

commentary on

# Second Peter

Standing amidst Apostasy

James West

*To my family, all the folk at Tamworth Bible Baptist Church,  
and all those who love His appearing*

# Table of Contents

Background Information.....	4
Chapter 1: Keep growing in the knowledge of Christ .....	5
Chapter 2: Beware of false teachers .....	9
Chapter 3: Look diligently for the return of the Lord.....	11

# Background Information

This epistle may have been written from Rome in about A.D. 67, just before Peter's martyrdom. It is not certain whether the recipients of his two epistles were Jewish, Gentile, or a mixture of both (see 1 Peter 1:1).

In his first epistle, Peter sought to encourage the believers to withstand persecution. In his second epistle, he exhorts them to stand against apostasy by cleaving to the knowledge of the truth.

This book places great stress on 'knowing' and not doubting the knowledge that we have. In his book *New Testament Bible History*, Richard Hester has identified the key word of the epistle as 'knowledge', and shows the three-fold purpose of the book (here summarised): 1. To encourage the readers to grow. 2. To warn about coming apostasy and false teachers. 3. To reaffirm the certainty of the return of Christ.

# Chapter 1

## Keep growing in the knowledge of Christ

**(v. 1)** We have entered into this precious relationship with Christ, through His righteousness – the righteousness of deity.

**(vv. 2-3)** Grace (undeserved help) and peace will increase in us as we grow deeper in our knowledge of (relationship with) God and His Son, just as we obtained all things that were necessary for life and godliness through knowing Him. Note that knowing Him is tied up with a call to glory and virtue.

**(v. 4)** God has given us so many promises, by which we escape the corrupting influences of sin, while we pursue the calling of deep union with Christ (Heb 12:10). These promises probably include those that led us to the point of salvation, as well as those that point us to the hope of being changed and ultimately glorified in Heaven.

**(vv. 5-7)** Peter has talked about the preciousness of our faith, and the wonderful effects of the knowledge of God. Now he shows his readers that they need to be pro-active in building upon their faith.

‘Peter lists seven qualities or traits of character in this moral development, and he introduces each new trait as being ‘in (en), ‘in connection with,’ the preceding. Each is inherent in its predecessor, which in turn is supplemented and perfected by the new quality, giving it more abundant fruitage.’ ( D. Edmond Hiebert, *Second Peter and Jude*, p. 52)

‘The sequence here teaches us that none of the traits can reach maturity unless the previous supporting traits are maturing well.’ (Jim Berg, *Essential Virtues*, p. 4)

Virtue: Excellence

**Knowledge:** Knowledge of God's Word. We need to be personally studying and meditating on God's Word. A sporadic opening of the Bible or an occasional hearing of God's Word preached is not enough. Peter is talking about a commitment to continually pursuing the knowledge of God, which causes the believer to grow deeper in his relationship with Christ.

**Temperance:** Self-control

**Patience:** Continuing to do right despite adversity

**Godliness:** Holiness. The whole life – conduct, speech, thought-life, and demeanour – ought to be characterised by a reverence for God.

1 Peter 3:15 'But sanctify the Lord God in your hearts...'

**Brotherly kindness:** This seems to describe a love for other believers, which is to be unfeigned and fervent (1 Pet 1:22). We ought to be more than willing to be a blessing to fellow believers (Gal 6:10; 1 John 5:1).

**Charity:** (Agape) Love. God Himself gives the best description of this word in 1 Corinthians 13. It is love which willingly sacrifices itself for another's highest good. This is the kind of love which extends to all.

**(vv. 8-10)** If a believer pursues these things, he will have a fruitful and satisfying relationship with the Lord. If he doesn't, it shows that he has largely forgotten the significance of his being saved from sin. Giving diligence doesn't save, but it helps one to see that he is saved. It serves to increase a person's assurance (the knowledge that he is saved), even though it doesn't add one iota to his salvation.

**(vv. 11)** I believe this verse is teaching that God will give a triumphant and glorious welcome to the faithful saints, upon their arrival in Heaven. We know that God is truly interested in helping His children to run and finish their race well, and to stand before His majesty in exceeding joy (Ps 84:11; Jude 24).

**(vv. 12-15)** As Peter considered the eternal welfare of his readers, and possibility of great rewards, he recognised the need to stir them up with the same old truths they had heard. He wanted to do so, as long as he was alive. And even after his death, He intended for his letter to be a constant reminder to them.

**(vv. 16-18)** The message of Christ's coming kingdom was no lie. The three apostles were eyewitnesses to a prophetic glimpse of this coming kingdom when Jesus was transfigured in their presence (Matt 17:1-5). They also heard the voice of the Father, declaring Jesus' Sonship.

**(v. 19)** Not wishing to discredit his own single experience, but rather showing that it confirmed the message of numerous Old Testament writings (possibly more sure to the Jewish mind), Peter urged his readers to establish fuller confidence in those writings. The Scriptures are the believer's light in this dark age, until Christ returns.

The apostle likens Christ to the day star, which is Venus, the bright star that often heralds the dawning of another day (Rev 22:16). Until Christ comes – for as the day star, He shall arise in our hearts – Christians must give heed to His precious Word. The time is drawing nigh when Christ, whom we love, shall at last shine in our full view. Peter emphasizes the importance of the Scriptures, as we anticipate this event, for the Scriptures contain the 'exceeding great and precious promises,' by which we enjoy this participation in the divine nature even now (v. 4).

**(v. 20)** David Cloud comments (*One Year Discipleship Course*, p. 76): 'The phrase "private interpretation" refers to the writers of the Bible (2 Peter 1:20). In the context, this refers to the giving of revelation rather than to the understanding of it. The Bible writers did not interpret God's revelation to mankind through their own thinking; they were given God's revelation by the Holy Spirit. They did not always even understand what they were writing (1 Peter 1:10-12).'

The holy men who penned the Scriptures didn't write a subjective interpretation of what they received from God. In other words, God

both gave the revelation, and also superintended the actual recording of it.



# Chapter 2

## **Beware of false teachers**

**(vv. 1-3)** Peter warned that just as false prophets came in Old Testament times (e.g. see Jeremiah 23), so false teachers would also come to his readers. However, God would judge these false teachers.

**(vv. 4-9)** Three Old Testament examples are now given to demonstrate (see verse 9) that God is well able to preserve His own from sin and judgment, and to reserve (guard) the wicked (Peter still has the wicked false teachers in mind) until the time of their punishment:

*The angels that sinned* (see Jude 6): This no doubt refers to some of the demonic realm that fell with Lucifer, who are presently confined to be cast into the lake of fire. These are probably the demons that will be released at a certain time during the seven year tribulation period to inflict hurt on people (Revelation 9). The meaning seems to be that if God would not spare creatures of such high rank as angels, neither will He spare these false teachers for their wilful sin.

*Noah and his family*: God spared them (though they were few), because they were righteous, and He punished the world, though they were many, for their sin.

*Sodom, Gomorrha, and Lot*: God made an example of two cities to all who would presume to 'get away with' ungodliness. Although Lot was not a good example of godliness, he is mentioned as a righteous man. God preserved in him a sense of justice concerning the sin around him, and also delivered him from being destroyed with Sodom.

**(vv. 10-14)** These false teachers are sensual and anti-authoritarian. It is not clear whether these false teachers were in the habit of despising earthly authorities only, or spiritual powers as well. Peter is probably

speaking along the same lines as Jude (Jude 8 & 9), who relates the dignified response of Michael the archangel towards Satan. The application seems to be that it is entirely inappropriate for these men to despise the authorities that God has ordained or allowed in this world, such as government leaders, church leaders, or even the Word of God. These men are doomed for eternal destruction. Their thoughts are lustful, and their participation in the Lord's supper or love feast is an abomination in God's sight. They are shameless in their sin (i.e. they don't seek to hide what they do, as those of the night), and will certainly be punished for it.

**(vv. 15-22)** The false teachers are like Baalam, who was willing to curse Israel for money. They will teach falsehood for gain. Theirs is a kind of insanity. Like empty wells, they cannot give what they offer. They are like promising clouds that don't drop rain, and are carried about by false doctrines and passions. They deceive those who were seeking the way of salvation, and who had already left off the vices of worldly company. They promise liberty to their followers, but they themselves are in bondage to sin.

**(v. 20)** They (includes both the teachers and their followers) are in an even worse condition after becoming again entangled in the world. It would have been better to have been ignorant altogether, than to knowingly reject the truth. This seems to imply degrees of punishment in Hell.

# Chapter 3

## Look diligently for the return of the Lord

**(vv. 1-2)** In both epistles ('which' is plural in the Greek) Peter's intent was to fully arouse his readers by reminding them of his teaching. He didn't want them to forget what was prophesied by the Old Testament prophets, or the recent commands from the apostles concerning the need to prepare for the return of the Messiah.

**(vv. 3-7)** Their mindfulness was to be heightened with the assurance that scoffers will come in the last days, denying His return. These appear to be deists, who were saying that nothing had changed since the beginning of creation, or since the death of the fathers. The fathers referred to here are probably Old Testament prophets, or martyred apostles, or both.

The basic thought seems to be this: The scoffers willingly ignore the fact that God flooded the earth with water even after so long a time since creation. Even so now, by His decree the universe is reserved for destruction by fire. Since there was a Divine judgment by water, men ought not to think that there cannot be another judgment by fire.

Somewhere between Revelation 20:10 and the start of Revelation 21, the destruction of the old universe takes place in preparation for a new one. This coincides generally with the final banishment of lost humanity to the lake of fire after the Great White Throne judgment. Maybe this is why Peter says, '...against [until] the day of judgment of ungodly men'.

**(vv. 8-10)** God can see eternity, and all time lengths are similarly short compared to it. What seemed like a long time to the scoffers was only a short time to the eternal God. However, God is giving men time to repent and be saved. 'The day of the Lord describes end-time events that begin after the rapture and culminate with the

commencement of eternity' (*The Bible Knowledge Commentary*, edited by Walvoord and Zuck). We see this huge expanse of time summarized in verse 10.

Although it may seem to some that God is slack in keeping His promise, the day of the Lord (the end-time judgments, triggered by the rapture of the saints) will come quickly and unexpectedly. The destruction by fire reminds us of 1 John 2:17: 'And the world passeth away, and the lust thereof: but he that doeth the will of God abideth for ever.'

**(vv. 11-18)** Considering the final destruction of the present universe should serve as motivation to purify ourselves in holiness. We ought to be eagerly anticipating (signified by 'hasting unto') the time when we meet our Lord. Seeing we look for a new universe, 'wherein dwelleth righteousness', we must prepare to meet the Lord, and remember that the time of waiting is because God is giving every person time to be saved.

Paul also spoke about this same truth in all his epistles. However, men had tried to pervert his teachings. Seeing that the readers had been forewarned, they were now to beware, so that they themselves did not apostasize with the wicked. By contrast, they were to (v.18) '...grow in grace, and in the knowledge of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ'.



TAMWORTH BIBLE  
BAPTIST CHURCH

Copyright 2019 by James West

This publication is published for free distribution in digital format. See the Publications section at [tbbc.org.au](http://tbbc.org.au). We do not allow distribution of this publication from other websites.