

Abounding Grace Christian Church

A Study of the Second Epistle of Peter – Part 11

I. Exposition of Chapter Two – False Prophets and Teachers (Continued).

A. Verse 20 – “For if, after they have escaped the pollutions of the world through the knowledge of the Lord and Savior Jesus Christ, they are again entangled in them and overcome, the latter end is worse for them than the beginning.”

1. “...they have escaped the pollutions of the world through the knowledge of the Lord and Savior Jesus Christ...”
 - a. The word “**escaped**” is also found in 1:4 and 2:18. The word means; “**to be rid, be freed from**”¹ An additional definition is; “**to become safe from danger by avoiding or escaping**”².
 - b. The word “**pollutions**” means; “**a state of being tainted or stained by evil**”³
 - c. The word “**knowledge**” means; “**precise and correct knowledge... the true knowledge of Christ’s nature, dignity, benefits**”⁴
2. “...they are again entangled in them and overcome...” – The word “**entangled**” means; **to intertwine; met. to implicate, entangle, involve;...or to entangle one’s self in.**⁵ Kenneth Wuest adds: “**Entangle’ is emplekō (ἐμπλεκω), ‘to inweave.’ The noun speaks of an interweaving, a braiding. Their going back to their former immoral lives was not the act of a moment, but a gradual process, as the word implies.**”⁶ The word “**overcome**” means; “**to experience defeat and subjection—‘to be defeated, to be conquered, to be controlled by’**”⁷
3. “...the latter end is worse for them than the beginning.” – To have known Christ as Lord and Savior, and then to be entangled, conquered and controlled by the pollutions of the world again, is worse than had they never known Christ.

“For if after they have escaped the filthy things of the world through the rich knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ, they again get entangled in them and succumb to them, their last state has become worse for them than their first.” – II Peter 2:20 – New English Translation

B. Verse 21 – “For it would have been better for them not to have known the way of righteousness, than having known it, to turn from the holy commandment delivered to them.”

1. This expounds on verse 20. Note the phrase “...known the way of righteousness...” and compare it to “...the knowledge of the Lord and Savior...” (verse 20). The word “**known**” here is the verb form of the word “**knowledge**” in verse 20 (noun). The word means; “**to possess more or less definite information about, possibly with a degree of thoroughness or competence**”⁸ So, Peter is saying, in a different way, that these false teachers had been true believers in Jesus Christ. They knew Him as Lord and Savior and, thus, knew the “...way of righteousness...”. Scriptures teaches that righteousness is obtained by exercising faith in Jesus Christ (**Romans 3:21-26**).
2. It would have been better for them to not ever have known than “...to turn from the holy commandment delivered to them.” – The word “**turn**” means; “**to return to a point or area where one has been before**”⁹. The “...holy commandment...” must be referring to the Gospel of Jesus Christ. The Gospel had been “**delivered**” to them. “**Deliver**” means; “**to give over, hand over, deliver up,...to commit, intrust,**”¹⁰

C. Verse 22 – “But it has happened to them according to the true proverb: ‘A DOG RETURNS TO HIS OWN VOMIT, and, ‘a sow, having washed, to her wallowing in the mire.’” – Jews considered dogs and pigs as amongst the lowest of animals and unclean (cf. **Matthew 7:6**). The first proverb about a dog is from **Proverbs 26:11** which reads; “**As a dog returns to his own vomit, so a fool repeats his folly.**” The second saying is not from the Bible from the Aramaic wisdom book of Ahikan¹¹ and was a well-known proverbs amongst the Jews.

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² Johannes P. Louw and Eugene Albert Nida, *Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament: Based on Semantic Domains* (New York: United Bible Societies, 1996), 239.

³ Ibid., 769.

⁴ Joseph Henry Thayer, *A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament: Being Grimm’s Wilke’s Clavis Novi Testamenti* (New York: Harper & Brothers., 1889), 237.

⁵ Mounce, 1141.

⁶ Kenneth S. Wuest, *Wuest’s Word Studies from the Greek New Testament: For the English Reader*, vol. 12 (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1997), 62.

⁷ Louw and Nida, 500.

⁸ Ibid., 333.

⁹ Ibid., 193.

¹⁰ Mounce, 1233.

¹¹ Robert James Dr. Utley, *The Gospel according to Peter: Mark and I & II Peter*, vol. Volume 2, Study Guide Commentary Series (Marshall, Texas: Bible Lessons International, 2000), 294.

II. Exposition of Chapter Three – Christ’s Return.

A. Verses 1-2 – **“Beloved, I now write to you this second epistle (in both of which I stir up your pure minds by way of reminder), that you may be mindful of the words which were spoken before by the holy prophets, and of the commandment of us, the apostles of the Lord and Savior,”**

1. **“...I stir up your pure minds by way of reminder...”** – The words **“stir up”** were mentioned in 1:13 and mean; **“to arouse or awake thoroughly”**¹² As mentioned in a previous lesson, Peter emphasized the need to remind his readers of the things mentioned in this letter (cf. 1:13, 15). Regarding the phrase **“pure minds”**, Dr. Bob Utley writes:

“This term can mean pure in the sense of sincere or morally straight (cf. Phil. 1:10). The false teachers were not pure in any sense. They were immoral and manipulative self-seekers.”¹³

2. **“...that you may be mindful of the words which were spoken before by the holy prophets...”** – First, Peter wants his readers to remember what the **“...holy prophets...”** had said. This is referring to the Old Testament and probably relates to what he wrote in 1:19-21 concerning **“...holy men of God spoke as they were moved by the Holy Spirit.”**
3. **“...and of the commandment of us, the apostles of the Lord and Savior.”** – According to Dr. Utley this is an idiom referring to the Gospel. The mention of the apostles is possibly connected to Peter’s testimony found in 1:16-18 concerning the Mount of Transfiguration and the Second coming of the Lord. So, Peter is exhorting his readers, and all believers, to always keep in mind the Scriptures, especially in dealing with false teachers. The **“holy prophets”** refers to the Old Testament and **“the apostles”** refers to the New Testament.

B. Verses 3-4 – **“knowing this first: that scoffers will come in the last days, walking according to their own lusts, and saying, ‘Where is the promise of His coming? For since the fathers fell asleep, all things continue as they were from the beginning of creation.’”**

1. **“knowing this first...”** – This same phrase is used in 1:20 to indicate his main points. The New English Translation reads; **“Above all, understand this...”** emphasizing how important what he’s about to say is.
2. **“...that scoffers will come in the last days...”** – The word **“scoffers”** means; **“one who makes fun of by mocking”**¹⁴ The **“last days”** is basically understood as the time between Jesus’ first coming and His second coming. We, therefore, are in the last days!
3. **“...walking according to their own lusts...”** – Peter describes the false teachers as having **“lusts”** several times in this letter. (cf. 1:4; 2:10; 2:18). The word **“lusts”** here means; **“impure desire”**¹⁵
4. **“...saying, ‘Where is the promise of His coming?’** – Peter warns that in the last days there will be those who scoff at, or make fun of the idea that Jesus is coming again. Donald C. Stamps writes:

“In the last days – the period between Christ’s first coming (by birth) and his second coming – false teachers will doubt and deny that Christ will return to take His church (i.e., His bride) to be with Him (Rev.22:17), to destroy the ungodly world system (cf. Rev. 19:11-21) and to restore and renew the natural order of creation in the world (e.g., Rom. 8:19-22; cf. Rev. 20ff.).”¹⁶

5. **“...For since the fathers fell asleep, all things continue as they were from the beginning of creation.”** The idea of **“..the fathers fell asleep”** is referring to their forefathers dying. The basic idea here is that false teachers/scoffers will assert that everything has been the same ever since the beginning so why should we expect any end to what we are experiencing. In other words, since nothing has happened in all this time, scoffers would reason, why expect the Lord’s return now?

C. Verses 5-6 – **“For this they willfully forget: that by the word of God the heavens were of old, and the earth standing out of water and in the water, by which the world that then existed perished, being flooded with water.”** Here Peter refutes the claim by the false teachers that throughout human history everything has remained the same. Dr. Thomas Constable writes:

“Peter cited two events in the creation of the cosmos that show that things have not always been as they are. God did intervene in the world in the past. When God spoke the universe came into existence (‘by the word of God’; Gen. 1:6- 8; cf. Heb. 11:3). God spoke again and the dry land separated from the waters (Gen. 1:9-10). Thus God used ‘water’ to form the dry land (‘the earth was formed out of water and by water’). God brought the whole universe into existence by His ‘word,’ and He also brought planet earth into existence ‘by water.’ Peter proceeded to say that He also used both means to destroy it (in Noah’s day, v. 6), and He will use two means to destroy it in the future: His word and fire (v. 7).”¹⁷

¹² Mounce, 1124.

¹³ Utley, 297.

¹⁴ Louw and Nida, 434.

¹⁵ Mounce, 1152.

¹⁶ *Fire Bible: English Standard Version*, Donald C. Stamps, Gen. Ed. (Springfield, MO: Life Publishers Int’l, 2011), 2204.

¹⁷ Thomas L. Constable, *Notes on 2 Peter* (<http://www.soniclight.com>: Sonic Light Publication, 2024), 65.