**2 Peter Commentary**

**2 Peter Chapter 1**

2Pe 1:1

**“Simon.”** The Greek text has “Simeon,” which is the Hebrew form of “Simon,” Peter’s Jewish name. Peter’s first-century audience would have understood that immediately and not have been confused, but modern readers might easily be confused and wonder why “Simon Peter” is suddenly being called, “Simeon Peter.” See commentary on Acts 15:14.

**“to those who have obtained a faith.”** It is not at all clear who Peter is writing to, and it is hotly debated by scholars. Many say that 2 Pet. 3:1 indicates that they are the same people who 1 Peter is addressed to, but there are serious reasons to question that.

**“faith.”** The Christian Faith that consists of a body of beliefs.

**“because of the righteousness *shown by* our God.”** 2 Peter 2:1 is saying that it is because of the righteous acts of God, such as sending His Son Jesus to die for our sins, and because of the righteous acts of Christ, such as living a sinless life and dying on the cross, that people can obtain to the Christian Faith.

Translated quite literally, the Greek text reads, “in righteousness of our God.” A first-century Greek would likely have understood the phrase “in righteousness of God” as “in connection with the righteousness of God,” meaning that God and Christ acted in connection with and in accord with righteousness. However, the translation “in connection with the righteousness of God…” would not be a clear translation for the English reader. The word “in” can occasionally have the meaning “through,” which is the way a number of English versions read, or it can have the meaning “because of,” which fits very well here and is clearer in English than “through.”[[1]](#footnote-31566) Robert Bratcher says, “because of (or, through) the righteousness.”[[2]](#footnote-21053) The definite article “the” is not in the Greek text, but grammatically it does not have to be since the noun follows a preposition, in this case, the “in” (Greek, *en*).

In contexts such as these, the word “righteousness” can refer to the internal righteousness of God, i.e., that one of His attributes is righteousness, and/or it can refer to His righteous acts, behavior, conduct, etc., the inner righteousness as shown outwardly by righteous actions. Here in 2 Peter 1:1 it refers to both, but the emphasis is on outer righteousness, the righteous actions of both God and Christ. This is why some English versions read “justice” instead of righteousness; righteous actions show up as “justice” (cf. CEB, NJB, NLT, Douay-Rheims, David Hart). The righteousness (righteous being and righteous acts) of God and Christ open the door for people to be saved and granted everlasting life.

**“our God, and *our* Savior Jesus Christ.”** It is standard that the New Testament Epistles open with a salutation from both God and Jesus Christ, and so it is logical that 2 Peter would open with a statement that recognized the work of both God and Christ. However, Trinitarian versions usually translate the verse, “our God and Savior Jesus Christ,” and Trinitarians usually claim that this verse is an example of Jesus being referred to as God. But that is unlikely for a number of reasons.

For one thing, Epistles usually open with greetings from both God and Jesus (Rom. 1:7; 1 Cor. 1:3; Gal. 1:3, etc.), and so it would be unusual for this one to open with a statement that Jesus is God.

Furthermore, Peter speaks of God and Jesus in the same verse on a number of occasions, and never equates Jesus with God in them, but speaks of them as being different (1 Pet. 1:2, 3; 2:5; 3:21; 4:11; 5:10; 2 Pet. 1:2). Not only that, but God and Jesus are referred to as separate in the other epistles, which would make this an unusual reading.

Also, there are many non-Trinitarian ways to translate 2 Peter 1:1, as the following translations show:

* “of our God and *the* Saviour Jesus Christ” (ASV)
* “of our God, and the Saviour Jesus Christ” (*Concordant Literal New Testament*)
* “of our God and of our Deliverer Yeshua the Messiah” (CJB)
* “of our God and of our Saviour Jesus Christ” (Weymouth)
* “of our God, and [our] Saviour Jesus Christ” (Rotherham; margin)
* “of God and our Savior Jesus Christ” (Noah Webster Bible)
* “of our God, and of Jesus our Lord” (*The Better Version of the New Testament*)

Another thing that is noteworthy is that there are textual variants to 2 Peter 1:1 that may well represent the original reading. That would mean that the reading in the majority of the Greek texts is a later alteration to the text. There are Aramaic, Latin, Coptic, Sahidic, and Greek manuscripts (including Sinaiticus and 044) that have “Lord” instead of God, and read, “our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.” Translations from the Aramaic read: “our Lord and our Savior, Jesus Christ.”[[3]](#footnote-12805)

In conclusion, then, 2 Peter 1:1 can be translated in a non-Trinitarian way, like many well-respected English versions do. Also, there are a number of supporting reasons it should be translated in a non-Trinitarian way. Furthermore, it is possible that the original text did not mention God at all, but like the Latin, Aramaic, and Sahidic texts (and a few Greek texts), read “Lord and Savior.” As for the Granville Sharp rule, Greek grammarians such as Turner and Norton show that there is no evidence that there was an actual “rule” of grammar like the Granville Sharp rule, and in any case, there is no need for a second article if no confusion would arise without it. Because Scripture clearly shows a difference between Christ and God, and that difference would have been in the minds of the believers, the Granville Sharp “Rule” does not apply in verses such as Titus 2:13 and 2 Peter 1:1 (see also the commentary on Titus 2:13).

2Pe 1:2

**“through the knowledge of God.”** In Peter, we see this same idea in 2 Peter 2:20.

2Pe 1:3

**“By his divine power.”** The “his” here is God. God called us.

**“him who called us.”** The “him” is God, not Jesus. The Epistles show that God calls believers (1 Cor. 1:9).

2Pe 1:4

**“By these things.”** The “these things” is translated from the demonstrative pronoun and refers to all the things mentioned in 2 Peter 1:3.[[4]](#footnote-25603) So “these” include God’s power, knowledge of God, and his glory and excellence. The point that Peter seems to be making is that through all these things comes the “precious and exceedingly great promises.”

**“you become partakers of the divine nature.”** When the text says “you become partakers,” it is not speaking of a future reality, as if the person becomes a partaker when Christ comes back. The person becomes a partaker now, in this life. The Greek word translated “partakers” here in 2 Peter 1:4 is *koinōnos* (#2844 κοινωνός), and in this context, it means a partaker or someone who shares in something. Thayer says, “a partaker, sharer*,* in anything,” and gives 2 Pet. 1:4 as an example.[[5]](#footnote-21836) Friberg uses the word “participant,” as does the *TDNT*.[[6]](#footnote-32120) It makes sense that the Scripture would say the believer participates in, or shares in, God’s divine nature. After all, Christians are born-again children of God, and children by birth have the nature of the parent.

Many versions recognize that Peter is saying that the believer participates, or shares, in God’s very nature. For example, versions say that we: “come to share in God’s nature” (CJB); “share in the divine nature” (HCSB, NAB); “become partakers of the divine nature” (RV, ESV, NASB, NET, RSV).

The Christian New Birth is a literal event: the Christian is “born” of God, and gets God’s very nature born inside him (God uses three different Greek words for birth to describe this birth event: *anagennaō* (1 Pet. 1:23); *palingenesia* (Titus 3:5) and *apokueō* (James 1:18). Furthermore, the New Birth is an act of creation, which is part of the reason why 2 Corinthians 5:17 says the Christian is a new creation. God is holy, and God is spirit, and what is born in the Christian is God’s very nature: holy spirit. So, when a person confesses Christ as Lord and believes God raised him from the dead, at that very moment in time the person gets “born again” and gets God’s nature, holy spirit, with which they are sealed (Eph. 1:13-14).

The new, holy nature that is born inside the person changes the person from being “unholy” and dead in sin, to being “holy” and raised from the dead with Christ and, in God’s eyes, already seated in heaven with Christ (Eph. 2:5-6). It is because born-again Christians have a new holy nature that God calls them “holy ones,” which gets translated as “saints” in most versions of the Bible (cf. Rom. 1:7). We are not “holy ones” because we live such holy lives; we are “holy ones” because we have the holy nature of God born inside us. A holy God is our Father and we are his holy children.

Our new nature is permanent and cannot be changed. The “nature” of a person or animal comes to him from an outside source (most often the parent) and cannot be changed by the individual. When we are born into this life, we humans have the nature of our parents and cannot change that even if we want to.

Adam experienced the inability to change his nature. When Adam sinned, his sinless nature ended and he was changed to having a sin nature. No doubt Adam would have loved to have renounced his sin nature and changed back to his former holy nature, but the change was irreversible, and he was stuck with his new sin nature. He then passed down his sin nature to his descendants and no one—not Adam and not us—can simply “renounce” their nature.

Similarly, when we get born again we get a new, holy nature—God’s nature—that battles inside us with our sin nature (Gal. 5:17), and we cannot renounce that new nature either. No Christian can renounce God and go back to being unholy. God’s nature—holy spirit—makes us holy and we are sealed with holy spirit until the day of our redemption (Eph. 4:30). Our new holy nature is permanent. We got it when we got born again, and we cannot renounce it and become unholy.

[For more information on the New Birth, see commentary on 1 Pet. 1:3, “new birth.” For more on Christian salvation, see Appendix 10: “God’s Promise of Salvation.”]

**“the corruption that is in the world because of *evil* desires.”** As this verse says, evil desires lead to corruption. We think of politicians as being corrupt due to their evil desires for power, control, and money, and that is certainly the case. Other people become corrupt for various reasons, and just as the mind and morals can become corrupt, many sinful things can corrupt the body as well. For more on the word “corruption” see commentary on Galatians 6:8.

2Pe 1:5

**“Now for that very reason.”** Because you have escaped the corruption of the world and become partakers of the divine nature (meaning, you got saved and have everlasting life), now make a diligent effort to live a godly life so you get many rewards in the Kingdom of Christ. You will be provided with a rich welcome into the everlasting Kingdom of Christ (2 Pet. 1:11).

2Pe 1:9

**“blind.”** The man who does not continue in the Faith is “blind” to what Christ had done and the responsibilities it carries.

**“he is nearsighted.”** “Blind” and “nearsighted” are metaphors, not meant to be taken literally. But being severely nearsighted before the invention of eyeglasses was in many cases about the same as being blind. Also, the word “nearsighted” in this context points out that it is important to keep what Christ did for us in mind no matter how long we have been a Christian. The man who does not continue to live in the Faith is “nearsighted” in that his salvation is so far in the past he cannot “see” it anymore. It slips from his mind. Also, the person is nearsighted because they see only what is immediately in front of them: their own needs and desires. They do not see the Day of Judgment, which is in the future but which is certain nevertheless. The person who has godly vision sees their own day of judgment coming in the future and lives in a way that will bring the most blessing on that day.

2Pe 1:10

**“brothers and sisters.”** The Greek text is “brothers,” but that often includes men and women.

[For more on brothers and sisters, see Word Study: “Adelphos.” For more on women’s involvement in the early church, see Appendix 11: “The Role of Women in the Church.”]

**“being chosen.”** The Greek is *eklogē* (#1589 ἐκλογή), and is best translated “choice” rather than “election.” The term *election* comes with undesirable Calvinist connotation—the meaning here cannot be election in the Calvinist sense. If we were to take Calvin’s view, *how then could you do anything to make your election sure*? You could not. Supposedly, it is wholly in the hands of God whether you are part of the elect or not, so it does not make sense to speak of “making one’s election sure.”

**“you will never stumble.”** The Greek text uses a double negative for emphasis, “not never,” but a double negative in English makes a positive.

2Pe 1:11

**“everlasting kingdom.”** The translation “everlasting kingdom” comes from the adjective *aiōnios* (#166 αἰώνιος) coming between the definite article and the word “kingdom,” thus most naturally describing the age-long duration of the kingdom.

[For more on this distinction, see Appendix 1: “Life in the Age to Come.”]

2Pe 1:12

**“the truth that you now have.”** The Greek is more literally, “the present truth” which is a way of saying the truth that a person has at the time, perhaps by learning it in the recent past; it is not saying that truth in any way changes through time. For example, Paul wrote to the Colossians about the truth “that has come to you” (Col. 1:6), which is more literally, “that is present with you.” The Good News was a truth that the Colossians did not have at one time but had at the time Paul wrote to them.

2Pe 1:13

**“I am in this tent.”** Here Peter refers to his human body as a “tent,” emphasizing how temporary it is.

2Pe 1:14

**“laying aside of my tent.”** That is, Peter was saying that his death was coming soon. The NRSV ignores the idiom and just says “death.”

**“as our Lord Jesus Christ has made clear to me.”** This is one of the clear scriptures that shows that Jesus Christ does give revelation to people. The word “made clear” is the same word that is translated “indicating” in 1 Peter 1:11, concerning the prophets getting revelation about the future.

2Pe 1:16

**“cunningly devised myths.”** The Greek word translated “cunningly” is *sophizō* (#4679 σοφίζω), related to *sophos*, wisdom, and its meanings include “to make wise (or teach),” “to become wise (gain understanding),” and “to devise cleverly or cunningly.” BDAG has “to be skilled in formulating or creating something in an artful manner, frequently with the implication of self-serving cleverness, *reason out, concoct ingeniously/slyly* or *devise* craftily.”[[7]](#footnote-19133)

When it comes to inventing potential beliefs that draw people from the simple and wonderful truths given by God, there is always more than just innocent ignorance involved. There is usually demonic involvement at some level, as well as pride and arrogance, and there also is likely defiance and rebellion against God. In that light, “cunningly” is to be preferred over the translation “cleverly.” Belief systems that do not include salvation through the Lord Jesus Christ are not just “clever,” they are cunning, and they do not end in salvation and everlasting life, they end in death for those who follow them.

2Pe 1:17

**“came to him.”** The Greek text uses a divine passive, meaning, “was brought to him,” and this expression is used to avoid directly attributing the action to God, which was a common way of speaking about God. Other examples of divine passives can be seen in the New Testament (cf. Eph. 2:10; 3:16; Col. 1:16).

**“the Majestic Glory.”** A circumlocution for God. God is the Majestic Glory.

2Pe 1:19

**“reliable prophetic word.”** This refers to the Scripture, which is more reliable than the experience of the Transfiguration, which was a subjective experience, and only to three people, Peter, James, and John (Matt. 17:1).

**“the day dawns.”** This is a reference to the Parousia, the coming of Christ.

2Pe 1:20

**“Know this first.”** The word “first” here can mean “before anything else, before (in time),” or “above all else, the most important thing.” More to the point, however, is the fact that the phrase is idiomatic, and more or less equivalent to our English, “Listen up!” or “Pay attention!” Peter is getting ready to point out something that is very important, and it certainly is important to know that the Scripture had its origin in God, not human beings. Scholars who believe that the words in Scripture are “God-breathed” (2 Tim. 3:16) arrive at vastly different theological conclusions than those scholars who think that people sat down and composed the Scripture out of their own mind. Peter uses the same phrase later in 2 Peter 3:3.

**“prophecy of Scripture.”** The “prophecy” that Peter is referring to is the prophetic writings in the Old Testament. While Peter’s focus is upon the OT prophets here, his claim about the divine source of prophecy can be appropriately extended to the writings of the apostles in the New Testament as well.

**“*a matter* of one’s own interpretation.”** The Greek phrase ἰδίας ἐπιλύσεως (*idias epiluseōs*) simply means “of one’s own interpretation. There are two ways to understand how this expression is functioning in the verse: 1) it is a statement about the interpretation of prophecy, or 2) it is a statement about the origin or source of prophecy. These two meanings are based on whether one understands Peter’s intention to be one of combating critics or opponents who would assert either that OT prophecy can be interpreted in various different ways depending upon one’s perspective, or that OT prophecy is not truly divine prophecy and therefore is false and cannot be trusted.

According to the first option, Peter would be establishing that the interpretation of OT prophecy is not something which can be relegated to a person’s will or their own ideas. Prophecy cannot be taken into a person’s own hands and the interpretation formed according to whatever they choose it to be. In Peter’s mind, prophecy cannot be handled in this way because each person’s own interpretation is not valid; a person is not entitled to make up their own interpretation about prophecy.

According to the second option, Peter would be responding to those who would criticize OT prophecy by saying that the prophecy is not valid because the prophets misinterpreted the revelations they received from God. For Peter, revelation and interpretation go hand in hand. This is commensurate with the views in the ancient world where prophets were regarded as interpreters. Their utterances were viewed as interpretations of the divine will. But the OT prophets didn’t function in the same way that the pagan prophets did, trying to interpret the will of the gods through signs and omens.

In contrast to this, Peter is saying that the revelation of OT prophecy is not an interpretation that the prophet derived from their own assessment. Instead, the revelation and interpretation of prophecy were both from God, and therefore, the interpretation doesn’t come from the prophet himself. The interpretation has its origin in God.

Verse 21 provides the rationale for Peter’s statement in verse 20 about prophecy. The reason why no prophecy is of one’s own interpretation is because OT prophecy never came from a person’s will. Prophets didn’t speak because they willed for it to happen. Rather, prophets spoke from God as they were “moved” (i.e., inspired) through the power of God’s holy spirit.

Peter is explicit here to affirm that prophecy is a divine work alone and originates in God. No human ingenuity or volition is involved. And so, no interpretation ever came from a prophet independent from God. Because of this, the interpretation of prophecy is fixed and has its authority in the divine source. No one is permitted to claim they can reinterpret the prophet, for the prophet spoke from God and that eliminates the possibility for any personal interpretation of prophecy to be legitimate.

2Pe 1:21

**“moved by holy spirit.”** This refers to the holy spirit that is the gift of God.

[For more information on the uses of “holy spirit,” see Appendix 15: “Usages of ‘Spirit.’”]

**2 Peter Chapter 2**

2Pe 2:1

**“the People.”** The designation “the People” often refers to the nation of Israel, as it does here (see commentary on 1 Peter 2:10). Peter is warning his audience that if false prophets arose from among the Jews, “God’s chosen people,” then they could arise from among God’s new chosen people, the Christians. We cannot let our guard down or be naïve when it comes to our leaders—the Devil is crafty and getting a false prophet into the congregation is a great way to lead people astray.

**“destructive heresies.”** This could also be translated “ruinous heresies,” that is, heretical teachings that “ruin” or are destructive to the truth. God wants all people to come to a knowledge of the truth, and truth is precious and fragile. The pastor over a congregation needs to understand that while some difference of opinion and teaching is unavoidable, and some variation of basic beliefs is unavoidable, there are some beliefs and teachings that are destructive, and the pastor (“shepherd” in the Greek text) is to protect the sheep from such destructive teachings. Although some versions have the word “secretly,” there is no indication that false doctrines had entered the church “secretly,” but rather the people who believed those erroneous teachings simply came into the church and taught them (cf. Jude 1:4).[[8]](#footnote-15781)

**“Master.”** The Greek is *despotēs* (#1203 δεσπότης) means master or lord, and it refers to someone who has legal control and authority over others, such as subjects or slaves (cf. 1 Tim. 6:1; Titus 2:9). It is used both as a title for God (Luke 2:29; Acts 4:24), and a title for Jesus Christ (2 Pet. 2:1; Jude 1:4), and here is referring to Christ. See commentary on Luke 2:29.

2Pe 2:2

**“defamed.”** The Greek verb *blasphēmeō* (#987 βλασφημέω) means showing disrespect to a person or deity, and/or harming his, her, or its reputation.

[For more on *blasphēmeō*, see commentary on Matt. 9:3.]

2Pe 2:3

**“Their condemnation, *pronounced* long ago.”** The condemnation that is said to be pronounced long ago is describing God’s established judgment against false prophets and false teachers. God’s condemnation of these individuals has been made evident throughout history. The false prophets and teachers that Peter is describing are falling under that same condemnation. Therefore, Peter describes them as also being condemned from long ago.

2Pe 2:4

**“For if God did not spare.”** 2 Peter 2:4-11 is one sentence in the Greek text, taking 8 verses in the English Bible.

**“did not spare angels when they sinned.”** In this context, the angels that sinned, sinned in the time before the Flood. Sometime between Adam and Noah some of the Devil’s angels (who are called “sons of God” in Gen. 6:2), sinned and were imprisoned in Tartarus (cf. Gen. 6:1-4; 1 Pet. 3:20). It had been many years before that time, before Adam was created (the exact time is unknown), some angels joined the Devil and rebelled against God. They are known in the Bible as “his [Satan’s] angels” (Matt. 25:41; Rev. 12:7), and those fallen angels are also called “demons” in the New Testament.

In the days between Adam and the Flood, some of the Devil’s angels sinned when they “took wives” from the human women (Gen. 6:2). Demons cannot actually sexually reproduce with women, but rather they worked with the genetics of the women in a type of genetic manipulation and formed a race known as the Nephilim, which in Hebrew means, “Fallen Ones” (Gen. 6:4). This was the same basic kind of genetic manipulation that the Devil and demons had already done to many species of plants and animals on earth to change them from being God’s wonderful creation to being a reflection of the Devil’s nature; for example, the Devil altered many plants so they have thorns and thistles, and altered many animals so that they became dangerous (Gen. 3:18).

The tainted race of the Nephilim was wicked, and in time it polluted the world and the gene pool of mankind so badly that God had to save the genetic line to Christ by the Flood. After the Flood, the demons again tried to produce this wicked race (Gen. 6:4 “after that;” cf. Num. 13:33), but gradually they were killed off, many by the Israelites when they came into the Promised Land from Egypt. God put the angels that sinned into Tartarus to keep them from doing more harm.

[For more on the meaning of the phrase “sons of God,” see commentary on Gen. 6:2. For more information on the Nephilim, see commentary on Gen. 6:4. For supporting information on demons producing offspring via human women, see commentary on Jude 6 and Jude 7. For more information on the first outbreak of Nephilim occurring in the time before the Flood, see commentary on 1 Pet. 3:20. For more information on the Abyss, see commentary on Rev. 20:1. For more on Satan and his fallen angels, see commentary on Rev. 12:9.]

**“Tartarus.”** The Greek is *tartaroō* (#5020 ταρταρόω), which is translated “Tartarus” in English. Many English translations say “hell,” as if the Greek word were *hades* or *Gehenna*, which it is not. In any case, “hell” is not an accurate translation, and especially so when one considers what many Christians have been taught about “hell”—that it is a place where the human souls of unsaved people are tormented by the demons that rule there. That description of hell is not biblically accurate and not true. Some English translations read “pits of gloom,” “underworld,” or another description of Tartarus instead of “hell,” but especially since Tartarus was a place that was well-known in Greek mythology, those are not the best translations either; the best thing, in this case, is to use Tartarus and learn what it is.

*Hades* was the Greek word used to represent the Hebrew word *sheol*, which was the state of being dead. When the Hebrew Old Testament was translated into Greek around 250 BC, the Hebrew word *sheol* was translated by the Greek word *hades. Sheol* was not the physical grave itself, but the state of being dead. Thus dead people are said to be in *sheol* (cf. Gen. 37:35; 42:38; 1 Kings 2:6; Job 7:9; Ps. 6:5; 16:10; Prov. 7:27; etc.). It was actually a bad choice to translate the Hebrew word *sheol* as the Greek word *hades*, because in *sheol* people are dead, whereas, in Greek mythology, *hades* was a place where the disembodied souls of dead people are alive. Thus by translating *sheol* as *hades*, great confusion about the state of the dead—whether they are really dead or alive somewhere—was introduced into Judaism and then into Christianity, and that confusion still exists today. It would have been better if the Greeks had simply transliterated *sheol* into Greek and brought it into the language as a loanword. The Bible, properly translated, makes it clear that dead people are dead until the Rapture or a resurrection.

[For more on the dead being dead and not alive in any form, see Appendix 3: “The Dead are Dead.” For more on the spirits who are now in prison, in Tartarus, see commentary on 1 Pet. 3:19 and Jude 1:6.][[9]](#footnote-28271)

Demons have never been in *sheol* (*hades*) and are not there now. In the Bible, *sheol* (*hades*) refers to the state of being dead, and demons have never been dead. In contrast to *sheo*l (*hades*), *Gehenna* is the Lake of Fire, where in the future unsaved people will be thrown and burned up (Rev. 20:15). The Devil and his demons will also be thrown into *Gehenna* and eventually destroyed there (Matt. 25:41; Rev. 20:10), but they are not there now. No one is in *Gehenna* at this time because no Day of Judgment has occurred yet.

In contrast to *sheol* (*hades*), the state of being dead, and to *Gehenna*, the Lake of Fire that will destroy the enemies of God, Tartarus is a prison where gods (demons) who have sinned are kept, as this verse says, “to be held for judgment.” Interestingly, 1 Peter 3:19 says God put the demons in “prison,” using the standard word for prison, *phulakē* (#5438 φυλακή). It makes sense that God has a prison for the demons who committed specific sins. In Greek mythology, Tartarus was the deepest region of the world, placed beneath the Underworld itself. According to Greek mythology, the powerful gods locked away their enemy gods in Tartarus. Thus there is a kernel of truth in these legends, as there is in most legends, because by the time the legends were formed, God had indeed locked away some demons in Tartarus so they could not sin anymore. God was holding those demons there until their Day of Judgment came. Gradually Tartarus became identified in Greek legend as a place where serious criminals were tortured, but there is no reason to believe God tortures the demons in prison.[[10]](#footnote-27563)

**“chains.”** The Greek texts are divided, with some reading *seira* (#4577 σειρά), a chain or rope, and others having *sirois*, (σιροις**;** no occurrence in the NT), which is a pit, specifically for storing grain. Scholars favor *seira*, a chain, because it has the oldest and widest breadth of textual witnesses; nevertheless, a number of modern versions read something such as “pits of darkness.” We have no knowledge of what kind of “chain” (or for that matter, what kind of prison) would hold a demon. The spiritual world is completely different from our physical world, but nevertheless, there are spiritual realities that are as completely real to spirit beings as our physical realities are real to us. The Bible mentions many things that exist in the spirit world. They dress in clothing, have weapons (swords), worship at a Temple, sit on thrones, and much more.

2Pe 2:5

**“along with seven others.”** The Greek is very idiomatic and is more literally, “the eighth,” implying there were seven others.

2Pe 2:6

**“which made.”** The Greek is a perfect participle that seems to be indicating a result (“with the result that they were made”). This can be simplified to a relative clause (“which made them”) for a more concise and smooth reading.

2Pe 2:7

**“worn down.”** The constant exposure to sin wore down Lot’s resolve. This may be one reason he was so quick to offer his daughters to the men of Sodom (Gen. 19:7-8).

2Pe 2:8

**“kept tormenting *his* righteous soul.”** The Greek verb *basanizō* (#928 βασανίζω) is in the active voice, imperfect tense. Lot kept tormenting himself by his decision to live in Sodom. Some versions try to get Lot “off the hook” by translating the verb as a passive, saying something like, “Lot’s soul was tormented,” but that is clearly not the force of the text, nor is it historically accurate. Lot, when given the choice by Abraham, chose to live in Sodom. If he did not know what it was like before he moved there (he probably did), he certainly would have found out very quickly and could have moved elsewhere, even back near his Uncle Abraham. Instead, like so many people, he acted to his own hurt, and thus tortured himself. People would spare themselves a lot of hurt and pain if they would not make poor decisions that end up only hurting them (see commentary on Gen. 13:11).

**“*his* righteous soul.”** The Greek has no article and no pronoun, and thus would read, “a righteous soul.” Of course, the context makes it clear that the righteous soul is his own. The understatement makes the reality hit home harder.

2Pe 2:9

**“godly.”** See commentary on Acts 10:2, “godly man.”

**“to keep the unrighteous *accountable*.”** The translation of the Greek, and its meaning, are difficult and debated. The Greek present participle (“punishment”) usually connotes present action, but it can sometimes refer to an event in the future, and it likely does here. Thomas Schreiner writes, “Though this interpretation [that the unrighteous are suffering now] is possible, present participles did not necessarily denote present time (cf. 2 Pet. 3:11). Context is the decisive criterion. I think it is quite unlikely that Peter depicted the present judgment of the wicked. The false teachers in the letter gave every appearance of current property...Hence, it seems more likely that Peter reminded his readers of the final judgment, the day when the opponents will experience condemnation”[[11]](#footnote-21492) Some English versions translate the participle as a future. For example, the NIV(2011) translates the last phrase, “and to hold the unrighteous for punishment on the day of judgment.” Similarly, the NET reads, “and to reserve the unrighteous for punishment at the day of judgment,” and the NJB reads, “and hold the wicked for their punishment until the day of judgment.”

There are many commentators who take the Greek present participle as meaning that the wicked are currently suffering now while awaiting the Day of Judgment. However, a survey of those commentators shows that almost universally they believe in an “immortal soul” that lives on after a person dies. It is the teaching of orthodox Christianity that each person has an “immortal soul” that lives on after a person dies, and so that soul must go someplace the moment the physical body is dead. Thus the orthodox teaching is that a person goes immediately to heaven or “hell” when they die, and so the ungodly are currently suffering in “hell” (or wherever the rich man is suffering in Jesus’ parable of the rich man and Lazarus in Luke 16:19-31). So, for people who accept the belief in an immortal soul, it makes sense that the wicked dead are suffering now. For example, Lenski writes that God “holds them [the unrighteous] in hell now for the day of judgment at his Parousia.”[[12]](#footnote-29989)

However, the belief in an immortal soul that is suffering now contradicts Scripture and also 2 Peter 2:9. Most to the point, there is no occurrence of “immortal soul” in the Bible; that is a tradition. The human soul can be destroyed (Matt. 10:28). Also, the belief in an immortal soul that is suffering now does not make sense in light of 2 Peter 2:9, which would then be saying that a wicked person is suffering in hell now, before the Day of Judgment. But how can a person be in heaven or hell before they are judged? How can someone suffer in hell before the Day of Judgment? Scriptures such as Daniel 12:2 and Revelation 20:11-15 show the truth of the matter; that dead people are dead in every way until the resurrection, at which time they are brought to life for the Day of Judgment, and then granted everlasting life or thrown into the Lake of Fire. No human is rewarded or punished before they are judged.

[For more on the dead being actually dead, see Appendix 3: “The Dead are Dead.” For more on there not being an “immortal soul,” see Appendix 16: “Usages of ‘Soul.’” For more on people not being tormented in “hell” forever, see Appendix 4: “Annihilation in the Lake of Fire.”]

2Pe 2:10

**“desires that lead to defilement.”** This seems to be a genitive of production. The desire that eventually leads to defilement; results in defilement. While it could be taken as an attributing genitive, (“defiling desire”) but this seems less likely because the “desire” does not defile, but it leads to the person acting on the desire and becoming defiled.

**“authority.”** The Greek is literally, “lordship,” that is, the authority of the lord.

**“slandering.”** The Greek verb *blasphēmeō* (#987 βλασφημέω) means showing disrespect to a person or deity, and/or harming his, her, or its reputation.

[For more on *blasphēmeō*, see commentary on Matt. 9:3.]

**“the glorious ones.”** The Greek word *doxa* is in the plural and refers to glorious beings. Peter does not specify whether this reference is to God, Christ, or angelic (or “spirit”) beings. Some commentators have proposed that the “glories” refer to the glories of Christ.[[13]](#footnote-30559) While Peter is speaking of glorious beings, it should also be mentioned that people who defame God, Christ, and spirit beings also defame God’s glorious creation. Even the assertion that God’s wonderful creation of people, animals, and the interworking systems of the universe occurred by random chance is a defaming and minimizing the great things that God has done and the wondrous glories of His creation.

2Pe 2:12

**“slander.”** The Greek verb *blasphēmeō* (#987 βλασφημέω) means showing disrespect to a person or deity, and/or harming his, her, or its reputation.

[For more on *blasphēmeō*, see commentary on Matt. 9:3.]

**“in their destructive ways they also will be destroyed.”** This phrase is very difficult and scholars have suggested at least five different meanings for what it is saying.[[14]](#footnote-11111) All agree that the text is saying the final end of these defamers is destruction. The two most logical possible meanings are that this is similar to Jude 1:10, that it is by their destructive behavior they are destroyed because of the judgment their behavior brings upon themselves. Evil may seem to pay off in the short term, but eventually, it results in terrible consequences. Many verses say that the evil deeds of evil people will eventually come upon their own heads (cf. 1 Kings 8:32; Ps. 7:15-16; 9:15; 10:2; 35:8; 57:6; 94:23; 140:9; 141:10; Prov. 1:31; 5:22; 11:5; 14:14; 26:27; 28:10; Jer. 2:19; Ezek. 11:21).

Another likely meaning is that Peter is using a Hebraism that was common in Semitic thought and thus to him, the word destruction is repeated for emphasis, and simply refers to being destroyed (cf. the Septuagint of Isa. 24:3, “it will be destroyed with destruction”).

The meaning of this phrase is that when unsaved people are thrown into Gehenna, they will be totally and finally destroyed. The “destruction” of the ungodly is not temporary. It is complete and final. This section of Peter is speaking of ungodly people who infiltrated the Church but were never saved (see commentary on 2 Pet. 2:20).

2Pe 2:14

**“eyes full of adultery.** The literal Greek text is “eyes full of an adulteress.” The noun is concrete, “an adulteress.” This might have hit home more powerfully in the first century than it does now (the literal seems strange today), because a contemporary saying was that a shameless man had harlots, not “pupils” in his eyes (the Greek word *kora* (κωρα) was a homonym meaning “young girl” or “pupil of the eye.”[[15]](#footnote-21940) This verse speaks very powerfully to images that get implanted in the brain and are hard to remove. Men are visually stimulated, and pornography and other images of women stay in their mind and can be extremely hard to get rid of. A man who has been involved in sexual sin can literally have his mental eye full of an adulteress. The best way not to have to deal with that problem is not to get involved in the first place.

**“souls.”** The Greek word translated “soul” is *psuchē* (#5590 ψυχή, pronounced psoo-'kay), and it has a large number of meanings, including the physical life of a person or animal; an individual person; or attitudes, emotions, feelings, and thoughts. Here it is used more broadly of the individual himself with an emphasis on his thoughts and emotions, and thus is similar to the use in Romans 2:9.

[For a more complete explanation of “soul,” see Appendix 16: “Usages of ‘Soul.’”]

**“Cursed children.”** The Greek is a double noun; literally, “children of a curse,” which is an idiomatic way of describing a person who is under a curse. Technically, the English word “accursed,” which is in some modern versions, is a noun and means “under a curse.” In contrast, the word “curse” is often a verb, as in “I curse you!” But “curse” can also be a noun: “He spoke a curse.” In modern English, “cursed” often has the same meaning as “accursed.”

2Pe 2:15

**“right way.”** The more literal is “straight road.”

2Pe 2:17

**“mists driven *away* by a windstorm.”** To understand the impact of this verse we must understand the Mediterranean climate of Israel and the Middle East. There is a rainy season and a dry (very dry!) season. The “former rains” (the early rains) usually come in October and soften the ground for planting, and then there is a wet season that lasts until April, when the “latter rains” fall and give the crops the final watering they need to produce abundantly. During that wet season, the soil is soft and people plant and grow crops. Sometime in April the rains usually stop, and from late April until mid to late October there is almost no rain at all (sometimes no rain at all).

During that dry season the only constant moisture the plants get is from the dew, the night mists, and that dew is essential for the health of the foliage in Israel. This explains why Isaac blessed Jacob by saying, “God give you the dew of heaven” (Gen. 27:28), and why Moses blessed Joseph by saying, “His land is blessed by Yahweh, by the choice things of heaven, by the dew” (Deut. 33:13). It explains why Elijah cursed Israel by saying, “there will not be dew or rain these years except by my word” (1 Kings 17:1), and it explains why brothers living in harmony with each other is “like the dew of *Mount* Hermon coming down upon the mountains of Zion” (Ps. 133:3). The dew was vital to the health and well-being of Israel.

In contrast to the life-giving dew, ungodly people are unproductive and hurtful. Worse, they promise good things but deliver bad things or nothing at all. Ungodly people are like springs that promise water and life, but produce only dry, dusty ground. They are like mists that promise the life-giving dew, but then somehow move away before they can actually contribute anything good. Thus, false teachers promise a lot but deliver little. They are alienated from God, the source of life, and the gloom of darkness has been reserved for them.

2Pe 2:18

**“those who have just escaped from people who live in error.”** The new converts are the special victims of the false teachers who entice people by the flesh. The new converts are just in the process of fleeing away from the world and escaping its grasp. There is a textual variant that results in the rendering, “actually escaped” (or “indeed escaped,” etc.) and some English versions have that (cf. NKJV), but the better support seems to be that the converts had “recently” or “just” escaped the world.

2Pe 2:19

**“slaves of corruption.”** The false prophets and teachers were indeed slaves of corruption, but the same phrase can be “servants of corruption,” and they were that as well. There is a huge irony behind the Devil’s strategy, that he promises “freedom” but it results in slavery. For example, being “sexually free” usually results in a person being a slave to their passion.

2Pe 2:20

**“For if.”** The opening word, “for” and the plural participle connect the “they” in this verse with the false believers Peter was discussing (“after they have fled” is a participle that is more literally rendered: “having fled,” but it is understood as a past event, thus the REV translation). Some commentators, perhaps seeing that the ungodly people in Jude and 2 Peter were never saved to begin with, say that this verse shifts from those ungodly people to the newly saved Christians in 2 Peter 2:18, but there is no real reason to make that jump and it is widely rejected.

**“after they.”** 2 Peter 2:20-22 has been a doctrinal battleground between those people who believe a person can lose their salvation by turning from God, and those who believe that once a person is saved, that person’s salvation is secure. The scope of that argument, including commentary on all the other verses that play a part in the final decision, is too large to handle here, and in this entry, we will only explain why 2 Peter 2:20-22 does not show that a person who has been born again can lose his salvation.

The people referred to in 2 Peter 2:20-22 were never saved in the first place. They infiltrated the Church, and indeed became influential members of it, but never actually made a heart commitment to Jesus Christ as Lord and thus never became saved. This still goes on in many churches and even seminaries today. This fact is much easier to see when 2 Peter 2 is read in light of the book of Jude, which covers much of the same material. Simon Kistemaker summarizes the relation between Jude and 2 Peter 2: “A quick glance at the second chapter of II Peter and the Epistle of Jude proves to any reader the parallelism of these writings. Jude’s letter totals 25 verses; 19 of these are paralleled in II Peter. This parallelism includes not only words and phrases; also the order of the presentation is virtually the same.”[[16]](#footnote-10220)

Furthermore, Kistemaker examines the three major positions on the dating of 2 Peter: that it was written after Jude, before Jude, or that both it and Jude were written independently and borrowed ideas from a common source. He and many other scholars conclude that Jude was written before 2 Peter. The introduction to 2 Peter in the NIV Study Bible (2011) agrees, and says, “While many have insisted that Jude used Peter, it is more reasonable to assume that the longer letter (Peter) incorporated much of the shorter (Jude).”

Thus, the readers of 2 Peter were almost certainly aware of what Jude had written, and were knowledgeable of the subject matter of Jude. This becomes important when trying to understand 2 Peter because some of the concepts in 2 Peter are more fully fleshed out and more easily understood when read in light of Jude. For example, 2 Peter 2:4 mentions the angels that sinned and were thrown into Tartarus, but that is understood more clearly when it is read in light of Jude 1:6, which gives a little more detail about how those angels sinned.

Both Jude and Peter are speaking about unsaved people who have infiltrated the Church. They are not speaking of believers who were part of the congregation and then left the congregation and turned away from the Lord. The ungodly people in question are still part of the congregation. 2 Peter 2:13 says “they feast with you,” and 2 Peter 2:18 says that they, by their unrestrained behavior are enticing those “who are just fleeing away from those who live in error,” that is the members of the congregation who are trying to escape the things of the world.

That these ungodly people infiltrated the Church is especially clear in Jude 1:4, which says that these people “crept in unnoticed,” were “ungodly,” and denied Christ. These people did not come into the Church as newly converted and excited believers who loved the Lord more than the world but then changed and returned to ungodly behavior. When they came into the church they were not saved, but “crept” in (“come in by stealth” (HCSB); “wormed their way in” (CJB); “secretly slipped in” (NET) and have “come in unobserved” (YLT)). 2 Peter 2:1 does not speak about how these deceivers got into the Church, but notes that they will continue to be among the Church and bring in heresies. Both Jude and Peter say these people deny Christ. Jude writes that they “are denying our only Master and Lord, Jesus Christ” (Jude 1:4), while Peter writes they were “denying even the Master who bought them” (2 Pet. 2:1).

There is no evidence these false teachers had been saved and turned away from Jesus Christ until the disputed verses of 2 Peter 2:20-22. When both Jude and 2 Peter 2 are read from the start, it becomes clear that the evil people who infiltrated the Church had been evil from the very beginning. The idea that they were actually born-again Christians is not even in Jude, and only comes from 2 Peter 2:20-22 and then is read back into the whole book of 2 Peter. But the end of 2 Peter never says those people were saved and then apostatized; that is an assumption. When we take the time to closely examine the exact vocabulary in 2 Peter 2:20-22, we can see that it is a false assumption; but unfortunately, the way that this section has been understood has influenced people’s thinking about the whole chapter.

Jude and 2 Peter 2 continue to parallel each other: Jude 1:4 says these false teachers pervert grace into immoral indulgence, while 2 Peter 2:2 says they have unrestrained ways. Jude says they will be destroyed (Jude 1:5), while Peter says “their destruction is not asleep” (2 Pet. 2:3). Jude says these people “defile the flesh,” while Peter says they “walk after the flesh in its passion for defilement.” Jude says they “reject lordships,” while Peter says they “show contempt for lordship.” Jude says they “defame the glories,” while Peter says they “do not tremble at defaming the glories” (Jude 1:8 and 2 Pet. 2:10). Jude says these people “defame whatever things they do not understand” (Jude 1:10), while Peter says they engage in “defaming things of which they are ignorant” (2 Pet. 2:12). By all this evil, Jude says they destroy themselves (Jude 1:10), while Peter says “in their destruction they will be destroyed” (2 Pet. 2:12; cf. 2 Pet. 2:1).

Jude says these people engage in “immoral indulgence” and “defile the flesh” (Jude 1:4, 8), while Peter says they have “eyes full of an adulteress” (2 Pet. 2:14). Jude says that they act “for the sake of profit” (Jude 1:11), while Peter says they have “a heart trained in greed” (2 Pet. 2:14). Jude says these deceivers are “flattering people for their own advantage” (Jude 1:16), while Peter says they are “enticing unstable souls” (2 Pet. 2:14), and then further elaborates: “they entice, by the lusts of the flesh, by unrestrained behavior, those who are just escaping from those who live in error” (2 Pet. 2:18). In other words, they used sex and other passions to entice and entrap new believers who were just coming out of the Greco-Roman world, which was full of violence, vice, and valuables, but was in violation of God’s ways. Jude calls these ungodly people “clouds without water…wild waves of the sea” (Jude 1:12-13), while Peter says they are “springs without water…mists driven by a storm” (2 Pet. 2:17). With the many extremely close descriptions of these people in Jude and Peter, they can be seen to be the same people; perhaps not exactly the same individuals, but the same kind of people (and those kind of people are still in the Church today, which is one reason Jude and 2 Peter 2 are so relevant to us).

Additionally, Jude says they walked in the “way of Cain” and after the “error of Balaam” (Jude 1:11), while Peter says they forsook the “right way” and followed “the way of Balaam” (2 Pet. 2:15). Balaam was the false prophet to whom the king of Moab offered a lot of money to curse Israel (Num. 22-24). We should pay close attention to God’s choice of Cain and Balaam as the examples in these letters because although both of them sinned mightily against God later in life, neither one of them had ever made a heart commitment to Him in the first place. It seems that if God had wanted to warn people about being saved and then falling away that He would have picked people like King Saul or Solomon. Those men, especially Solomon, started out with a close and obedient relationship with God but then turned away from Him. Frankly, if God was trying to warn us that we can make a commitment to Him and then turn away and lose our salvation, He picked two very bad examples, because Cain and Balaam show the opposite: people who have had a very profound personal experience with God but still never make the commitment to follow Him. Cain and Balaam are very good examples of the deceivers in Jude and 2 Peter 2. They knew God but never got saved.

Jude graphically portrays the deceivers as “hidden reefs at your love feasts,” while Peter more literally says that they are “reveling in their deceptions, while they feast with you” (Jude 1:12; 2 Pet. 2:13). So just as a hidden reef will destroy a ship and endanger those onboard, these unsaved deceivers had infiltrated the Church and were taking part in the “love feasts,” and their deception would destroy the congregation, shipwrecking some people’s faith (cf. 1 Tim. 1:19. “Love feasts” was a term that first-century believers used for their communal meals that included recognizing the Lord’s broken body and shed blood, cf. 1 Cor. 11:17-34).

Jude concludes his critique of these unsaved imposters with a decisive phrase about the spiritual state of these people: “not having the spirit” (Jude 1:19). These people do not have holy spirit and they are not saved. Since there is no verse, nor any verified personal experience showing that a born-again individual can sin or turn away from God to such an extent that God removes the gift of holy spirit from them, we can conclude the deceivers in Jude and 2 Peter were never saved in the first place.

The gift of holy spirit, as a gift from God and part of the person’s very nature (2 Pet. 1:4), is irrevocable (Rom. 11:29), and if a person could lose it he could no longer operate any of the manifestations of holy spirit, such as speaking in tongues. The gift of holy spirit that we have today is the same as the holy spirit of the New Covenant that God promised to give to Israel in the Millennial Kingdom (which is why the holy spirit Christians have is called, “the promised holy spirit;” Eph. 1:13). Also, the prophecies of New Covenant holy spirit say that it is permanent (Isa. 59:21; Ezek. 11:19-20; 37:12-14). We can therefore conclude that the holy spirit believers have today is also permanent, making the fact that the deceivers in Jude and 2 Peter 2 do not have the spirit a clear piece of evidence they had never been saved. Then Jude concludes his Epistle with six verses to build up and encourage the believers.

Peter, like Jude, also concludes his exposure of these unsaved people with harsh words, saying that it would have been better for them if they had not come to know the way of righteousness than to know it and turn away. He then turns his attention away from these evil imposters and takes 18 verses (2 Pet. 3) to encourage the believers that the Day of the Lord will come, no matter what some people say, and to be diligent to be blameless in God’s sight.

What we can conclude from reading Jude and 2 Peter is that both Epistles are speaking of the same deceitful, false believers. It is clearer in Jude than it is in Peter that these people were unsaved when they infiltrated the Church, but using Jude to help us interpret Peter, as well as based on the evidence in Peter, we can see that they were unsaved—they were denying Christ, they did not have holy spirit, and they are awaiting destruction.

[For more information that once a person is born again his salvation is guaranteed, see Appendix 10: “God’s Promise of Salvation.” For more on the New Covenant holy spirit that God promised to Israel being given to the Church, see commentary on John 7:39 and commentary on Eph. 1:13.]

**“after they have escaped.”** The word “escaped” is from the Greek word *apopheugō* (#668 ἀποφεύγω), which has the meanings “to flee from,” and “to escape.”

It is important to note that given the context in Peter and Jude of the false teachers who deny Jesus Christ and don’t have holy spirit, it would be overstating the case to think that these people had completely escaped the shameful deeds (or defilement) of the world as if they left worldly things behind entirely; everyone is tainted by those things to some extent, and these people almost certainly more so. Certainly, they did “escape” to some extent, but not entirely, as we clearly see from Jude and Peter. It is true that at some point they fled some of the shameful deeds of the world, but given the sinful nature of the Roman empire, in which a national sport was murder in the gladiator arena, open sexual sin was promoted, and idolatry was demanded, we can see why escaping from that lifestyle could be to one’s advantage. In fact, many people did flee from it and ran to different things, including the cultic mystery religions, as well as Judaism and Christianity.

**“from the defilements of the world.”** The word “defilement” is from the Greek word *miasma* (#3393 μίασμα), which literally refers to defilement connected with a crime and was also used of being stained or defiled by evil, but the word can also “focus on the crime itself; shameful deed, misdeed, crime.”[[17]](#footnote-17089) It is safe to say that these people fled both the shameful deeds and the defilements that those deeds caused.

At one point these false teachers fled the horrors of the Roman world and were attracted to Christianity, which was generally a loving and welcoming community. They fled the “shameful deeds” that defiled them in the Roman empire, but although they attached themselves to the Christian congregation they still never gave their hearts to Jesus Christ, and instead over time their old nature got the better of them and they descended back into old sinful patterns, this time in the context of the Church.

Actually, Peter uses the phrase, “after they have fled from the shameful deeds of the world” very accurately because it describes exactly what they did. However, they stopped short of getting saved. Peter had many words in his vocabulary to clearly express that these people were saved if they were in fact saved. He could have used “saved” (1 Pet. 1:9; 4:18), “born again” (1 Pet. 1:23), “new birth” (1 Pet. 1:3), “redeemed” (1 Pet. 1:18), or even a whole phrase that described the state of being saved (cf. 1 Pet. 1:13). However, Peter uses none of the words in the New Testament that clearly indicate salvation. Instead, he describes exactly what these deceiving sinners did: they learned enough about the teachings of the Lord Jesus, including seeing the love and acceptance in the Christian community, that they fled the sin of the Roman empire and came into the Church. But they never got “saved,” “born again,” or “redeemed”—they never made a saving commitment to the Lord—and they ended up being sucked back into some of their old ways.

**“through the knowledge of the Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.”** These false teachers were able to flee from the evil deeds and defilements of the Roman world through their knowledge of the Lord Jesus Christ. Like many Jews and pagans, they heard the teachings of the Lord and changed from some of their former ways, at least for a while. Many people do that. Many sinners begin to come to church and hear the teachings of Jesus and improve their lives and even gain some status in the church, yet never give their hearts to Jesus and become saved. Amazingly, there are also quite a few “biblical scholars” who gain an extensive knowledge of the words of Jesus, even reading them in the original languages, but never make the heart decision to take Jesus as Lord. Knowledge never equals commitment.

Many people get saved knowing almost nothing about Jesus, while other people learn a huge amount about the teachings of Jesus, and even improve their lives based on what Jesus said, but never make the decision to make Jesus their Lord. That was the situation with these false Christians in Jude and Peter. In fact, Peter uses the Greek word *epignōsis* (#1922 ἐπίγνωσις) for “knowledge,” which often refers to knowledge that is more full or complete, and thus shows that, like Cain and Balaam who both had intimate experiences with God but never made a heart commitment to Him, these people got to know the things of God quite well but never made a commitment to be saved. This resulted in it being better for them to never have “known” (*epiginōskō* #1921 ἐπιγινώσκω; the verb form of *epignōsis*) the way of the Lord than to have known it as well as they did and yet reject God. Thus, these people are like the people described in Romans 1 who have a reprobate mind. They “know” (*epiginōskō*) God’s righteous decrees, but ignore them and instead continue doing—and support others who also are doing—things that are worthy of death (Rom. 1:32).

Eventually, if a person does not get saved, the old nature begins to influence them and most of those people are pulled back into sin and become entangled in it. Church pastors see these behaviors all the time. Sadly, some of these people, like the deceivers in Jude and Peter, disguise their sin and stay in the congregation, some doing considerable damage to it.

**“the last state has become worse for them than the first.”** This phrase is used by some people to show that it is possible for a person to lose his salvation, while other people use it as proof that the deceivers that Peter is referring to were never saved in the first place. One thing is certain: this phrase cannot be referring to a saved person losing future rewards in the Kingdom. There is no way a saved person could ever sin so badly that any lack of rewards or punishments in the Kingdom would be worse than not getting saved and having everlasting life. It is clear that the only way a person could be worse off after hearing and rejecting Jesus is if he can lose his salvation or if he was never saved.

The orthodox Church does not really have a theology that shows how a person who hears about Christ and turns away is worse off than someone who never hears and is unsaved. Orthodox theology says all the unsaved go to “hell” and burn forever, so how could anyone be worse off after hearing about Jesus? After all, burning in hell forever is burning in hell forever, whether you have heard of Jesus or not.

But what the orthodox Church has failed to realize is that the unsaved do not burn forever, but instead are annihilated in the Lake of Fire after a time of suffering that is commensurate with the sin they have committed. Just as there are different rewards for Christians based upon what they have done in this life, the unsaved suffer in the Lake of Fire for different amounts of time based upon the sin they have committed in this life. To hear about Jesus Christ and how he gave his life to save mankind, indeed, to be part of the Christian congregation and to be taught about Christ and treated with love, and further, to even be a teacher in the congregation, but then to spurn Christ and not confess him as Lord, is a terrible sin that will be severely punished.

Christian teachers who treat the Bible lightly and teach error will be strictly judged (James 3:1), so imagine how severe the punishment will be for one who infiltrates the Christian congregation while denying Christ (mostly secretly, of course), and then teaches error to the congregation. They will be much worse off on the Day of Judgment than people who never had a good opportunity to hear the teaching of Christ and to see the love of Christ among the Christian congregation.

[For more about annihilation in the Lake of Fire, see Appendix 4: “Annihilation in the Lake of Fire.” For more about a person’s suffering before being annihilated being related to the sin they have committed while alive on earth, see commentary on Rom. 2:5.]

2Pe 2:21

**“to turn back from.”** That is, to return to their ungodly lifestyle.

2Pe 2:22

**“the dog returns to his own vomit.”** This is similar to Proverbs 26:11.

**“sow.”** A “sow” is a female pig (the “o” in “sow” is pronounced like the “ou” in “ouch,” not like the “o” in “so”).

**2 Peter Chapter 3**

2Pe 3:3

**“Know this first.”** This is idiomatic and has the force of “Pay attention to this.” See commentary on 2 Peter 1:20.

2Pe 3:4

**“the Fathers.”** Many theologians believe that this refers to the early Christians, such as the apostles. Most people who assert that also believe that 2 Peter was not written by Peter, but by someone who just used the name “Peter,” and saying that the “fathers” referred to the early Christian fathers and apostles allows for a very late date for 2 Peter, which many theologians, especially liberal theologians, favor. However, as Simon Kistemaker points out, “In the New Testament, the expression *our fathers* signifies the Old Testament fathers (compare John 6:31; Acts 3:13; Rom. 9:5). Because this was a standard expression, we are not amiss in asserting that Peter appears to conform to the usage that was current in his day.”[[18]](#footnote-23322) Lucas and Green write, “But ‘the fathers’ is a standard New Testament way of referring to the Old Testament believers. As Hebrews 1:1-2 says, using the same Greek word, ‘In the past God spoke to our forefathers’ ….In other words, these people are saying that Jesus Christ has changed nothing; things are just the same as in Old Testament days when *our fathers died*.”[[19]](#footnote-27833) *The Expositor’s Bible Commentary* also notes that “fathers” referring to the Old Testament fathers, is normal biblical usage.[[20]](#footnote-18453)

**“asleep.”** The Greek verb is *koimaō* (#2837 κοιμάω), to fall asleep, to be asleep. Sleep is used as a euphemism and metaphor for death. See Appendix 3: “The Dead are Dead.”

2Pe 3:6

**“by means of these.”** While the NA28 text reads δι’ ὃν (*di hon,* “on account of which [things]”), the external textual evidence strongly favors the reading δι’ ὧν (*di hōn*, “through which [things]”). This is the reading adopted by the Tyndale Greek New Testament and the reading that informs the translation of most modern English versions.

2Pe 3:7

**“are reserved for fire.”** The earth was destroyed by water at Noah’s flood. In the future, the earth will be destroyed by fire so God can have a new heavens and a new earth (cf. 2 Pet. 3:10).

**“until the Day of Judgment and destruction of ungodly people.”** The present heavens and earth exist until the second and last resurrection, the resurrection of the unrighteous. In the second resurrection, all the unrighteous (unsaved) people of all time will be raised from the dead and judged (Rev. 20:11-15). The Final Judgment does not occur on earth and is associated with the destruction of the current heavens and earth and the establishment of the new heavens and earth (Rev. 21:1; see commentary on Rev. 20:11).

2Pe 3:10

**“will be exposed.”** The last word in the Greek text of the verse presents what many scholars say is one of the most difficult textual problems in the New Testament due to the fact that the best manuscript evidence reads in a way that is difficult to explain, the fact that the other readings seem plausible, and there does not seem to be any clear way to trace the development of the various readings.[[21]](#footnote-22246) There are a number of variant readings, and even some suggestions made by scholars that are not in any ancient Greek text. Although there are many variations, the two major ones are represented by the reading in the NASB, “will be burned up,” and in the ESV, “will be exposed.” Both readings are clearly within the scope of Scripture; in the Day of the Lord the world we know now will be destroyed (Isa. 24:1-23), and in the Day of the Lord things that have happened on earth will be exposed (2 Cor. 5:10).

The Greek text with the strongest manuscript support reads, “will be found” (Gk. *heurethēsetai*). The word is a future passive verb and is referred to as a “divine passive,” meaning that the works will be found out by God, thus “exposed.” Once the heavens pass away and the elements are destroyed, what remains are the actions and deeds of humankind that God has been watching since the beginning of the creation of humankind. In the Day of the Lord, the “works” of humankind will be exposed and will be subject to God’s judgment.

2Pe 3:12

**“earnestly desire.”** The Greek word is *speudō* (#4692 σπεύδω) and it can mean to hasten or to eagerly expect. Many translations say something such as the NIV, “and speed its coming,” or have a similar phrase that indicates that we humans can do something to speed the coming of the Day of God. Although many theologians support this translation, and think we can do something to make the Day of God come faster, verses that are given in support of that belief (such as Matt. 6:10; 1 Pet. 2:12 and comparing those with verses such as Matt. 13:58 where unbelief hinders the work of God) do not in fact support that conclusion, but only indicate the Kingdom is coming sometime in the future. There is not, in fact, a single verse of Scripture that clearly says we can modify the timing of the Day of the Lord by our behavior. In fact, the Bible is clear that before the Day of the Lord, the situation in the world will get worse and worse, and many people will even turn from the faith (Matt. 24:14; 2 Thess. 2:3; 1 Tim. 4:1; 2 Tim. 3:1, 13; 2 Pet. 3:3; Jude 18). Lenski writes: “We question whether the holy conduct of Christians can hasten the day of judgment, whether this is the teaching of the Bible. The decline of faith and the coldness of love would have more of a tendency to hurry that day along. The verb [*speudō*] is widely used in the sense of ‘to be eager’ (see Liddell and Scott for illustrations), which fits perfectly here as an intensifying synonym of ‘expecting.’”[[22]](#footnote-28539) We agree with Lenski that it seems clear that it is things on earth getting worse as mankind gets more evil, and not that believers get more holy, that is the harbinger of the Day of the Lord.

2Pe 3:14

**“in his sight.”** The dative pronoun, *auto*, is taken with the word “blameless,” and is construed to mean “in his sight,” a dative of sphere, rather than as an instrumental dative (“found ‘by’ him”) or a dative of association (“at peace ‘with’ him”). The idea conveyed by “in his sight” is judicial, and points to the Day of Judgment to come, and thus the exhortation is a serious one: there is a judgment coming, so we should make every effort to be spotless and blameless before him on that day.

2Pe 3:15

**“the patience of our Lord *as an opportunity for* salvation.”** The Greek text literally reads, “the patience of our Lord is salvation.” The trouble with this cryptic phrasing is that Peter does not explicitly reveal the connection between the Lord’s patience and salvation. Peter is not equating the Lord’s patience with salvation, he is indicating that there is a relationship between the two. In connection with 2 Peter 3:9, where Peter speaks of the Lord’s patience, it seems that what Peter has in mind is that the Lord’s patience gives people an “opportunity” to receive salvation. Thus, to make the sense clearer, this connection has been included in the translation in italics.

**“our beloved brother Paul.”** By this time, the disagreements between Paul and Peter had been put behind them, and Peter writes that Paul was “beloved” by the people, even as he himself was.

2Pe 3:16

**“speaking.”** This is idiomatic for “writing.” The Greek text does use “speaking.”

**“distort.”** The Greek is *strebloō* (#4761 στρεβλόω), and it means to “torture” them, to “put them on the rack.” Thus it was used metaphorically of those who distorted or tortured language. Ignorant people constantly distort Scripture, but there is coming a day when God will vindicate both Himself and what He has said.

**“the rest of the Scriptures.”** Cf. Lenski and the NASB. That is the sense here. The word “Scriptures” is plural.

2Pe 3:17

**“immoral people.”** People who are unprincipled and therefore evil are immoral.

**“fall from your own steadfast position.”** The Greek word translated “steadfast position” is *stērigmos* (#4740 στηριγμός), and in this context, it means steadfastness or stability and refers to one’s steadfast or stable commitment to Christ based on the knowledge of the truth. BDAG gives as a meaning, “firm commitment to conviction or belief, *steadfastness…lose one’s firmness of commitment* 2 Pt 3:17.”[[23]](#footnote-31056) Thayer says, “firm condition, steadfastness: of mind.”[[24]](#footnote-24438) Friberg says “steadfastness, perseverance, firm position, as a state of inner stability.”[[25]](#footnote-14703) The versions translate *stērigmos* in different ways: “steadfastness” (ASV, DBY, RV, KJV, NASB, YLT); “stability” (HCSB, ESV, NAB); “firm grasp of the truth” (NET); “secure footing” (NLT); “secure position” (NIV). The translation “secure position” is not as clear as other translations because the reader has to understand that the secure position refers to the secure position in the believer’s mind, as Thayer and Friberg point out. Armed with confidence and a knowledge of the truth, the believer can stand faithful and have peace of mind. If they are led astray, they lose that firm confidence and can fall into error that can be very hurtful.

2Pe 3:18

**“in the day of the age *to come*.”** A more literal translation of the Greek would be “into the day of the age.” This ending makes perfect sense in 2 Peter because the Jews often thought of time in terms of two ages, “this present evil age” (Gal. 1:4), and the age to come (Matt. 12:32; Mark 10:30; Heb. 6:5), the Messianic Age. So here Peter writes about the glory of Jesus Christ, both “now” (this present age) and in the day (i.e., “time”) of the age to come.

**“[Amen].”** The word “Amen” occurs at the end of the sentence in some important early and disparate texts, but omitted in a few early texts. In general, the principle is that if it was original it would not likely be omitted by scribes, but if it was not original, there would be scribal pressure to add it. But there are so many different and important texts, some having “Amen” and some not having it, that scholars have been unable to arrive at a consensus about its originality. Some of the modern critical Greek texts omit it or put it in brackets to show it is doubtful. In addition, 2 Peter has at least 12 different postscripts in the various Greek manuscripts, so one can see that it would almost be natural to add “Amen” to the end of the Epistle.

1. BDAG *Greek-English Lexicon*, s.v. “ἐν,” def. 9. [↑](#footnote-ref-31566)
2. Bratcher, *A Translator’s Guide to the Letters From James, Peter, and Jude*, 134. [↑](#footnote-ref-21053)
3. Magiera; cf. Etheridge; and Murdock. [↑](#footnote-ref-12805)
4. R. Bratcher, *A Translator’s Guide to the Letters from James, Peter, and Jude*, 136. [↑](#footnote-ref-25603)
5. Thayer, s.v. “κοινωνός.” [↑](#footnote-ref-21836)
6. Friberg, s.v. “κοινωνόςs;” Bromiley, *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament*, s.v. “κοινωνός.” [↑](#footnote-ref-32120)
7. BDAG, s.v. “σοφίζω.” [↑](#footnote-ref-19133)
8. Also see Gene L. Green, *Jude and 2 Peter* [BECNT]. [↑](#footnote-ref-15781)
9. For more on *Hades* and *Sheol*, see Bullinger, *A Critical Lexicon and Concordance*, s.v. “hell,” 367-70. [↑](#footnote-ref-28271)
10. Pierre Grimal, *The Dictionary of Classical Mythology*, 433. [↑](#footnote-ref-27563)
11. Thomas Schreiner, *1, 2 Peter, Jude* [NAC]. See also Gene L. Green, *Jude and 2 Peter* [BECNT]. [↑](#footnote-ref-21492)
12. R. C. H. Lenski, *The Interpretation of 1 and 2 Epistles of Peter.* [↑](#footnote-ref-29989)
13. Cf. Lenski. [↑](#footnote-ref-30559)
14. Cf. Richard Bauckham, *Jude, 2 Peter* [WBC]. [↑](#footnote-ref-11111)
15. Cf. Norman Hillyer, *1 and 2 Peter, Jude* [NIBCNT], 201; Liddell and Scott, *Greek-English Lexicon*. [↑](#footnote-ref-21940)
16. Kistemaker, *New Testament Commentary: James, Epistles of John, Peter, and Jude*. [↑](#footnote-ref-10220)
17. BDAG, s.v. “μίασμα.” [↑](#footnote-ref-17089)
18. Kistemaker, *New Testament Commentary*. [↑](#footnote-ref-23322)
19. Dick Lucas and Christopher Green, *The Message of 2 Peter and Jude* [BST]. [↑](#footnote-ref-27833)
20. Gaebelein, *The Expositor’s Bible Commentary*. [↑](#footnote-ref-18453)
21. Richard Bauckham, *2 Peter and Jude* [WBC]. [↑](#footnote-ref-22246)
22. R. C. H. Lenski, commentary on 2 Pet. 3:12. [↑](#footnote-ref-28539)
23. BDAG *Greek-English Lexicon*, s.v. “στηριγμός.” [↑](#footnote-ref-31056)
24. Thayer, *Greek-English Lexicon*, s.v. “στηριγμός.” [↑](#footnote-ref-24438)
25. Friberg, *Analytical Lexicon*, s.v. “στηριγμός.” [↑](#footnote-ref-14703)