ultimately lead them to "deny Jesus Christ, our only Sovereign and Lord."

"THESE MEN" ARE DOOMED ALREADY

JUDE 5-7

In verse 5-7, Jude echoes chapter 2 of 2 Peter. Once again in triad form, he gives examples from the Old

Testament regarding the doom which befell those people who had been unfaithful to the Word of God. He refers to the case of some of the Israelites; people who had once been part of the chosen people, whom God had delivered from Egypt. Because they strayed from the faith, they were “destroyed.” Even the angels, who forsook God, were banished from the presence of God, to await their eternal doom. Of course, the readers knew about the fate of the infamous citizens of Sodom and Gomorrah. All three are vivid examples of what happens to people who disobey. Jude wants them to recognize that the “stakes are high” for those who teach falsely, as well as for those who follow them in their heresy, with no exceptions.

HOW TO IDENTIFY THESE AGENTS OF EVIL

JUDE 8-11

These “spiritual terrorists” get their orders from Satan, the “master-mind” of all evil from the beginning of time. And, even though they work under cover, they do leave a “trail.” There are certain things to watch out for in their “modus operandi.” For one thing, Jude says they are very arrogant (2 Peter 2:11-12). Their arrogance arose from their complete lack of reverence for things sacred. They elevate their human opinions to a position higher than the revealed will of God. Their personal behavior is determined by their own selfish desires.

Watch out for people like this, Jude says. Whatever you do, make sure you don’t come under their influence. He says: “Woe to them!” Their doom is just as sure as the judgment of God, which came down on those who seem to be their mentors. Cain, the first murderer, was a person who was devoid of faith and love. In his arrogance, Cain defied God, and despised his own brother. Balaam, the false prophet, was motivated by financial gain when he gave a false prophecy to King Balak (Numbers 22-24; 2 Peter 2:15). Like the false teachers Jude was warning about, Balaam was the instigator of immorality and the idolatrous worship of Baal Peor (Numbers 31:16). Numbers 31:8 describes his fate. Korah was notorious for leading a rebellion against Moses and Aaron, God’s appointed leaders (Numbers 16:1 ff). The false teachers, too, had nothing but scorn for the authority of the apostles.

FALSE TEACHERS WON’T DO ANY GOOD FOR YOU

JUDE 12-13

Jude had put these false teachers into a “rogue’s gallery” along with Cain, Balaam, and Korah. This should have been enough to make the point that the believers definitely would not want to have anything to do with them. But, Jude wasn’t through. He lets loose with a veritable barrage of metaphors (2 triads) to depict the utter folly of looking to these teachers for guidance in matters of faith.

First, he says that they are “blemishes at your love feasts, eating with you without the slightest qualm.” Peter referred to this, too (Lesson 5, pgs. 2 & 3). In secular Greek, at that time, the word here translated blemishes means “sunken rocks.” This certainly fits with the thrust of this section. When “these men” abuse and prostitute the sacred “Agape” meal, they really are like dangerous reefs, submerged beneath the surface, and ready to shipwreck the unsuspecting vessel. Avoid them. They could cause you disaster.

Jude’s second figure is that of hireling shepherds. They have the title shepherd, but they are in it only for themselves, and for what they can get out of it (Ezekiel 34:8). Those who follow them will not be cared for, when danger threatens.

The third picture is similar to what Peter used (Lesson 5, pg.4). They are “like clouds without rain.” They build up hopes but these hopes are soon shattered.

The fourth colorful metaphor is they are “autumn trees without fruit and uprooted - twice dead.” You don’t go to a fruit tree in the late fall expecting to find fruit. A deciduous fruit tree goes dormant for the winter. In this case, the figure is that of a tree, which is also uprooted. It is “twice dead.” So it is with these false teachers. They are as worthless and unpromising as an uprooted tree!

Jude’s righteous indignation seethes as he draws another pen-picture. “They are wild waves of the sea, foaming up their shame.” He may have remembered something similar from the words of Isaiah 57:20. The restless sea in constant motion has little to show for its action, except to leave along the shore a batch of dirty spume. Such is the behavior of these false teachers. The residue of their behavior is like scum on the seashore. Their belief and immoral behavior not only do not produce anything worthwhile, they are worthless, “yucky” scum!

The final image, these teachers project, is that they are “wandering stars.” Jude uses the Greek word “planare” from which we get our name for the planets, which “wander” in the heavens. But here, he means what we commonly refer to as “shooting stars.” They take an erratic path across the heavens, glowing brightly for a few seconds, and then they are no more, giving the appearance of being swallowed up by the darkness, with no lasting value!

THEIR DOOM IS SEALED

JUDE 14-15

To show the folly of listening to “these men,” Jude reminds his readers that the forces of God are already mobilized against them, to “do them in.” He quotes a passage from the book of Enoch. This writing was highly regarded among both Jews and Christians of that day. Note he doesn’t refer to Enoch’s writing as inspired Scripture. However, what Enoch writes here is “scriptural,” corroborated by Jesus Himself (Matthew 25:31; Luke 21:27). Enoch declared the important truth about the coming of the Lord. He uses the present tense (“is coming”) to suggest the idea, that the forces of judgment

are already mobilized. The purpose of the Lord’s Second Coming will be, to “judge everyone, and to convict all the ungodly of all the ungodly acts they have done in the ungodly way, and of all the harsh words ungodly sinners have spoken against Him.” The word “everyone” and the repetition of “all”, used three times here, emphasizes that it will be all-inclusive. Specifically, “these men” will not escape. Their doom is sealed. This should settle it for anyone tempted to follow them.

Jude validates what Enoch had written, including the clear-cut statement about the purpose of our Lord’s Second Coming. It will be to “judge and convict” those who have chosen to live without God. Significantly, there is no mention of a thousand year reign on earth, nor the idea of a time of rapture. Here again, Enoch was right and agrees with the writer to the Hebrews (9:27) that “man is destined to die once, and after that to face judgment.”

You can almost feel the scorn with which Jude begins a final salvo against “these men” (vv. 4, 10, 12, 14, and 19). To show that they were included in the category of the “ungodly,” who will come under the Lord’s judgment, Jude points to negative personality traits, which he knew his readers would find repulsive and utterly disgusting. The “grumblers and faultfinders” among the people of the Exodus were held up in Jewish culture, as examples of how not to act (1 Corinthians 10:10). Likewise, people who “follow their own evil desires; they boast about themselves, flatter others for their own advantage,” reflect personality traits of people who have lost their vital connection with God.

While Jude had in mind profiling “these men” who were to be avoided at all costs, his caricature gives us a mirror to look into. If we observe such traits in ourselves, we had better check our connection with God and, with God’s help, fix what needs fixing, lest we be among those who are included in the condemnation described in verses 14 and 15.

As Peter did in his second epistle, so Jude holds up the great Day of Judgment as a backdrop against which to urge diligence and caution for the followers of Christ in his day. His message is certainly quite timely for us, who are living in similar times. We need to listen to his call, to vigorously, “contend for the faith!”

PERSONAL APPLICATION – JUDE 17-25

Thank You, from the bottom of my heart, heavenly Father, for making Yourself known to me as a good and gracious God. Thank You for the faith You have planted in my heart. Grant that my hope of eternal life will help me to live each day with quiet confidence and trust until You come to get me. Through Jesus Christ, Amen.

Review

1. Who was one of the earliest “men of God” to declare that there would be a universal Day of Judgment? (v. 14)

Which word in verse 15 makes it clear that no one is going to be excluded?

Who will be convicted?

How does Jude indicate (v. 16) that the false teachers of his day were part of the group who would be convicted?

Jude 17-18

2. What did Jude want to convey by his affectionate greeting? (2 Peter 3:1)

What did Jude, like Peter (2 Peter 3:3), call to their attention regarding the presence of “scoffers” in “the last times”?

What does “they said to you” imply?

What did the apostles say would be typical of the life-style of the “scoffers”?

What did the apostles mean by “the Last Days?” (2 Timothy 3:1) (Lesson 6, pg.1)

Jude 19

3. What would the false teachers do that would be very detrimental to the spirit of fellowship in their group?

What do you think they did to bring this about?

Which religious group at the time of Jesus displayed a “holier than thou” attitude? (Luke 18:11)

What made them think they were on a higher spiritual level than others? (Matthew 6:16, 12:2, 23:1-5)

When is it okay and even required of you to separate yourself from certain people, according to 2 Cor. 6:14-17?

Jude 20-21

4. Although our salvation is a free gift from God, what responsibility does each Christian have, according to Jude?

How can you “build yourself up” in the faith?

Jude calls it “your most holy faith.” What is there about the Christian faith that would make it “most holy”?

What is the second thing we need to be concerned about?

What does Jude mean by “pray in the Holy Spirit”? (Romans 8:26-27)

5. The third item in Jude’s short list: “Keep yourselves in God’s love!” How do we do this?

What future event do we need to think about on a regular basis and why?

Jude 22-23

6. After we have done the things Jude tells us to do for our own spiritual health, what else should we be concerned about?

Suppose you have a son or daughter in college who is beginning to question some of the articles of faith. You have another son or daughter who has already decided to abandon the faith and live contrary to the Commandments of God. How could Jude’s counsel guide you in your approach to each?

Jude 24-25

7. What “encouraging word” does Jude include in this great “doxology”?

On what basis will we be able to stand in God's glorious presence "without fault"?

What significant role does he ascribe to God here?

How does this unique title rule out the popular cliché that "all religions are good" and ultimately lead to the same place?

What does Jude's closing word affirm?

LESSON 9 2 PETER & JUDE

JUDE 17-25

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“In the light of all this, Jude says, bow before Him. Give Him your praise and adoration. Ascribe to Him “all glory, all majesty, all power, and all authority!” He alone is worthy of such devotion! Our God is truly an Awesome God! Amen! Amen! Amen!”

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*THEME: “GUIDELINES FOR CHRISTIANS
THREATENED BY SPIRITUAL TERRORISM!”*

Following the tragic events of September 11, 2001, our national leaders found it necessary to expand the war against terrorism to include bioterrorism. Both Peter and Jude warned Christians of the first century about a deadly spiritual “germ-warfare” for which they needed to be prepared.

THE THREAT IS REAL: BE PREPARED

JUDE 17-18

Jude introduces the closing portion of his somber letter of warning with “Dear friends” or “Beloved.” His word “remember” is the first imperative in this letter. Jude wants them to realize that the presence of those, who were bent upon sabotaging the work of the apostles in their midst, was not something unexpected. It was something, which “the apostles of our Lord Jesus Christ foretold.” The statement, “They said to you” seems to suggest that they had heard this from the very lips of those apostles who had ministered to them. The imperfect tense stresses the repeated nature of this warning about “scoffers” making their appearance. The only place in the Bible where you will find this Greek picture of people, who impudently thumb their noses at God, as

they, “follow their own ungodly desires.” Christians living in the “last days” (including the 21st century) have been forewarned that the anti-God forces would be hard at work trying to destroy the Christian Church (Lesson 6).

A SURE SIGN OF EVIL: THEIR DIVISIVENESS

JUDE 19

For the third time, Jude bursts forth with a contemptuous “these men,” as if to say, “these scoundrels!” Then, he adds that in addition to the characteristics mentioned earlier in the letter, you will be able to sense their presence in your midst, because they will “divide you.” Some linguists see a kinship between this word and “Pharisee,” which means “people who set themselves apart.” The movement of the Pharisees can probably be traced to the time when the Israelites were in captivity in Babylon. Some of the Jewish people formed a “support group” to encourage one another to be true to the God of their fathers. They desperately needed all the support they could give one another if they hoped to survive as “a people set apart” for God.

By the time of Jesus, however, the movement had deteriorated into a “mutual admiration society.” The Pharisees regarded their accomplishments in the realm of religion as “merit badges” which they pinned upon their chests and strutted around town bragging about how much better they were than the run-of-the-mill people (Luke 18:10-14). Jude made the observation, that a similar spirit of prideful divisiveness would be obvious on the part of the false teachers. They liked to put “labels” on others according to how they “rated” them. The terms “natural instincts” and “have the Spirit” seem to point to terminology, which was being used in the “mysterious religions” of that day. There were those who claimed to be at a higher level of spirituality, which gave them the privilege of ignoring the directives God had given for personal moral behavior. Jude uses their terminology to indict them and to declare that by behaving as they did, the false teachers were the ones who were following their “natural instincts” and that, they also, were the ones who were totally “devoid of the Spirit.”

The warning about “causing divisions” could easily be misinterpreted. If loyalty to God’s Word on our part causes

other people not to want to have fellowship with us, we can’t help it. This kind of separation in and of itself is not prideful. But, when we begin to think that our taking such a stand somehow raises us to a higher standing with God, we have become infected with the unhealthy spirit of divisiveness, a characteristic of the false teachers.

HERE’S WHAT YOU NEED TO DO FOR YOURSELF!

JUDE 20-21

In contrast to the harsh “these men,” Jude once again directs his message to the believers, with “dear friends.” In four clean-cut imperatives he lays out a regimen for them to follow if they hope to keep themselves uncontaminated by the insidious virus of false teaching.

“Build yourselves up in your most holy faith.” Jude makes it clear that here is something for which each of us is personally responsible. We need to do whatever we can to be spiritually strong and healthy. The imagery could be of constructing a building on a solid foundation. He implies that we already have the foundation. He refers to it as “your most holy faith.” This could refer to the body of doctrine, which they had learned from the apostles. Jude refers to it as “holy” because it originated with the Holy God and because it has power to “make holy” those who diligently draw strength from it (Romans 1:16).

The second important element in this regimen, according to Jude, is that we “pray in the Holy Spirit.” He strongly urges that we give attention to the matter of our personal prayer life. This means, first of all, that we set aside time for regular, two-way communication, with our Lord and Savior. In Romans 8:26-27 Paul presents a neat summary of what Jude means. When we pray “in the Spirit” we can count on Him to help us know what to pray for. The Spirit will take our feeble words and fuzzy requests and make them acceptable to the Father.

The third thing Jude encourages us to do is “keep yourselves in God’s love.” As it is in any personal relationship, if it is to be kept alive and strong, there must be a constant renewal of love. Jude’s words remind us that it is possible to fall out of God’s love. We “keep ourselves in God’s love” by constantly renewing, in our mind, the truth about all that God has done for us, and

continues to do for us, regarding our salvation. We keep adjusting the focus of our understanding, so that we can clearly see, the basis of our relationship with God is solely and alone, God's love in Christ, which led Him to give Himself for us. This truth is also the great "equalizer," it doesn't leave any "wobble room" for a spirit of divisiveness to sneak in. Rather, just the opposite! When the love of God really gets into our system, it will energize us to do things that please Him. And we do it, not to buy God's favor, because we know that we already have His favor. We know He loves us. Furthermore, God's love within our hearts will spill over into our lives and empower us to show "agape" love to those with whom we live. What a wonderful "syndrome" to initiate!

The fourth directive is really the outgrowth of the first three. We will consciously live as people of hope; people who realize that here on earth we "have no continuing city." Rather, we consider ourselves "sojourners" because we are confident that something wonderful awaits us when "our Lord Jesus Christ" comes to bring us "to eternal life." We are engulfed by philosophies, which perhaps inadvertently, exert a strong pull on us to live as if there were no heavenly tomorrow. We will need to work at it to keep this hope alive. Jude puts a high priority on it, because he knows how crucial it is for us to approach each day of our life, in this spirit and with this attitude (Lesson 7).

WHEN WE HELP OTHERS WE HELP OURSELVES

JUDE 22-23

In this section where Jude is giving his exhortations as to what we should concentrate on if we hope to remain strong in the faith, he goes on to tell us that we should also take an interest in the spiritual well-being of others. There seems to be at least a hint that when we do this, there will very likely be the serendipitous effect that we are going to experience personal blessings. Our own faith could be strengthened. Obviously, this should not be our motivation for helping others. Yet, when we do things to serve others, invariably we experience blessings. That's just the way it is when we get involved with our good and gracious God!

Jude continues with another "triad." In verses 22-23, he writes about three situations that we could encounter when we try to reach out to those who are being misled. First, there are those who are just beginning to come under the influence of bogus ideas which are being promoted. Jude's advice for his readers is that they "be merciful" to the doubters. Intervention in such cases has to reflect a spirit of gentleness, understanding, and patience. The important thing is to do something helpful, but always in a way that allows compassion and loving concern to come across.

The second situation of apostasy is when doubt has progressed to the point where the people make it known, in one way or another, that they have succumbed to the false ideas. Jude says you need to snatch others from the fire and save them. When Jude uses the analogy of snatching someone "from the fire" some think that

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Without a doubt, Jude wanted to help his readers (and us) get on with their Christian lives in an attitude of composure and confidence.

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he was referring to the “fire of passion” which drove the false teachers. Others see in this reference to fire a figure of speech for the “fire of God’s judgment” (Amos 4:11). In reality, these two ideas are not so far apart. People who are consumed by sexual passion will ultimately experience the all-consuming fire of God’s wrath.

In dealing with fellow church members who have made it known that they have decided to follow the false teachers, Jude’s recommendation is to take quick action: “snatch them from the fire.” There is urgency here. You will need to use the direct approach. There is no time to wait! Of course, the motivation of mercy applies. This calls for what psychologists refer to as “tough love.” Using force never works. But, there is power in the Word. So use it, as Jesus did when he drove away Satan himself (Matthew 4:5-11).

The third situation, Jude says, also requires the quality of mercy, but with the qualification: “mercy, mixed with fear.” Paul has a similar injunction to the Galatians (6:1). “Mercy mixed with fear” means to reach out to someone who is straying because you truly care about the person. The word “fear” means to have a healthy respect for the risk you are taking. It’s a little like what’s happening in the fight against bioterrorism; well-trained people won’t expose themselves to anthrax until they know they are safe.

Jude’s rather graphic imagery speaks volumes on the subject. He implies that you run a big risk unless you are “hating even the clothing stained by corrupted flesh.” The

term for “clothing” refers to the garment worn next to the skin. It is the messy scene of carousing and debauchery, characterizing the teaching to which they were being exposed. Jude says we should definitely try to help, but we need to be sure that we aren’t vulnerable ourselves, lest we, too, end up as a casualty, unable to help others!

The reference to “stained garments” calls to mind instances where the Bible uses similar metaphors. Jude insists as strongly as John, in the book of Revelation, that the only person who can stand in the presence of God is someone who has not “soiled his garment” (Revelation 3:4). God Himself says that those who are acceptable to Him are “they who have washed their robes and made them white in the blood of the Lamb” (Revelation 7:14, 19:8). All of this provides an incentive to never give up on the erring and the lost. God does the saving, but He uses us in the process. In His name we can offer to exchange our soiled garments for the festive garments of righteousness (Isaiah 61:10; Zechariah 3:3-5).

OUR AWESOME GOD

JUDE 24-25

Up to this point, Jude’s short letter was pretty “heavy stuff,” the negative characteristics of false teachers, as well as the awful judgment of God upon them and their followers. Under the inspiration of the Spirit of God, he “wraps up” his message on a powerful upbeat note. He pens a truly spine-tingling doxology - one of the finest in all of Scripture! His doxology could very well have been the

distilled essence of the letter he told them he had been planning to write them (v. 3). Without a doubt, Jude wanted to help his readers (and us) get on with their Christian lives in an attitude of composure and confidence.

“To Him, who is able to keep you from falling”: What we are not able to do for ourselves; God will be there to do for us. If we stay close to Him, He is able to keep us safe. Jude assures us that God “is able to present you before His glorious presence without fault and with great joy.” The Greek word for “without fault” is the same word, which Peter used to refer to Jesus as the fulfillment of the figure of the Passover Lamb which had to be “without blemish” (1 Peter 1:19). The blood of the Lamb of God slain on Calvary enables us to be “without blemish” when we stand before God. Because of this, God can call us by name and invite us into eternal joy.

The doxology highlights the core of Christian theology, which makes it completely unique among the religions of the world. Jude calls Him: “God and Savior.” All other religions (Judaism, Muslim, Buddhism, and Shintoism) set forth moral codes and standards which people will have to achieve if they hope to gain God’s approval. We have experienced the horror that extremist Muslims can wreak upon innocent human beings because they want to gain special approval from Allah, and be entitled to special blessings in paradise.

It is eminently significant that Jude calls our God “Savior.” God is called “Savior” in seven places in the New Testament (Luke 1:47; 1 Timothy 1:1, 2:3, 4:10; Titus 1:3, 2:10, 3:4). In Christ, God is our Savior. He did it all for us. He is “the Lamb that was slain from the creation of the world.” (Revelation 13:8). He is our Lord, “before all ages, now and evermore!” “He is the same, yesterday, today, and forever” (Hebrews 13:8). This assures us that God is not going to change His mind. He will carry out His plan of salvation, which He conceived in eternity, before the creation. We can count on it! It’s a sure thing! You and I can look forward, with confidence, to indescribable personal blessings in paradise, which no one can improve upon.

In the light of all this, Jude says, bow before Him. Give Him your praise and adoration. Ascribe to Him “all glory, all majesty, all power, and all authority!” He alone is worthy of such devotion! Our God is truly an Awesome God! Amen! Amen! Amen!