

1 & 2 Peter

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(1981 and 1996 Studies plus 1995 Discourse)

The following notes on 1 and 2 Peter were compiled from two Bible studies led by Bro. Frank Shallieu, one in 1981 and the other in 1996. A discourse from 1995 is also included. The notes should be utilized with the following understanding:

1. Each paragraph preceded by “**Comment**” or “**Q**” (an abbreviation for “**Question**”) was introduced by someone other than Bro. Frank.
2. The original studies did not follow a prepared text but were extemporaneous in nature.
3. Although the transcriber tried to faithfully, with the Lord’s help, set forth the thoughts that were presented in the studies, the notes are not a verbatim rendering and, therefore, should be considered in that context.
4. Finally, Bro. Frank did not review the notes for possible errors that may have inadvertently entered the text.

With this disclaimer in mind, may the notes be a blessing as a useful study guide.

FIRST EPISTLE OF PETER

(Study led by Bro. Frank Shallieu in 1981)

The caption in most Bibles is “The First Epistle *General* of Peter.” This epistle is not addressed to a particular church but to all Christians in *several* churches.

1 Pet. 1:1 Peter, an apostle of Jesus Christ, to the strangers scattered throughout Pontus, Galatia, Cappadocia, Asia, and Bithynia,

Pontus, Galatia, Cappadocia, Asia, and Bithynia are all in Asia Minor, which is presently Turkey. (Peter did not go to Greece, Macedonia, or Rome.) In writing to the churches in Asia Minor, Peter presumably had visited them previously or else received questions from them. In other words, he had had some communication with these churches earlier in order to write to them now. However, the Bible is silent about that communication. The Book of Acts talks about his earlier days and then concentrates on Paul. Both Paul and Peter died at about the same time.

It is significant that Peter’s epistles are near the end of the Bible. The order of apostolic writings is as follows: Paul’s epistles, James, Peter’s epistles, John’s epistles, Jude, and John’s recording of Revelation.

Peter was the apostle of the circumcision (Gal. 2:8), so here he was addressing primarily *Jewish* Christians (“the sojourners [chosen ones] of the dispersion”—*Diaglott*). These Jewish Christians were “strangers” in the sense of being *nonresidents* of Israel. They were living abroad and, for the most part, intended to remain there. (However, before becoming Christians, they had returned to Israel for the three primary feast days.)

1 Pet. 1:2 Elect according to the foreknowledge of God the Father, through sanctification of the Spirit, unto obedience and sprinkling of the blood of Jesus Christ: Grace unto you, and peace, be multiplied.

Why is there a distinction between “obedience” and “sprinkling of the blood”? Peter is addressing those who responded when they were called of God. When their hearts were drawn, they listened to the message of Jesus and did not quench the Holy Spirit but went on to obedience by consecrating. Because they obeyed and became disciples, the blood was applied to them.

The “sprinkling of the blood of Jesus Christ” is related to the Passover, when the blood was sprinkled on the two sides of the door frame and the upper lintel in the shape of a cross. This represents one’s heart being sprinkled at the time of consecration when he accepts Jesus as Savior and becomes part of the firstborn class. Each individual thus receives Jesus into his heart through this “sprinkling of the blood.”

A question could arise as to which lamb is being referred to—the Passover lamb or the daily burnt offering sacrificed each morning and evening. It is probably the Passover lamb because the time element is related to the Exodus, whereas the daily sacrifice came later when they entered the Promised Land and enacted many ordinances they could not do previously.

1 Pet. 1:3 Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, which according to his abundant mercy hath begotten us again unto a lively hope by the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead,

“Blessed be ... God [who] ... hath begotten us *again* unto a lively [living] hope by the

resurrection of Jesus Christ.” Their living hope was extinguished when Jesus was crucified, and then it was revived when he was resurrected. First, Peter mentions the application of the blood (Jesus’ *death*) and then he indicates that the resurrection of Jesus was a very important doctrine (Jesus’ *life*).

Peter is writing to Jews who were *already* consecrated Christians. Since they knew about Jesus’ resurrection before Peter wrote this epistle, he is writing to give them a *continual* reminder about their being begotten again to a living hope. When arguments are mixed and Peter’s words are paraphrased, he is saying in effect: “If Christ died for you, if the Father Himself loveth you, who can say aught against you?” This is a lesson the Christian should continually keep in mind lest he become despondent and discouraged.

Notice that it is *God* who has “abundant mercy.” Many think of Jesus’ mercy but not God’s. *God* is the *Author of salvation!*

1 Pet. 1:4 To an inheritance incorruptible, and undefiled, and that fadeth not away, reserved in heaven for you,

Why does the apostle mention “an inheritance incorruptible, and undefiled, and that fadeth not away”? Now that Jesus is resurrected, the Church’s inheritance is *real, lasting, and constant*; it does not come and go or fluctuate.

1 Pet. 1:5 Who are kept by the power of God through faith unto salvation ready to be revealed in the last time.

One’s faithfulness unto salvation is not known in the present life but will be “revealed in the last time.” Our actual standing with God and where we will ultimately be placed will then be made manifest. It is good we do not know this in advance regarding either ourself or others, for how could we enthusiastically try to help others if we knew absolutely that they would go into Second Death, for example? Even if we observe discouraging things, the hope that one might be faithful keeps us trying to encourage him. And it is good for us to be active.

We are “kept by the power of God through *faith*.” Externally, a Christian might appear to be deserted by God. Consider Jesus, for instance, especially at the end of his life. If we observed his talent, wisdom, sympathy, courage, etc., and then saw him being tried as a criminal, mistreated, and crucified, the very things done to Jesus would seem to belie his testimony that he was the Son of God. We must continually keep in mind that the calling of God in the present life is to suffer and to be unpopular from the world’s standpoint.

Faith is the substance of things hoped for, and the things we hope for are in the *Bible*. Therefore, faith’s foundation is in the Word of God. Faith is the exercise of the mind, heart, and will in the promises of God. In other words, faith is obedience. If we continually think upon, love, and try to obey God’s Word, we are exercising faith. One is rewarded according to his faith: “According to your faith be it unto you” (Matt. 9:29). In proportion as we exercise ourselves to *know* and to *do* the Lord’s will as presented in His *Word*, we are rewarded. If what we believe and act upon is not taught in the Word, we are not exercising faith but credulity. Sometimes people even die for credulity, which would be an improper cause. Faith is the exercise of the heart and mind toward God, His Word, and Christ.

1 Pet. 1:6 Wherein ye greatly rejoice, though now for a season, if need be, ye are in heaviness through manifold temptations:

This verse indicates that the Christians in Asia Minor were undergoing persecution (“manifold

temptations”). The Jewish Church had a lot of hard experiences because they were in the midst of Jews who had rejected Jesus. Many Jewish Christians had trouble getting employment, especially in Jerusalem, and in addition, a famine occurred there, as predicted by Agabus (Acts 11:28–30). No wonder, then, that the Apostle Paul took up a collection for them. In this very difficult time, the Christian Jews in Jerusalem had to exercise a great deal of faith in order not to get discouraged.

Notice that we can be in “*heaviness*” when undergoing trials and temptations. “Now no chastening [trial] for the present seemeth to be joyous, but grievous” (Heb. 12:11). We will not necessarily be “happy” at such times. Our rejoicing comes from realizing that we must be tried and from looking beyond the trial. A Christian does know sadness when going through a trial.

1 Pet. 1:7 That the trial of your faith, being much more precious than of gold that perisheth, though it be tried with fire, might be found unto praise and honour and glory at the appearing of Jesus Christ:

The “*trial of your faith*” would be the *proof of your faith*. *Overcoming* the temptation is the thought in the Greek. In other words, *overcoming* a temptation is the *proof* of a trial. (A different application would be that the very temptation or experience itself is invaluable. That is a good thought but not what Peter is saying here.) It is the *overcoming* of the experience that is more valuable than gold. This verse helps us to be in the right heart attitude and frame of mind to realize in advance that we *must have*, need, and will have trials.

The trial of our faith is “more precious” than “gold that perisheth.” Compared with our heavenly hope, even gold loses its value. “Fade, fade, each earthly joy; Jesus is mine” is the thought. While gold is stable from the world’s standpoint, the Christian has a different outlook on life.

“O, how the gold hath dimmed!” (Lam. 4:1 paraphrase). This text mentions gold from an unfavorable standpoint. When a Christian backslides, becomes worldly, is overtaken with temptations in the present life, and loses his appreciation of the truth, the luster of the divine calling and promises begin to fade and fade. Of course the gold, representing the divine nature, does not fade. What fades is the eyesight of the backslidden Christian. His appreciation declines.

Back to what Peter is saying. Gold loses its value when one has higher spiritual values. Truth is more precious than gold. To the new creature, all things become new, and his values change to a much higher plane than material gold.

Peter is also indirectly referring to the gold of the Tabernacle arrangement, as will be seen later in the epistle. The Law Covenant arrangement fades to the Jew who accepts Christ.

When the proof of our faith is tried with fire, it is more precious than gold that perishes. Our hope is that our *overcoming* will be such that it will result in making our calling and election sure (that it “might be found unto praise and honour and glory at the appearing of Jesus Christ”). The manifestation of the Church’s approval is yet future—at the *apokalupsis*; then the *world* will know.

If we are more than overcomers, the proof of our faith will be found unto the praise, honor, and glory of not only God but also *ourselves*, for the Church class will be praised in the Kingdom. The people will praise, honor, and give glory to the *Church*.

1 Pet. 1:8 Whom having not seen, ye love; in whom, though now ye see him not, yet

believing, ye rejoice with joy unspeakable and full of glory:

Generally speaking, Christians in Pontus, Galatia, Cappadocia, Asia, and Bithynia (verse 1) had never seen Jesus. According to the flesh, they were having “manifold temptations” and “heaviness,” yet they rejoiced with unspeakable joy in the knowledge of Jesus and his resurrection.

1 Pet. 1:9 Receiving the end of your faith, even the salvation of your souls.

The “end” (ultimate objective) of one’s faith is the salvation of his own soul, not his body. “Even” and “your” are supplied words. Nevertheless, this verse does not refer to the salvation of the world. The *context* shows Peter is speaking about the Church’s salvation. The salvation of restitution is very secondary compared with the salvation of the Church itself. The “gospel of the kingdom” is the call to be kings and priests, the *bride of Christ* (Matt. 4:23).

Consider the context. Peter is talking about temptations in the *present* life (verse 6) and then about the overcoming in a trial being more precious than gold so that our goal will be reached: salvation to the divine nature. After the sufferings come the praise, honor, and glory—if we are *faithful* (verse 9).

Those who are evangelistically inclined put the emphasis on having the privilege of blessing the world of mankind. But the gospel of the Kingdom is being faithful to God and hearing His “Well done, thou good and faithful servant” (Matt. 25:21); it is working out our *own* salvation *first*, before we think of the salvation of others. Our hope should be to be with Jesus and the Father—*ahead* of being with other Christians. It is *NOT* selfish to want to be faithful and to please God so that we may see Him.

Peter is leading up to the salvation of the *Church*, the *sonship* relationship, which was not understood or appreciated in the Old Testament (see verses 10 and 11). The calling of the new creation was something very different. The Jews were materialistic in that they thought of being a blesser nation, of ruling Gentile nations. True, the Church will do this, but being with Jesus and obtaining a heavenly reward of the divine nature are the higher objective.

1 Pet. 1:10 Of which salvation the prophets have inquired and searched diligently, who prophesied of the grace that should come unto you:

The Old Testament prophets prophesied of the grace to come unto the Church class.

1 Pet. 1:11 Searching what, or what manner of time the Spirit of Christ which was in them did signify, when it testified beforehand the sufferings of Christ, and the glory that should follow.

The Spirit of Christ, which was in the prophets of Old Testament times, prophesied of the sufferings of The Christ (Head and body) and of the glory that should follow. The “suffering” period is the present life; the “glory” period is the next life.

1 Pet. 1:12 Unto whom it was revealed, that not unto themselves, but unto us they did minister the things, which are now reported unto you by them that have preached the gospel unto you with the Holy Ghost sent down from heaven; which things the angels desire to look into.

The instruction to the Prophet Daniel is an excellent example of Old Testament visions and prophesyings being primarily for *us* in the Gospel Age, for he was told to seal up the book

until the time of the end (Dan. 12:4). Daniel was informed about the holy people whom God would call, but he did not know who this class would be. Being called to the *spiritual* goal of reigning with Christ and being made partakers of the divine nature are subjects not understood back there.

Galatians 3:7–9 reads: “Know ye therefore that they which are of faith, the same are the children of Abraham. And the scripture, foreseeing that God would justify the heathen through faith, preached before the gospel unto Abraham, saying, In thee shall all nations be blessed. So then they which be of faith are blessed with faithful Abraham.” In this text, Paul says that the gospel of God was referred to in the Old Testament under the promise to Abraham that in him and his seed would all the families of the earth be blessed. The promise to Abraham was the gospel in a nutshell. However, the *channel* of the blessing is the kernel of the matter. This text is used to preach restitution and it does, but Paul gives the emphasis to the *blessor*, not to the *blessee*. It is more blessed to *give* than to receive. We tend to think how blessed it is for us to receive, but Paul says it is more blessed to be the channel of blessing than to be blessed by the channel. *The calling to be the blessing seed is the gospel.* And this calling has to do with the justification of the heathen by *faith*, not by works. Paul is referring to the *present life*, to the *chief business* of the Church at the present time.

1 Pet. 1:13 Wherefore gird up the loins of your mind, be sober, and hope to the end for the grace that is to be brought unto you at the revelation of Jesus Christ;

This whole chapter is building up the calling of the Church and its hope, through faithfulness, of being rewarded with the divine nature and being made a permanent part of God’s intimate family. The “grace” of this verse is a continuation of that in verse 10. In other words, the same grace of which the Old Testament prophets prophesied is what we hope for “at the revelation of Jesus Christ.”

God’s exceeding and “*abundant mercy*” (verse 3) is that He has *called the Church*. It is unbelievable to think that not from the holy angels but from insignificant planet Earth God has called not the wise, great, noble, or rich but little “nobodies” to be rewarded with the divine nature. And, in addition, *no other beings* will ever again in the future have such an offer. Surely, that is *more grace* than what the world will receive! “*Exceeding great and precious promises*” are given unto the Church (2 Pet. 1:4). These promises are as high above the world of mankind as the heavens are above the earth. If we can but be faithful and realize that the trials of the present life will grant us this *great inheritance*, we will accept them with the right spirit.

1 Pet. 1:14 As obedient children, not fashioning yourselves according to the former lusts in your ignorance:

1 Pet. 1:15 But as he which hath called you is holy, so be ye holy in all manner of conversation;

1 Pet. 1:16 Because it is written, Be ye holy; for I am holy.

Having the foregoing information, we should continue as “obedient children.” How easily we could be fashioned “according to the former lusts” if we just relaxed! Diligence and effort are required to fashion ourselves according to God’s precepts. The former lusts may continue to exist because we are born of the earth, earthy, as far as our bodily frames are concerned and we have inherited Adamic weaknesses. Therefore, we must diligently try to curb, expunge, and crucify our former lusts with the objective and hope that we may inherit the promises of God, who says, “Be ye holy; for I am holy.”

With the change of nature, not only will the faithful Christian experience a perfect spiritual body, but he will no longer be troubled by lusts. There will no longer be a fight between the flesh and the spirit, for one who is victorious and faithful unto death will have only pure and elevated thoughts.

When created as a man, Adam was both male and female. However, when he was separated at the time of Eve's creation, he was missing the female part. That is the significance behind the thought that the two together were "one flesh" (Gen. 2:24). As a result of the separation into male and female, coupled with man's fallen condition, the human race has been subject to both legitimate and illegitimate desires. But when one is made whole in the resurrection, when both component parts are put together, the human race will consist of males who are complete with the female part.

On this side of the veil, we have no rest, but beyond the veil, there is rest in more ways than one—not just from labor and fatigue but from sinful tendencies. In heaven there will be no more "Canaanites" in the land, as it were.

1 Pet. 1:17 And if ye call on the Father, who without respect of persons judgeth according to every man's work, pass the time of your sojourning here in fear:

"Pass the time of your sojourning here in [reverential] fear." We are to do this lest we displease God and come short of obtaining the great heavenly inheritance. We should never feel secure or complacent about having gotten a crown.

Peter's thinking is a little different than we are accustomed to hearing. These are strong exhortations! If the apostles were here today, their sermons would be strong and very searching. We need more than an intellectual understanding of types and pictures. From a corrective standpoint, we need to learn to analyze and improve our characters!

Real soul-searching discourses are often not too well received. It is hard for both teacher and listener to go against the current. Some teachers have "itching ears"; that is, they desire to please the hearer. A strong talk might be described as "bad news to the flesh, good news to the new creature."

1 Pet. 1:18 Forasmuch as ye know that ye were not redeemed with corruptible things, as silver and gold, from your vain conversation received by tradition from your fathers;

This verse is a reference to the Tabernacle arrangement, under which the Israelites used money to pay a recognition or token that they had been redeemed. Money was paid on two occasions. On one occasion, every man, rich or poor, had to pay a bekah (half a shekel) to acknowledge that the Israelites were purchased as a nation (Exod. 38:26). Although only a small token, the payment meant they all had to equally recognize that they were a bought people. Literal money was used, but it prefigured a spiritual application in the Gospel Age. Just as back there the redemption price had to do with natural Israel's coming out of natural Egypt, so redemption and salvation in the Gospel Age pertain to spiritual Israel's coming out of symbolic Egypt (the world). The blood of Christ is the payment money now, and Christ paid that price by grace, for none of Adam's children could have done so.

The "tradition from your fathers," which led to "vain conversation [conduct]," was the Law Covenant. The Law itself was not vain, but since none could perfectly keep it, none could get life from it. Stated another way, for those who tried to get life by obeying the Law, their efforts were in vain. The Jews put too much emphasis on the material things connected with the Tabernacle, and their conduct was vain in that the Law did not change their lives. They

followed forms, ceremonies, and sacrifices, but their hearts were not in them. It was vain conduct to think that anyone could buy God's goodwill by giving Him money (as Catholics do today with the Mass). It is shallow thinking to try to get away with such behavior. The Father judges every man's work "without respect of persons" (verse 17), and superficial behavior will not be approved. Some church leaders put more emphasis on the collection box than on the conduct of those they are trying to instruct.

1 Pet. 1:19 But with the precious blood of Christ, as of a lamb without blemish and without spot:

The type had many valuable lessons, but how much superior is the antitype! The fathers were redeemed with silver and gold, but we are redeemed with the precious *blood* of Christ, the spotless, unblemished Lamb of God. How much more *costly* (precious) was Christ's sacrifice! It is one thing to bring a lamb to be sacrificed and quite another to give one's own Son, as God did. With us as Christians too, it will cost something to maintain our integrity. We will be misunderstood and maligned.

1 Pet. 1:20 Who verily was foreordained before the foundation of the world, but was manifest in these last times for you,

1 Pet. 1:21 Who by him do believe in God, that raised him up from the dead, and gave him glory; that your faith and hope might be in God.

God raised Jesus from the dead. *God* keeps us through faith (verse 5).

1 Pet. 1:22 Seeing ye have purified your souls in obeying the truth through the Spirit unto unfeigned love of the brethren, see that ye love one another with a pure heart fervently:

This epistle is addressed primarily to Christians who have obeyed "the truth ... unto unfeigned [*phileo*] love of the brethren." Peter exhorts them to go beyond this type of love to "[*agape*] love one another with a pure heart fervently." Christians in Asia Minor had manifested their obedience and sincere (*phileo*) love of the brethren by contributing to the necessities of the Jerusalem Church. Having compassion and a feeling of brotherhood, they helped to support those in Jerusalem. Now Peter wants their love to grow further—to go beyond just material lines.

Comment: Many times a gift is of little value, but the recipient appreciates our thinking of him or her.

1 Pet. 1:23 Being born again, not of corruptible seed, but of incorruptible, by the word of God, which liveth and abideth for ever.

In this verse, "born again" should be "begotten again." Since the Greek word can be translated either way, the context determines whether the reference is to the begetting or the birth. In most cases, the birth is referred to.

Notice that we are begotten by the "*word of God*," which is likened to an incorruptible seed. The Word is the begetting agent. We are begotten by the Father and the Word of truth.

1 Pet. 1:24 For all flesh is as grass, and all the glory of man as the flower of grass. The grass withereth, and the flower thereof falleth away:

1 Pet. 1:25 But the word of the Lord endureth for ever. And this is the word which by the

gospel is preached unto you.

The Word of God is more important than anything along material lines. Although this same apostle was an eyewitness of the personal honor of Jesus on the Mount of Transfiguration, and although he heard God say, "This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased," it is he who said elsewhere, "We have ... a *more sure word of prophecy*" (2 Pet. 1:19). Also, when Moses and Elijah were seen in vision along with Jesus on the same Mount of Transfiguration, it was Peter who gave a materialistic answer: "Let us make here three tabernacles" (Matt. 17:4). Now, however, his words and admonitions are completely *spiritual*. Jesus said to Simon Peter, "I have prayed for thee, that thy faith fail not: and *when thou art converted*, strengthen thy brethren" (Luke 22:32). Therefore, "conversion" sometimes takes place after consecration because the individual did not understand the full gist of consecration at the time he gave his life to the Lord.

At the same time that Peter was brash and impulsive, especially his speech, he was also very humble and tender.

1 Pet. 2:1 Wherefore laying aside all malice, and all guile, and hypocrisies, and envies, and all evil speakings,

"Wherefore" refers to the last two verses of Chapter 1. "All flesh is as grass." The thought is as follows: Time is passing quickly. Life is very short. The more time we spend on problems, difficulties, evil speaking, ill will, etc., the less time we have for spiritual things. It will not be long until we are in the grave, so we should not waste time on malice, guile, hypocrisies, envies, or evil speakings.

This admonition reminds us of Paul's words in 1 Corinthians 5:7,8 regarding the Passover: "Christ our passover is sacrificed for us: Therefore let us keep the feast, not with old leaven, neither with the leaven of malice and wickedness; but with the unleavened bread of sincerity and truth." Leavened bread is likened to malice and wickedness; unleavened bread, to sincerity and truth. Bread (1 Cor. 5:7) and milk (1 Pet. 2:2) are both foundation food; that is, the Christian needs to feed on pure unadulterated bread and milk as fast as possible.

Many Jewish Christians fled to Asia Minor when a *great persecution* arose in Judea (1 Pet. 1:1). Imagine the courage of Peter and others who remained behind in Jerusalem and Judea! Now Peter is addressing those who fled from the persecution and took up residence in Asia Minor. Thus these general epistles of Peter were slanted toward Jewish Christians, but they have an application, especially along prophetic lines, to Gentile Christians as well.

1 Pet. 2:2 As newborn babes, desire the sincere milk of the word, that ye may grow thereby:

1 Peter 1:2 shows that this epistle was addressed to those who had *already consecrated*, generally speaking. Yet Peter considers these Christians as *relatively new* in the truth, as "babes." He is advising them to spend their time and energy getting the rudiments of truth as *fast* as possible. Why? so that they will "grow." Other translations say "grow to salvation," which is better than the King James Version's "grow thereby." A confirmation that "grow to salvation" is the thought is that Chapter 1 refers to the *Church's salvation* several times (1 Pet. 1:5,9).

1 Pet. 2:3 If so be ye have tasted that the Lord is gracious.

1 Pet. 2:4 To whom coming, as unto a living stone, disallowed indeed of men, but chosen of God, and precious,

1 Pet. 2:5 Ye also, as lively stones, are built up a spiritual house, an holy priesthood, to offer up spiritual sacrifices, acceptable to God by Jesus Christ.

1 Pet. 2:6 Wherefore also it is contained in the scripture, Behold, I lay in Zion a chief corner stone, elect, precious: and he that believeth on him shall not be confounded.

Verses 4–6 refer to a pyramid. 1 Peter 1 alludes to the Passover and the Tabernacle with the silver and gold and the sprinkling of blood. Peter also said (1 Pet. 1:3) that the disciples were begotten again unto a *lively* hope through the resurrection of Jesus. Now in 1 Peter 2:4,5 Jesus is called a “*living stone*,” and the Church are referred to as “*living stones*.” In his epistles, Peter reflects his own emotional experiences when he was with Jesus. These experiences made a *deep* impression on him, and he weaves them into his epistles. Here he is alluding to his confession that Jesus was the Christ, the Son of the *living* God. Jesus then said the apostle’s name was “Peter” (*petros*), a piece of rock, as compared with the *rock foundation* truth about Jesus, the truth upon which the Church would be built. “Life” was a *big subject* to Peter.

Not long after that, Jesus said, “Except [unless] ye eat the flesh of the Son of man, and drink his blood, ye have no life in you” (John 6:53). From that time forth, many forsook him for making such a strong statement. (Under the Law, it was sacrilegious to drink blood.) Then Jesus asked those who remained and did not forsake him, “Why have you stayed?” Peter replied, “Thou [only] hast the words of eternal *life*” (John 6:68). Again Peter interjected the thought of *life*. Being very practical, he said that all flesh is as grass, which withers and *dies* (1 Pet. 1:24). He was interested in *life*, in a future, for all the glitter around him, no matter how beautiful, just goes into the grave. Only Christ had the message of *hope* and *life*. When Jesus was crucified, Peter’s hopes almost perished too. But when God raised Jesus, the disciples were begotten *again* unto a *living hope*; that is, Peter’s quest for life was revitalized by the resurrection.

Thus there is a lot behind the thought of Jesus being a *living stone*. Not only is Jesus a real, animate being, but *only he* has the words of *life*! And Peter’s own name (“stone”) is in this picture.

Verse 5: The Church, as living stones, are built *up into a spiritual house* (*pyramid*), conforming to the image of Christ, the top stone of the Pyramid. All the stones underneath conform to the top stone in a pyramid structure.

The term “holy priesthood” reminds us of the Tabernacle and the Temple. Also, God promised in Exodus 19:5,6 that if the nation of Israel would obey His voice, they would be a “peculiar treasure” to Him, a “kingdom of priests,” and a “holy nation.” The Tabernacle and the Temple predominated in a lot of Peter’s thinking.

The Church is to offer up “spiritual sacrifices” through Jesus. The word “spiritual” is omitted in some of the ancient manuscripts, but it is in the *Diaglott*. To include or omit the word does not necessarily change the meaning, however. As to how it is interpreted has a lot to do with the time application. One way would not change the meaning; another way would. The Pastor preferred to omit the word because he said we do not sacrifice spiritual things but, rather, *earthly things* (i.e., restitution, earthly hopes and ambitions, material things). Nevertheless, we should not sacrifice spiritual interests and time, as some do, but should try to preserve them for serving the Lord.

The other way to consider the word “spiritual”—that is, as being included—is that Peter was contrasting the literal animal sacrifices of the Law Covenant with what the Christian would sacrifice now. Anything the *Christian* gives up for the right motive (and even the things he must do to provide things decent, needful, and honest for himself and his family) is counted

toward his spiritual reward.

Verse 6: God places or *sets* (“lays”) in Zion a chief cornerstone (Jesus). In one sense, the top stone has already been laid, even though the whole building underneath (i.e., the Church) has not been united to it (i.e., to Jesus). The risen, exalted Lord has been tried, proven, and elected. The Church down here are trying to conform their lives to the pattern already set—and to grow up into that building.

Notice the last half of the verse: “He that believeth on him shall not be confounded [ashamed, run about in a distracted way].” This text comes from Isaiah 28:16, where it has a different ending: “He that believeth shall not make *haste*.” The thoughts harmonize if we note the context. Peter is not directly quoting but is *applying the principle* of what Isaiah meant.

Why did Peter mention that he who believes on Jesus shall not be confounded? One reason was to help those Christians in Asia Minor who were being persecuted. Jesus was the *sure* foundation in contradistinction to the insecurity they were experiencing according to the flesh. Along another line, Isaiah 8:14 says that the stone was a stone of stumbling. This thought will be discussed under 1 Peter 2:8.

1 Pet. 2:7 Unto you therefore which believe he is precious: but unto them which be disobedient, the stone which the builders disallowed, the same is made the head of the corner,

1 Pet. 2:8 And a stone of stumbling, and a rock of offence, even to them which stumble at the word, being disobedient: whereunto also they were appointed.

On the one hand, the “top stone” (Jesus) was rejected of men and disallowed at the First Advent; hence it was a source of *stumbling*. On the other hand, to the Christian, the “top stone” is a *foundation stone*—a *precious foundation*.

From the narrow perspective of the literal laborers building the literal Great Pyramid, the top stone was a misfit, so they rejected it *hastily*. They had no understanding of what its purpose was. And so it was with the antitype. When Jesus came at his First Advent, he was a misfit as far as the priesthood of his day was concerned. He was “bigger” than they—his motives, arrangements, perspectives, etc., were larger and greater—but they rejected him *without due, considerate deliberation*. Had they *analyzed* and thought more about Jesus, had they not been too hasty, the priesthood would have put the facts together and realized he was the Messiah. But they were occupying Moses’ seat, and in their *envy*, they could not see themselves being replaced. They felt that *he* was the one out of place, whereas in reality, *they* were the ones out of place. In contrast, those who accepted Jesus at his First Advent did not “make haste.” They pondered the issues, asking, “Is this the Messiah?” “Is this the Son of God?” And as they considered the matter, studying his words, his conduct, the time, etc., they accepted him.

Many of us are emotional bundles, and we size up situations instantly, making snap judgments for good or for bad. As a result, valuable facts are sometimes overlooked. In fact, the issue at hand could even be a turning point in our lives, for which we make a wrong decision because of being too hasty. Had we thought and reflected on the matter, we might have seized on something that would change our entire life in a beneficial way.

The thought in Isaiah 28:16 is that those who did not make haste were not confounded but accepted Jesus. However, the builders, in hastening, found the top stone to be “a stone of stumbling”—just the opposite.

True, the literal top stone back in Shem's day did not fit the Great Pyramid, for it was too large. Although it was beautiful and perfected, having required *much* labor, it did not fit. Therefore, in haste, the builders concluded that a mistake had been made. The top stone was a nuisance to the laborers, but they should have taken time to reflect that there must be a reason for its size, for *the Designer could not make a mistake*. As for Shem himself, he would have been very puzzled by the size of the top stone, but he did not hastily assume the Designer had erred.

In the future when the Pyramid is refurbished with an enlarged exterior, it will be in line with the top stone. The top stone was built for the *future* Pyramid dimensions, not for the original dimensions. And that is true of Jesus too. The religious leaders thought Jesus was "too big for his britches"—brash, bold, etc.—when he made such statements as "I will rebuild the temple in three days" (Matt. 26:61). And to claim additionally that he was the Messiah and the Son of God was too much for them. We can, to a large extent, understand how they were deceived and how they misjudged the matter in their haste, but the ones who are especially responsible are those who had repeated opportunities and thus went against light. Consider the sincere ones like Nathanael, who asked, "Can anything good come out of Nazareth?" He was momentarily stumbled, but apparently, he prayed to God about the matter. It was too big a decision for him to make alone, so he went under the fig tree to pray. God answered his prayer when Philip called, "Nathanael! Nathanael! We have found the Messiah!" (Jesus was the one from Nazareth he was already troubled about.) When Jesus said to him, "Behold an Israelite indeed, in whom is no guile!" Nathanael asked, "How do you know me?" Jesus replied, "When you were under the fig tree, I saw you." Then Nathanael knew for sure that Jesus was the Christ. Thus Nathanael did not make a hasty judgment.

We must beware of prejudice and other factors that would make us render too hasty a judgment. Some accept truth with credulity instead of digging deep to the foundation and proving "all things" (1 Thess. 5:21). *True faith* is based on *understanding*.

It is interesting that, as shown in verse 7, the *foundation* is the *top stone* rather than the bottom. This is opposite to the normal building process. Jesus is the "sure foundation" (Isa. 28:16), and the Father is even above Jesus.

This illustration of a reverse viewpoint can be used in principle with the Tabernacle. Certain viewpoints start with the Most Holy and extend outward, showing that God predestined this whole arrangement from the Most Holy to the Holy to the Court to the Camp to outside the Camp. However, the people have to approach in the opposite way, being built *up* into the image of Christ, the top stone, or progressing *inward* toward the Most Holy. God, however, looks at matters the other way, starting with what is *most holy* first. The Ark was conceived by God ahead of the rest of the Tabernacle, the Ark being The Christ, which God had in mind before the other ramifications of His plan were disclosed.

1 Pet. 2:9 But ye are a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, an holy nation, a peculiar people; that ye should show forth the praises of him who hath called you out of darkness into his marvellous light:

In the present life, we are a royal priesthood only in a prospective sense. From the finished standpoint in the Kingdom, the Church will offer up the sacrifices of the people. (The Book of Leviticus shows how those who wanted to offer up a certain type of sacrifice brought it to the priest.) However, in the *present* life, in the Gospel Age, it is the *priests* themselves who are being consecrated and making their own little offerings.

The sacrifice of praise that the Church offers to God continually in the *present* life is called "the fruit of our lips." "Let us offer the sacrifice of praise to God continually, that is, the fruit of our

lips giving thanks to his name” (Heb. 13:15).

“Ye are ... a peculiar people.” Originally “peculiar” had the thought of unique, that is, singular in the sense of being unique. The Church will be a *unique precious treasure*. The offer of the high calling is peculiar in that it is a one-time offer for a very special class, a class who are favored in a special way. Just as the top stone was disallowed of men and was a “stone of stumbling” but is tried, proven, flawless, finished, and perfect in God’s sight, so the world considers the Church peculiar in the bad sense. However, God views the Church class as peculiar in the good sense, as the apple of His eye! Sometimes the word “peculiar” is translated “redeemed” or “purchased.”

1 Pet. 2:10 Which in time past were not a people, but are now the people of God: which had not obtained mercy, but now have obtained mercy.

Before many of the Jewish Christians accepted Christ, they had been religious-minded, godly-living people. For example, Peter said in Acts 10:14, “[From my youth up] I have never eaten any thing that is common or unclean.” As godly-living people, they had found they were misfits. Although they had a religious bent of mind, the majority were not of the Pharisees or of the educated element but were unlearned. (Exceptions were the Apostle Paul, Joseph of Arimathea, and Nicodemus. Moreover, Paul’s epistles show that some in high positions accepted the gospel.) These individuals had been trying to serve God under the Law but were not fully satisfied with that arrangement. And now that they had accepted Christ, it was even *more* discomfoting because of the *persecutions* they were getting, as well as still being misfits. The circumstances might have discouraged them, so Peter was writing to comfort and fortify them. He was saying, “Look at Jesus, who was *perfect*. He was mistreated, so you should expect the same. Think it not strange concerning the fiery trial that should try you, for here unto you were called. God has been very kind to you. Do not be discouraged by your persecuting experiences. God is looking for this type of individual in the present life, and if faithful, you will be of the future royal generation and receive the great inheritance.”

Peter was trying to encourage them, but he could not promise that the persecutions would cease—that would be a false hope. However, he could give them a hope regarding what faithfulness under these conditions would work out for them in the future. God’s Word may appear to be temporary, *but it will bear fruit—everlasting fruit!* In spite of some strong words and admonitions later on, there is something very tender about Peter in these epistles.

1 Pet. 2:11 Dearly beloved, I beseech you as strangers and pilgrims, abstain from fleshly lusts, which war against the soul;

Peter is addressing especially those Christian Jews who had left the Jerusalem environment to live in Asia Minor under (or amidst) a different culture. As “strangers [exiles] and pilgrims,” they were exposed to new and different temptations in this alien environment (see 1 Peter 1:1).

Peter cautioned these Jewish Christian exiles not only as “strangers” but also as “pilgrims” whose destination is the *next life*. While they were to submit to every ordinance, they were to be careful they did not have roots there and take up *full* residence.

1 Pet. 2:12 Having your conversation honest among the Gentiles: that, whereas they speak against you as evildoers, they may by your good works, which they shall behold, glorify God in the day of visitation.

Not only were these Jewish Christians exposed to new temptations and onslaughts, but as newcomers with different habits, customs, and conduct, they were a gazing stock and the

objects of criticism, mistrust, and misunderstanding. Therefore, they had a double problem: to keep a visual high standard as well as to be very defensive lest the temptations of the new environment pull them down.

Peter was not saying they would be understood in the present life, but they were to live honestly now and conduct themselves in a holy way so that ultimately—in the Kingdom—they would be understood. “In the day of visitation,” the former critics will “glorify God” on behalf of the holy conduct of these Christian Jews. The “day of visitation” is the time when the *world* will be instructed.

Peter tells the Jewish Christians they will be spoken of as “evildoers.” And this is what usually happens when foreigners come into a country; that is, they are viewed with suspicion whether or not suspicion is justified. Peter says to live honestly, but even though they do so, they will be called evildoers. Persecution in the present life is a theme for the Christian.

We can “glorify God” by having honest conduct and setting an example. Then in the Kingdom, these former detractors will look back and remember the conduct of the saints. Now we are misunderstood for not voting, not participating in war efforts, etc., but in the next life, these same persecutors will understand. They will see that they were the ones at fault and that the saints stuck to right principles. Honor will be brought to God when the world ultimately sees that the influence of His Word in the life of the saints had a good effect.

1 Pet. 2:13 Submit yourselves to every ordinance of man for the Lord’s sake: whether it be to the king, as supreme;

1 Pet. 2:14 Or unto governors, as unto them that are sent by him for the punishment of evildoers, and for the praise of them that do well.

The Christian is to submit to “every ordinance.” The word “king” can be “emperor,” for these Jewish Christians were under the Roman Empire. In other words, they were to obey the overall command as well as local ordinances *so far as conscience would permit*.

Of course submitting to “every” ordinance could be carried to an extreme if one knuckled under to *wrong* religious practices. For example, when Peter was told not to preach the gospel, he acted rightly when he replied, in effect, “Is it proper for us to obey you, the civil authorities, or to obey God?” (Acts 5:29). The Christian is to obey *God*. Thus Peter’s own life and behavior must be considered along with this text in his first epistle before we make a final judgment as to what the Lord would want us to do, for if the Christian obeyed *all* authorities in *all* matters, he would even go to war.

Peter’s plain advice here (and Paul’s advice in Romans 13:1 and Titus 3:1) was given to guard the new creature against radicalism. The new creature is usually combatant by nature to a greater or lesser extent and there are many unjust laws, but the Christian is to submit unless a law personally affects a stand for conscience. Under certain circumstances, the new creature must take a stand.

In the early Church in the name of Christianity, many lectured constables and other law enforcers, thus bringing *unnecessary* persecution on themselves, all the while thinking they were doing God a service. It is easy to find fault with conditions, but if this is our main preoccupation, we will not have time to develop the peaceable fruits of righteousness. Thus Peter’s advice to submit to every ordinance was given to prevent us from bringing unnecessary persecution upon ourselves.

In the *overall* picture, laws are made to punish evildoers and to protect the righteous. Even an unjust government is a stabilizing influence, and *any* government is better than no government at all. *No* government would mean *no* law and order.

1 Pet. 2:15 For so is the will of God, that with well doing ye may put to silence the ignorance of foolish men:

In the next age, the world will realize that they previously had a wrong concept in regard to proper living. The saints will then “put to silence the ignorance of foolish men.”

1 Pet. 2:16 As free, and not using your liberty for a cloak of maliciousness, but as the servants of God.

How could these Jewish Christians have used their “liberty for a cloak of maliciousness”? As enlightened Christians who had a wealth of information and knowledge about the Law, God, Jesus, etc., they could have entered this strange land that knew nothing about these things and been very critical and condemning of the “foolish” practices of these unlearned people. However, while free from these practices and customs, they were not to consider themselves entirely free in all respects, for they were *servants* of God and were to live accordingly. Christians are under contract or bondage *to God*.

1 Pet. 2:17 Honour all men. Love the brotherhood. Fear God. Honour the king.

Notice the scaling. Honor all, love the brethren, fear God, and honor the king (or emperor). In other words, try to get along peaceably with all men but especially with regard to the brotherhood. To the latter, we are not to give just a deferential recognition but to *love* them. In honoring all men, we are to respect their titles and duties. We are to go beyond this with the brethren and to love those who have the same heavenly hopes and aspirations. We are to “fear God” in the sense of *obeying* Him and being extremely careful to *please* Him.

1 Pet. 2:18 Servants, be subject to your masters with all fear; not only to the good and gentle, but also to the froward.

1 Pet. 2:19 For this is thankworthy, if a man for conscience toward God endure grief, suffering wrongfully.

“Servants, be subject to your masters.” This admonition shows that many slaves became Christians, and their knowledge made them superior to their masters in thinking, particularly on spiritual matters but even along natural lines. Consequently, they viewed their masters in a more unfavorable light, especially if the masters were uncouth and unkind. Peter did not tell the slaves to seek their freedom in order to serve God better but to *submit* “with all fear.”

The Greek *phobeo* or *phobos* is translated “fear” in verses 17 and 18. In regard to both God and the slave masters, the Christian was to be very careful lest he displease Him or them. The Christian is to obey! We are to tremble at God’s Word. We are not to get chummy with God. In being freed from an improper fear of hellfire or whatever, we are not to go to the other extreme and be palsy-walsy. Those who get chummy are in danger of getting careless and of paying less attention to what He is saying in His Word.

There were two classes of slaves: (1) common laborers and (2) intellectual persons who, for example, might be used to instruct the master’s children as tutors. Slaves of both categories became Christians.

“Servants, obey in all things your masters according to the flesh; not ... [merely] as menpleasers; but in singleness of heart, fearing God” (Col. 3:22). If slaves thought only of serving God, they would be apt to weigh every command to determine whether it was His will. Many commands were unjust as regards the slave but were, nevertheless, to be rendered to the master not only as *obedience* to him but also as serving God. If conscience was involved in obeying, that was another matter, but frequently we must violate our feelings and suffer indignities as a Christian. And if we suffer because of right doing, God commends us, “for this is thankworthy.”

1 Pet. 2:20 For what glory is it, if, when ye be buffeted for your faults, ye shall take it patiently? but if, when ye do well, and suffer for it, ye take it patiently, this is acceptable with God.

If we suffer for doing *wrong*, we should take it patiently, but there is no special reward for so doing, no special virtue, when the fault is ours. However, if we suffer for doing *right*, we are *suffering with Christ or for him*.

1 Pet. 2:21 For even hereunto were ye called: because Christ also suffered for us, leaving us an example, that ye should follow his steps:

1 Pet. 2:22 Who did no sin, neither was guile found in his mouth:

1 Pet. 2:23 Who, when he was reviled, reviled not again; when he suffered, he threatened not; but committed himself to him that judgeth righteously:

Why mention that Jesus “did no sin, neither was guile found in his mouth: ... when he was reviled, [he] reviled not again”? To help us take patiently all suffering for *righteousness* and realize it is part of our sacrifice and sin offering. There is a distinction between suffering for *right* doing and suffering for *wrong* doing. The former is part of our sin offering; the latter is not. We are to consider how much Christ suffered for *righteousness*’ sake. However, this does not mean that Jesus never said anything in the face of criticism, but he *reasoned* with his critics and did not retaliate with evil and a loss of temper. With us, when we lose our temper and lash out on the spur of the moment, it may *seem* as if our retaliation is justified, but *reason* must be used instead. In other words, if something is done to us unjustly, we can answer and reason with the individual to show him that his conduct was wrong and thus, hopefully, correct him in his future behavior, but we are not to retaliate with a dig or slander, etc. To do so would not be productive and would be rendering evil for evil.

At times Jesus called attention to his critics and pointed out their faults, but at the end of his life, he remained *silent*, for he knew it was time for him to die. Jesus wanted to neither hasten nor delay God’s timetable for his execution, so he was mute. But before his “hour” came, he did speak out at times and at other times simply removed to another place. Thus time, circumstances, and conditions in each Christian’s life are factors in regard to his *duty* and *action*. We must really weigh these factors. Otherwise, we can take these words and justify ourselves for almost anything one way or the other. We must observe what Jesus and the apostles did and did not do according to circumstances. This applies to *DUTY* and *ACTION*, for principles and conscience should *never* be violated!

Back to the same question: Why mention that Jesus “did no sin, neither was guile found in his mouth”? One reason is that at times we, too, will have to suffer wrongfully for right doing. If Jesus so suffered, we should not be surprised when we have that experience—and Jesus was *sinless*. The Church is called to suffer.

At times Paul properly used “guile” in witnessing depending on whom he was addressing and their background and what the circumstances were. For example, he addressed the people about their “UNKNOWN” God. He told them that they were too religious with their multiplicity of gods and that they should concentrate on the one unknown God. This is using guile or deceit in a proper way. Guile or cunning as mentioned here by Peter would be in the sense of having a motive to damage others.

Jesus had no deceit in his mouth in the sense that *whatever* he did, it was always for the good of the individual. Consequently, he sometimes spoke and sometimes was quiet depending on the circumstance. But in *no* case did he want to *trap* or do harm or injury to anybody. He did stymie his opposers with questions, using the same line of reasoning they did: “Now I will answer *your* question with a question.” This was a form of *reasoning*.

Even when Jesus rebuked, his motive was to shake up the wrongdoers to see that what they were doing was wrong. He rebuked to wake them up but never to trap them. He spoke openly, bluntly, forthrightly. The words may have been cutting, but they were the simple truth. He was impartial in his words and spoke honestly. Communication and honesty are admirable traits.

In the Berean comments, the remark was made that Jesus did not sharply rebuke any *one* individual but, rather, the scribes and the Pharisees as a *class* and a *system* and that the rebuking was necessary to save the pure of heart from their influence. Generally, *where possible*, we should try to avoid naming individuals, but sometimes it is necessary to name them. By adhering to certain Scriptures and ignoring others, we would be stifled and never make comments, but we are to obey *all* Scriptures and thus be balanced in the matter, realizing there are times when individuals should be named. The apostles singled out certain individuals by name, and so must we in some instances. However, the usual thing is to criticize the system (for example, Papacy). Even the Pastor named individuals on occasion as being harmful to the Lord’s cause.

“When he suffered, he threatened not.” When Jesus was mocked and buffeted, he did not threaten. The natural tendency would be to say, “The Lord will get you for that.” Thus when we are persecuted, we should not threaten.

Jesus committed his cause to *God*, who judges righteously. Sooner or later *God* will repay; vengeance is His! It takes faith to believe this. Sometimes the judgment is postponed until the next age.

1 Pet. 2:24 Who his own self bare our sins in his own body on the tree, that we, being dead to sins, should live unto righteousness: by whose stripes ye were healed.

Throughout his ministry Christ suffered, but now Peter is focusing on the *end* of his ministry, when he was especially buffeted. Earlier, Peter spoke of Jesus’ conduct and sinlessness and the *verbal* persecution he endured. But Jesus left us an example of *physical* suffering too. Therefore, we, as Christians, should also expect physical suffering. It is true that most of our battle today is mental, but there can be physical suffering too. There is a subtle indication here that the Church shares in the sin offering.

1 Pet. 2:25 For ye were as sheep going astray; but are now returned unto the Shepherd and Bishop of your souls.

This verse is a quote from Isaiah 53:4–7. The apostle gives a practical application, saying (paraphrased), “We all, like sheep, were going astray. Our sin, the chastisement of our peace,

was laid on him.”

A question is asked in Isaiah 53:1, “To whom is the arm [Christ] of the LORD [Jehovah] revealed?” Two perspectives are implied: (1) The nation of Israel did not believe Jesus was the Messiah, and they rejected him. (2) *Momentarily* even the disciples were confused and forsook him. When Jesus did not open his mouth and then was crucified, they wondered if he was being punished for displeasing God. They misunderstood the humiliation being heaped on him and even wondered for a short time if indeed he was the Son of God, the real Messiah.

Peter is saying that what Jesus went through was the extreme, but since we are called to suffer a similar humiliation, people could also look upon us as being alienated from God, even though we are trying to please Him. Because of our experiences, people could conclude that we did not have God’s favor. Peter is trying to encourage us that this is exactly the kind of experience the Christian is called upon to endure in the present life, suffering as did the Master. This is a warning that we should not misunderstand certain experiences and providences.

Peter began his epistle with the words “Blessed be ... God ... [who] hath begotten us again unto a lively hope by the resurrection of Jesus Christ” (1 Pet. 1:3). When Jesus was crucified, the hopes of the disciples were all shattered. Their hopes died when Jesus died. But when he was resurrected, their hopes revived. When the Shepherd was smitten, the sheep were scattered and confused (Zech. 13:7). But when he was raised, the confused and scattered sheep had revitalized hopes. Many of the Christian Jews in Asia Minor had known Jesus *personally*, as Peter had. Thus they knew that when Jesus died, they were scattered, and when he was raised, they had renewed hope. Peter is writing from Israel to these dispersed Christian Jews about their *common* experience. They had been like scattered, confused sheep, but now they had returned unto the Shepherd of their souls, Jesus, and he was alive forevermore (Rev. 1:18). Thus he is now the Shepherd in a more constant way in that he is *ever living*.

Jesus is the “[under] Shepherd and Bishop of your souls.” The Great Shepherd is Jehovah, and Jesus is the more immediate under-Shepherd. A “bishop” is a guardian, an overseer, a superintendent, a custodian. “Custodian” means to be in charge of. God is in back of Jesus’ custodianship; that is, *He* gave Jesus the custodianship. Custodianship implies more than just being a protector and a defender; teaching (tutorship) and training are also involved as regards the very *soul* of the individual.

1 Pet. 3:1 Likewise, ye wives, be in subjection to your own husbands; that, if any obey not the word, they also may without the word be won by the conversation of the wives;

1 Pet. 3:2 While they behold your chaste conversation coupled with fear.

This advice is directed particularly to married sisters who have unconsecrated husbands, although the principles of obedience to husbands carry over to those with consecrated husbands as well. Hopefully, the wife’s conduct will have a beneficial influence on the unconsecrated husband so that he, too, will reverence the Lord and perhaps come into a consecrated relationship.

The wife should have pure conduct (behavior) coupled with *reverential* “fear” for God. Thus the husband will realize the wife is obeying her conscience because of reverence for God. He still might not like certain things, but at least he will see the motivation of wanting to please God. The emphasis is on *pure conduct*.

Just as with the servant and his master (1 Pet. 2:18), the word “fear” here also includes the thought that the wife should consider her relationship to her husband and be careful to avoid

giving offense or being overly contentious—*unless*, of course, *principle* is involved. In that case, she is to contend for principle.

Both the servant who becomes a Christian and the wife who consecrates would have minds enlightened beyond those of their master and husband, respectively, and the temptation in knowing they are right on so many points would be to make the relationship a very contentious one. Therefore, except where principle is involved, some forbearance to speak out should be practiced, and this balance is difficult to achieve. Regarding the servant, Peter said to be subject to the master *even if* the master was unjust—as long as the slave’s relationship to God was not jeopardized. And the same applies to a consecrated wife who has an unconsecrated husband. There are times when self has to be put out of the way and the wife has to go along with unjust demands. Such a situation should be borne with patience and forbearance except where principle is involved and/or where one’s spiritual life could be snuffed out and gradually strangled.

Peter is giving guidelines to all people in all situations as to how to face certain matters. It is up to each Christian to *analyze* each problem as it arises and then try to determine the right course.

“Fear” on the part of the wife would include “reverence” for the husband inasmuch as Sarah called Abraham “lord” (verse 6). This would be in harmony with 1 Peter 2:17, “Honor all men,” which would certainly include the husband. (Of course Abraham was not unconsecrated, but Peter is concentrating on the proper demeanor of the wife in the marital relationship.) A caution is needed, however, for it is very easy for a wife, etc., who is weak in *one* direction to overdraw *one* side of this reasoning to her own preference, that is, to be either too submissive or too contentious.

Our own homes are the most difficult places to practice Christian principles, for that is where we let our hair down. For a wife to be the best example to her husband means she must *always* be on guard.

1 Pet. 3:3 Whose adorning let it not be that outward adorning of plaiting the hair, and of wearing of gold, or of putting on of apparel;

1 Pet. 3:4 But let it be the hidden man of the heart, in that which is not corruptible, even the ornament of a meek and quiet spirit, which is in the sight of God of great price.

Character is more important than *outward* adornment. Peter is not saying that there should be *no* braiding of the hair, wearing of gold, or putting on of apparel but that there should not be undue emphasis on these things. There should be the “ornament [development] of a meek and quiet spirit” and not outward adornment *merely*. The thought of “merely” is like Paul’s statement that we do not fight against flesh and blood *merely* but against principalities and powers and spiritual wickedness in high places (Eph. 6:12).

God places the higher emphasis on *character* development, but as far as outward adornment goes, the rule for dress of the sisters should be *modesty*, *discretion*, and *simplicity*. Elaborate braiding of the hair and gold chains would be an *ornate* display—and thus an inordinate attempt to attract attention to the body. In this same epistle, Peter says to “be clothed with *humility*” (1 Pet. 5:5).

1 Pet. 3:5 For after this manner in the old time the holy women also, who trusted in God, adorned themselves, being in subjection unto their own husbands:

1 Pet. 3:6 Even as Sarah obeyed Abraham, calling him lord: whose daughters ye are, as long

as ye do well, and are not afraid with any amazement.

Sarah is used as an example of one who had a meek and quiet spirit and was in subjection to her husband, yet she wore a gold bracelet and a ring. Therefore, Peter is not saying that women should wear no gold but to do it modestly and discreetly.

Evidently, Sarah was an unusual woman. She was extremely sedate and attractive, even to a king, and thus no doubt had a natural, stately bearing. Although she was a beautiful woman, her humility was manifested by the fact that she agreed to leave so-called civilization and to lead a nomadic, bedouin type of life following her husband, Abraham, through faith in God. In such an existence, she could not cater to her own natural beauty.

Sarah humbled herself by calling Abraham “lord” (or “master”), but coupled with this “do[ing] well,” she was “not afraid with any amazement.” In other words, she was not afraid to disagree with him in the proper spirit. The point is that the wife should not be in abject slavery to her husband with no opinions, no thoughts, and no judgments. From the standpoint of the wife being a new creature, the husband should not make inordinate, contrary demands. If the husband wants to curtail the wife completely as a new creature, she should not be terrorized by him. In such a case, the wife should not subject herself completely to his will but should obey the Lord instead. Therefore, in addition to modesty, simplicity, and obedience to the husband, there should be a reverence for God and *no fear of man*. The wife of an unconsecrated husband should try to be a good example to her husband, but where he tries to suppress her development as a new creature, she should not let him walk all over her like a doormat.

1 Pet. 3:7 Likewise, ye husbands, dwell with them according to knowledge, giving honour unto the wife, as unto the weaker vessel, and as being heirs together of the grace of life; that your prayers be not hindered.

In regard to the marital relationship, if we are at fault for not promoting peace and quiet in the home (where principle is not involved, of course), our prayers will be “hindered.” Serenity is conducive to a proper prayer atmosphere. Moreover, immediately following a heated difference on a matter, one or both parties may have difficulty in mechanically cutting off the argument and going to the Lord in prayer. This situation would be apt to affect the wife more, for her makeup is more sensitive than that of the husband.

If husband and wife are both consecrated, their prayers will be hindered if there is not a concern and consideration for the spiritual growth of the partner. This is especially true if the husband does not so honor his wife, but a responsibility is incumbent on both partners. If either one defaults on his or her responsibility, that one’s prayers will be hindered. However, in matters of disputation, the prayers of *both* will be hindered *if both are guilty*. The principle is the same as in Matthew 5:23,24, “If thou bring thy gift to the altar, and there rememberest that thy brother hath aught against thee; Leave there thy gift before the altar, and go thy way; first be reconciled to thy brother, and then come and offer thy gift.” If two brothers have a problem, the party in the wrong should make amends before he goes to the Lord in prayer (before he presents his “gift” at the “altar”). In other words, if it is possible to reconcile the difference and that possibility is not used, the prayers will not be accepted. Before we pray to the Lord, we should try to get a matter straightened out if we are the one at fault. The effort has to be made whether or not it works. And so in the husband-wife relationship, if one is responsible, both are affected but particularly the guilty one. (Usually both are at fault to a greater or lesser extent.)

Verse 7 has an even wider application to the husband’s *overall* regard for his wife’s spiritual welfare. If the husband habitually oppresses the wife and overrides her, his prayer life will be

adversely affected as well.

Peter is trying to make *both* husband and wife understand the relationship. If the husband is oppressive, he should see that this is an inordinate exercise of his responsibility. Or if the wife is not properly submissive, her prayers will be hindered. There is a *mutual* relationship and responsibility here. If this advice is neglected, hardened habits and attitudes will develop, leading to estrangement. And persistent estrangement has a deleterious effect on the home and the children. In giving honor to the wife, the husband must make sure he does not override her and develop a confirmed habit along this line, completely disregarding her feelings and welfare.

Husbands are to dwell with their wives “according to knowledge”; that is, they are to live considerately, wisely, and generously with them. If husband and wife are both consecrated and thus have the same hope and calling, then each should realize that the Lord has called the other party as well as himself or herself. This knowledge should keep both humble in the sense of treating each other respectfully. Neither should be high-minded. They should keep in mind that *both* are consecrated to do the Lord’s will and the Lord loves them both.

Familiarity with Scripture should provide husband and wife with a basic outline of how to treat the mate. If both are rightly exercised, conduct will be governed accordingly and each will see his or her own faults.

“Likewise, ye husbands, dwell with them according to knowledge, giving honour unto the wife, as unto the weaker vessel, ... [yet] as being heirs *together* of the grace of life.” The word “yet” instead of “and” helps to bring out the main thrust that both are consecrated to do the Lord’s will. If the husband has Scriptural knowledge along a certain line that pertains to a problem or dispute that arises, that knowledge should bring a solution as long as the wife is sincerely motivated toward the Word and toward doing God’s will. The fact that Peter was married helped him to understand the husband-wife relationship.

1 Pet. 3:8 Finally, be ye all of one mind, having compassion one of another, love as brethren, be pitiful, be courteous:

Peter enlarges the husband-wife relationship to include all of the brethren.

“Be courteous.” Sometimes one is more courteous to a worldly person than to a brother or sister because “familiarity breeds contempt.” Such an attitude will have a bearing on one’s salvation. The thought of courtesy, which is related to *brotherly love* in the Greek, is being “friendly minded.” We should have more courtesy.

1 Pet. 3:9 Not rendering evil for evil, or railing for railing: but contrariwise blessing; knowing that ye are thereunto called, that ye should inherit a blessing.

Rendering “evil for evil” or “railing for railing” is quite different than saying something the Bible instructs us to do. Certain situations will arise where stern things have to be said. Such cases are not “rendering evil for evil” but are speaking according to the Lord’s Word. However, when a wrong deed is done or a wrong and evil expression is uttered, we should not retaliate with the same.

1 Pet. 3:10 For he that will love life, and see good days, let him refrain his tongue from evil, and his lips that they speak no guile:

1 Pet. 3:11 Let him eschew evil, and do good; let him seek peace, and ensue it.

Actively *turn away* from evil, *do good*, and *seek and pursue peace*. Peace will not just happen. We must seek and pursue it—as long as conscience is not violated.

1 Pet. 3:12 For the eyes of the Lord are over the righteous, and his ears are open unto their prayers: but the face of the Lord is against them that do evil.

Peter mentions prayer again. We can see how this former rough, uncouth fisherman has been tenderized and changed in his attitude. Think of his courage to speak on the day of Pentecost about Christ so soon after the Crucifixion! He said the nation had crucified the Messiah. Although thousands became disciples as a result, many more did not (perhaps he spoke to 10,000 on that occasion). Moreover, he spoke in the Temple. What courage he displayed! His epistles show that his consecration changed him as a man. Such a *strong* personality could now be soft and gentle and speak about prayer life, seeking peace, and being compassionate—yet retain his courage for Christ! Although Peter was ignorant in the sense of being *unlearned*, without formal education, he was intelligent and very knowledgeable.

Jesus not only said Peter was a “rock” but also instructed him to “feed my lambs.” Normally we would not think of a rock feeding a gentle lamb (Matt. 16:18; John 21:15). Evidently, *to be of the Little Flock*, this *tender* disposition must be intermingled with *firmness*. We know this because God Himself is pictured as both a diamond and a sard stone. “Godlikeness” means a *balancing out* of a previously misshaped character that was either too soft or too hard. Justice and love have to be balanced.

The implication in verses 10–12 is that we must *continue* to follow these instructions, or we will jeopardize our future salvation (“For he that will love life, and see good days, let him....”). Those who obey the Lord’s counsel in the present life will “see good days” by attaining the Little Flock. Those of the Great Company will be somewhat ashamed in that they will be shown to be inferior, but at least they will get life. Not properly obeying the Lord’s counsel will either terminate our future life completely in Second Death or just partially affect our future life by limiting it to the Great Company.

Our conduct will definitely affect our prayer life. We are responsible for our conduct, but it must be *according to the knowledge of the Word*. At times Jesus made very strong statements. Depending on the circumstances and whom we are addressing, we must do likewise. We must speak with the authority of the *Bible*.

1 Pet. 3:13 And who is he that will harm you, if ye be followers of that which is good?

1 Pet. 3:14 But and if ye suffer for righteousness’ sake, happy are ye: and be not afraid of their terror, neither be troubled;

Verses 12–14 are a summary of the advice on how to be a servant, a citizen of the government, a wife (or husband), or one of the brotherhood. *If we try to do all that is recorded here and we still suffer*, then we should be happy and unafraid, for we are suffering for righteousness’ sake. If the Lord’s eyes are over us and His ears are open to our prayers and we have His approval, then there is *no reason* to fear what others may say or do to us. Even if we lose the world’s friendship, we will not be harmed as a new creature, and we will be pleasing God and have His approval.

“But and if ye suffer for righteousness’ sake, happy are ye.” Suffering for *righteousness’ sake* is different from suffering for Christ’s sake, which is espousing him as our Savior and following his instructions instead of some other pagan idea. The advice starting in 1 Peter 2:11 pertains to

daily living, which should be guided by *behavioral principles*. Suffering in these categories in connection with consistency of obedience would be suffering for righteousness' sake and *principle*. In regard to the Sermon on the Mount, there is a difference between suffering "for my [Jesus'] sake" and suffering "for righteousness' sake." "Blessed are they which are persecuted *for righteousness' sake*: for theirs is the kingdom of heaven. Blessed are ye, when men shall revile you, and persecute you, and shall say all manner of evil against you falsely, *for my sake*" (Matt. 5:10,11).

When we consider Peter's strength of character and his tender conscience, no doubt it bothered him all the rest of his life that he had denied Jesus three times prior to the Crucifixion. Now Peter was determined *never* to be afraid again, yet he was sympathetic toward others, for he, too, had once had problems.

1 Pet. 3:15 But sanctify the Lord God in your hearts: and be ready always to give an answer to every man that asketh you a reason of the hope that is in you with meekness and fear:

"Be ready always to give an answer ... [regarding] the hope that is in you." We are not to be ashamed, afraid, or unprepared. There are times when we should be not merely unafraid but also more aggressive and speak out. At other times we should pursue peace. The point is to have the eagerness and readiness of mind to use all opportunities properly. The "hope" we are to defend is a broad term referring to our expectations—whether about the high calling, the Kingdom, the Second Presence of Christ, the resurrection, or another aspect.

"Be ready always to give an answer ... with *meekness and fear*." This is a *balanced* thought. Aggressiveness is desired in that we should always be ready to give an answer or reason, but the response should be given with both meekness and reverence. While we should not fear to speak out, yet we should not lash out with words too strong for the occasion. In other words, we should not be unnecessarily combatant. And to be able to give a reason implies that we have *studied* the Lord's Word first. But after studying, we should not be either too reticent or too aggressive. The "sledge hammer" approach should not be used. "Let your speech be always with grace, seasoned with salt, that ye may know *how ye ought to answer every man*" (Col. 4:6).

Notice, it is *when we are asked* that we should be ready to give an answer. In other words, we can be very ready and willing to give an answer, but we should use discretion. When an opportunity arises, we are to *use* it, but we are not to force the opportunity.

The Revised Standard reads, "Always be prepared to make a *defense* to any one who calls you to account." The thought is that when we are *challenged*, we should be ready to give a defense. Earlier Peter had said we would be spoken of as evildoers (that is, we would be challenged), and when this happens, we should give an answer. Of course a simple question that is sincere and desirous of an answer certainly would not be treated the same as an accusation that we are evildoers.

1 Pet. 3:16 Having a good conscience; that, whereas they speak evil of you, as of evildoers, they may be ashamed that falsely accuse your good conversation in Christ.

Accusations against a Christian should be *false*. We will be accused of evildoing, but in due time (in the Kingdom), we will be vindicated *if our conduct is above reproach now*.

1 Pet. 3:17 For it is better, if the will of God be so, that ye suffer for well doing, than for evil doing.

If it is God's will that we suffer (*and it is*), we should suffer for *well* doing, not for evil doing. Several times Peter has mentioned this thought of Christians suffering falsely as evildoers, showing the early Christians in Asia Minor suffered a great deal along this line.

1 Pet. 3:18 For Christ also hath once suffered for sins, the just for the unjust, that he might bring us to God, being put to death in the flesh, but quickened by the Spirit:

After all, if Christ our Head, who was *sinless and just*, had to suffer as an evildoer, we should not be surprised to suffer likewise. Although Jesus suffered in a *specialized* sense ("the just for the unjust"), in principle we should also try to suffer unjustly.

Jesus was "put to death in the flesh, but quickened by the Spirit." The reasoning of Peter in this verse is similar to that of Paul in 2 Corinthians 4:16, "For which cause we faint not; but though our outward man perish, yet the inward man is renewed day by day." *Progression* is shown here. The outward man perishes *progressively* as the inner man is being renewed.

Christ also suffered for sins, as we are supposed to do, but in his case the *thoroughly just* One suffered for the unjust (that is, for the Church and the world). The thought alluded to here and stated in 2 Corinthians 4:16 is not merely that the Christian dies because he was born in sin and shaped in iniquity, and hence has the seeds of death in him through Adam's fall, but also that the Christian's "outward man" perishes from the standpoint of *sacrifice*. (Suffering in the flesh is part of the sin offering.) The inner man is being renewed or is growing up at the same time, but both processes (the perishing of the outward man and the growing of the inner man) terminate in a definite conclusion: *death* of the flesh. Suffering in the flesh terminates in the actual *finality* of the death of the flesh, and the renewing in the spirit (if faithful) eventually ends up in life. Just as Jesus' *whole* ministry *culminated* in the Cross, the death of his flesh, and he received life as a spirit being, so the death of our flesh is the conclusion or result of a whole consecrated walk (*progression*) of suffering that will, hopefully, lead to our being raised as a glorious spirit being.

"Christ also hath *once* suffered for sins." This statement contradicts the doctrine of the Mass in the Roman Catholic Church, which is supposed to sacrifice Jesus continually.

1 Pet. 3:19 By which also he went and preached unto the spirits in prison;

1 Pet. 3:20 Which sometime were disobedient, when once the longsuffering of God waited in the days of Noah, while the ark was a-preparing, wherein few, that is, eight souls were saved by water.

God did not terminate sin right away but permitted it to continue and get worse. This permission of sin seemed to show that God was impotent as far as abolishing evil and that He was unable to handle the situation. As a result, some of the angels were encouraged to be disobedient, whereas many might have refrained from disobedience through prudence if the situation had appeared otherwise. The seeming lack of punishment for wrongdoing—God's long-suffering and waiting instead of quickly punishing evil—was a crucial test of obedience to the angels.

This verse shows that the angels who were disobedient materialized late into the First World or "world that then was" (2 Pet. 3:6). The time span of this dispensation, which extended from the creation of Adam to the Flood, covered 1,656 years. Adam *died* through a *process of decay* at age 930, which was more than halfway into this period. With the human race *dying* and the situation on earth looking hopeless, some of the angels decided to "help" things along by creating a new hybrid race. This they did by injecting their *undying* spirit-being seed into the

human race (into the womb of women) and thus producing *living* children. The theory may be correct, but their actions were wrong, being contrary to God's plan.

Incidentally, although incorrigible spirit beings are doomed for destruction and can therefore die, they do not decay and grow old as fallen human beings do. For this reason the fallen angels concluded they were immune to death.

The materialization of the fallen angels whereby they actually left their "first estate" and married "daughters of men" occurred late in the pre-Flood era, that is, primarily in the 120 years while the Ark was being built (Jude 6; Gen. 6:4). Before that, the angels were ministers trying to help mankind, materializing only for specific missions and then dematerializing and returning to heaven. But some began to like it here and changed their abode, taking wives and having children. Satan was the leader, trying to produce a living race through intermarriage. When he was not punished, many others followed his lead.

"Few, that is, eight souls were saved by water." Only "eight souls" were saved in the Ark.

1 Pet. 3:21 The like figure whereunto even baptism doth also now save us (not the putting away of the filth of the flesh, but the answer of a good conscience toward God,) by the resurrection of Jesus Christ:

Why are the Ark and the saving of eight souls by water likened to baptism? This verse is a comparison of John's baptism with Jesus' baptism. (John's baptism was unto repentance, and the water symbolized a washing or cleansing.) Peter is going out of his way to say, "Do not misunderstand, for I am talking not about John's baptism but about the baptism into Christ's death." God deals with us according to the *will*, not according to the external deeds of the flesh. When we are baptized into Jesus' death, we are covered with a robe of righteousness, and thus we can be void of offense from the standpoint of conscience. Our *heart* condition is what counts, for if our salvation depended on the deeds of the flesh without this covering, we would all be condemned. Because of the imputed robe of righteousness, we can be free of unnecessary guilt.

This verse proves that *all*—Jew and Gentile—need Jesus' baptism in order to become Christians. Regarding salvation, a baptism into Jesus' death is also a baptism into his resurrection, for we are raised in "newness of life" (Rom. 6:4).

How was the resurrection prefigured in this illustration of the Ark? Those in the Ark were saved. The Ark was a means of safety that deposited eight souls on Mount Ararat, on the shore of safety. The number 8 signifies a new or fresh start, regeneration. It presupposes a previous completion.

7 = completion (a complete unit)
+1, or a total of 8 = a new day or a new start

When the eight souls were deposited on Mount Ararat, a new day or life began. God told Noah to "be fruitful, and multiply," just as He had instructed Adam (Gen. 8:17). Although not perfect like Adam, Noah was *reckoned* perfect and was reassured by the bow of promise. Hence there was a fresh start after the Flood.

Another example of the number 8 signifying a new day will be demonstrated when Ezekiel's Temple is built. In a portion of the Third Temple structure, eight steps will symbolize the Millennial Day.

Since only eight souls were "saved by water," *all the rest* of the people were *destroyed* by water.

1 Pet. 3:22 Who is gone into heaven, and is on the right hand of God; angels and authorities and powers being made subject unto him.

Jesus has “gone into heaven, and is on the right hand of God.” After his resurrection Jesus went to heaven to be on the right hand of God. All powers there (except God) were made subject to him at that time.

In the Ark illustration, where would the “going into heaven” take place? It would be after the Ark landed when Noah entered a new life and got the commission from God to “multiply,” etc. Noah pictures Jesus as the Second Adam in the new age with the commission to regenerate the human race (1 Cor. 15:45). Those who get into the Ark with the antitypical Noah are the Church. Therefore, if the eighth soul is Christ in this picture, then the other seven souls are the Little Flock class developed during the seven stages of the Church ($7 + 1 = 8$). The fact that “angels and authorities and powers ... [were] made subject unto him” signifies the new commission and authority of the resurrected Christ.

Verses 20–22: Peter is describing the baptism into Christ’s death, and the Ark is a symbol of this baptism. Noah represents Christ. The other seven on the Ark (Noah’s family) represent the Church, that is, the seven stages of the Church. The number 8 is a symbol of regeneration, resurrection, a new start, a new beginning—just as the number 8 is the start of a new week, seven days having passed ($7 + 1 = 8$).

The number 8 has become a symbol of resurrection for several reasons. In Arabic numerals, the number 10 is the revolving point, but number 7 is also a mark of complete units, as in the days of the week. The eighth day begins a new week. The notes of the musical scale are seven plus a repeat an octave higher: do, re, mi, fa, so, la, ti, do. The Bible uses multiples of both 7 and 10 to show completion, but 7 is used more in connection with the Church.

In another picture, only the three sons represent the Church, and Noah again pictures Jesus: 3 (sons) + 1 (Noah) = 4. In this case, the wives represent the covenant under which the three sons are developed. Like the three wise men and the three Hebrew children, the three sons picture three classes of the feet members at the end of the age. Why the *end of the age*? Of the 1,656 years from Adam to the Flood, the Ark pertains to only the *last* 120 years. Hence Peter is using an end-time picture.

There is still another type. Since the Flood represents the Time of Trouble, living *beyond* the Flood pictures the Millennial Age after the Time of Trouble. Since the number 8 can refer to the Millennium or to the age beyond the Millennium depending on context, how can we prove that in this picture the eighth day represents the Millennial Age? The animals are the clue. Both clean and unclean animals were also saved and carried through the Flood, and they picture the world of mankind. Since no “unclean” of the human race will live beyond the Kingdom, we know this picture refers to the Millennium.

The animals that entered the Ark were paired (Gen. 7:2 RSV). With seven pairs of each clean animal and one pair of each unclean animal being taken onto the Ark, the proportion was 7 to 1. In addition to the Little Flock, the Great Company class is shown in this picture of eight souls being saved in the Ark. Noah (Jesus), Noah’s three sons (the Church), and Noah’s wife and the wives of his three sons (the Great Company) were all saved and brought to a new life. Why do the four wives represent the Great Company? There are two reasons: (1) They were not direct descendants of Noah and hence were not as closely related as the sons. (2) The names of the wives are not given, whereas the names of the sons are recorded. Therefore, the wives (the Great Company) have a *subservient* role. Although the wives got life, they were merely

associates.

Verse 20 says that “few ... were saved.” In comparison to the world of mankind, few will be saved through baptism as either Little Flock or Great Company. It might be a true statement to say that a saint is “one in a million” compared with the world, for probably only several million people (between 2 million and 7 million) were alive at the time of the Flood as opposed to the eight souls who were saved.

Here we have a clue as to how many fallen angels there were. Half of the several million people would have been female (between 1 million and 3.5 million). Since the fallen angels married “daughters of men,” we know that there were not more than this number of fallen angels. And we know that the *holy* angels outnumber the *fallen* angels.

In regard to the ratio of one pair of unclean animals to seven pairs of clean animals, it is possible that in the Kingdom one out of eight of the world of mankind will remain unclean and thus go into Second Death. This would be about 12 percent—a *sizable* number! If 100 billion people have lived, this would mean 12 billion would be incorrigible.

With the Church, the consecrated of the Gospel Age, there are several pictures of the Second Death class. Two are as follows:

1. Nadab, Abihu, Eleazer, and Ithamar were the four sons of Aaron, the high priest. Nadab and Abihu, the two who died for offering “strange fire,” picture those who go into Second Death. Eleazer and Ithamar, the two who were spared, picture the Little Flock and the Great Company, respectively.
2. Of the 2 million Israelites who left Egypt in the Exodus, all over a certain age died and thus did not enter the Promised Land except Joshua and Caleb. However, the next generation, which totaled the same number (2 million) did enter. In other words, half of the people entered the Promised Land and half perished. As children of *Israel*, not of the world, they represent the consecrated.

Here, then, are two examples of a possible numeric 50-50 proportion of the saved versus those who go into Second Death in the Gospel Age. Peter provides further information in the next chapter: “And if the righteous scarcely be saved, where shall the ungodly and the sinner appear?” (1 Pet. 4:18). Probably the percentage of the Second Death class in the Gospel Age is higher than in the Kingdom. To fall back from the Little Flock to the Great Company is one thing, but to fall back from the Great Company means Second Death. Our standard should be high. If our standard is lax, there is great danger of falling into Second Death.

In 1 Peter 4:18, what is the difference between the “ungodly” and the “sinner”? The “sinner” is *obviously* such (the Nadab element). However, the “ungodly” can be outwardly godly and inwardly ungodly (the Abihu element). Both classes go into Second Death. “Nadab” means “lordly, aggressive.” This class expose themselves as sinners, for they are outwardly and obviously sinners. “Abihu” means “love of the Father.” This class *appear* to be loving, kind, and nice (according to worldly standards but not according to God’s standards). They are outwardly obedient and inwardly corrupt. The point is that the standard for life is *stricter* than is generally conceded.

Agape love is not emotional; it is a disinterested love and hence would fully acquiesce in the destruction of an incorrigible soul, *whoever* that individual might be. God would make that decision, and *agape* love would concur. In other words, if God decides that certain ones are unfit to live and will go into Second Death, *all* who get life on *any* plane—Little Flock, Great

Company, or world of mankind—will accept that decision. If told to be the executioner, the Little Flock will dispassionately mete out such judgment—even if the recipient is the closest relative or associate. When considered in *this* light, *agape* love is higher than *phileo* love. *Agape* love is a *principled* love, whereas *phileo* love is an *emotional* love. There is a common (*phileo*) love among the brethren, but *agape* love is higher—it is Godlike love.

The account in Exodus 32:25–28 is pertinent to this subject. “And when Moses saw that the people were naked; (for Aaron had made them naked unto their shame among their enemies:) Then Moses stood in the gate of the camp, and said, Who is on the LORD’S side? let him come unto me. And all the sons of Levi gathered themselves together unto him. And he said unto them, Thus saith the LORD God of Israel, Put every man his sword by his side, and go in and out from gate to gate throughout the camp, and slay every man his brother, and every man his companion, and every man his neighbour. And the children of Levi did according to the word of Moses: and there fell of the people that day about three thousand men.” In connection with the golden calf incident, Moses commanded the sons of Levi to slay with the sword “every man his brother, ... companion [friend], and ... neighbor.”

We should consider the principle carefully. If asked by a draft board or someone else if we would ever kill anybody, shouldn’t our answer be, “Yes, if God wanted me to”? Moreover, Jesus said in John 18:36, “If my kingdom were of this world, then would my servants fight [for it].” Many mistakenly think a pacifist is one who cannot kill under *any* circumstance.

Some erroneously think that *agape* love is so very generous. It is one thing to be magnanimous regarding an *opportunity* for all, but it is quite another matter to be so magnanimous regarding the *results*. The results are determined by how each individual responds. *Agape* love is a principled love.

1 Pet. 4:1 Forasmuch then as Christ hath suffered for us in the flesh, arm yourselves likewise with the same mind: for he that hath suffered in the flesh hath ceased from sin;

Verses 1–5 are a follow-up to verse 18 of the previous chapter. (Verses 19–22 regarding the Ark, baptism, and souls being saved are an interim thought.) Peter now resumes with thoughts about the sufferings of Christ.

“He that hath suffered in the flesh hath ceased from sin.” Many in monastic institutions use this verse to justify flagellation of the body and punishing oneself physically as a means of expiating sin, but that is not what this verse teaches.

Generally speaking, if a person is bold and courageous for righteousness and truth, it is an evidence that he is pleasing the Lord. Activity that brings suffering and reproach for righteousness’ sake is an evidence that a person’s will and intent are to please God. Although not a foolproof evidence, this is generally true. If we stand up for God and suffer for it, if we suffer for principle, if we suffer by curbing our own desires, if we suffer for witnessing and testifying about Jesus, etc., etc., these are favorable manifestations the Lord is looking for in us.

Some might take this verse to its conclusion and say that a person who not only suffers but also literally dies in the flesh ceases from sin, but that is not the thought here. This verse pertains to the *present* life. We *die daily*. Verse 2 proves that verse 1 applies to the present life. Also, the context (1 Pet. 3:16–18) shows that the suffering Peter refers to is suffering for well-doing and righteousness’ sake, not for self-inflicted scourgings, etc. The context disproves the claims of monastic orders.

1 Pet. 4:2 That he no longer should live the rest of his time in the flesh to the lusts of men,

but to the will of God.

We should no longer live the rest of our time in the flesh to gratify lusts and desires of the flesh, but we should live to do the will of God. While earlier a dispensational aspect of 1 Peter 3:20–22 was discussed in connection with the eighth day and coming forth from the Ark, the Apostle Peter is saying that just as Noah and his family lived a new life when they came forth from the Ark, so the Christian should live a completely new and different life when he has been converted and baptized and has forsaken the world.

1 Pet. 4:3 For the time past of our life may suffice us to have wrought the will of the Gentiles, when we walked in lasciviousness, lusts, excess of wine, revellings, banquetings, and abominable idolatries:

The new creature should avoid “*excess of wine,*” not all wine. The thought is that with *moderation*, wine would be proper, generally speaking.

1 Pet. 4:4 Wherein they think it strange that ye run not with them to the same excess of riot, speaking evil of you:

New creatures should not join in with former worldly companions in the same dissolute course of profligacy. Consider pleasure, for example. Sometimes for health reasons—and especially for mental problems—a Christian will take a day off from work to rest or go to the beach. Just remember that *moderation* is the rule. It is one thing to pursue pleasure regularly and excessively as a way of life and quite another to do something for relaxation occasionally. For instance, a Christian should not play tennis regularly to consume time and eliminate boredom.

Verses 3 and 4 in the *Diaglott* read: “... having walked in licentiousness, inordinate desires, excesses in wine, dissolute revels, intemperate banquets, and lawless idolatries; in which they are greatly surprised that you do not run with them the same dissolute course of profligacy, blaspheming.”

1 Pet. 4:5 Who shall give account to him that is ready to judge the quick and the dead.

“Him” would be Jesus. This verse could apply to either the Church or the world, but the application is probably to the Church. The reason the Church class do not indulge in these things is that they realize they will have to give an account of their life to Jesus.

“Wherein they [those of the world] think it strange that ye [the consecrated] run not with them to the same excess of riot, speaking evil of you [the consecrated]: who shall give [an] account to ... [Jesus].”

1 Pet. 4:6 For for this cause was the gospel preached also to them that are dead, that they might be judged according to men in the flesh, but live according to God in the spirit.

Based on the previous chapter, verse 6 can apply to either the world or the Church. Regarding the Church, Jesus was put to death in the flesh but raised spirit, i.e., a spirit being (1 Pet. 3:18). The Lord judges us in connection with how thoroughly we put to death the flesh. Since Jesus was perfect, he had no sin to put away, but the expunging of his own nature, laying it down, is an example to the Church, who have an imperfect nature (which is justified in Christ) and are judged according to how they conduct themselves in the present life.

Peter’s argument is probably that as Jesus set the example in putting to death his flesh, so we (the Church) must do the same. We are judged as to how well we “live according to God in the

spirit.” But there is also a *progressive* aspect. In the present life, we are “judged according to [our being] men in the flesh,” and if faithful, we will “live [in the future] according to God in the spirit.” In the present life, we are judged by God according to our heart intentions. We live as if walking in newness of life, hoping to attain the high calling. If faithful in this walk, we will get the crown in the next life. In other words, God judges the Church by how they put to death the flesh in the present life, and He will reward them accordingly in the spirit (as spirit beings) in the future.

When verse 6 is applied to the world, the reasoning would be as follows. God is just in condemning the world in that they pay no attention to Him and they continue in their ungodly pursuits. God is also justified in granting a higher reward to those who obey Him by forsaking the present life and consecrating their lives to Him.

1 Pet. 4:7 But the end of all things is at hand: be ye therefore sober, and watch unto prayer.

“But the end of all things is at hand.” This admonition applies especially to Christians living in the Harvest in that the term “all things” refers to the present evil world, but there is also a broader application to all Christians throughout the age. The messages to the seven churches in Revelation 2 and 3 are an example. Each message especially applied to the particular period of the Church to which it was addressed, but it also applied to the entire Church. What the Spirit said to one Church applies to all the churches. In regard to the epistles of Peter, their *location* in Holy Writ, as well as their *message*, is peculiarly adaptable to experiences at the end of the age, especially the second epistle. However, their principles also apply throughout the age.

This verse can be viewed from the standpoint that each Christian lives but a *short* time. Even if one is consecrated for 60 years, this is not a long period of time. Each one has to make his calling and election sure in a relatively short time and, therefore, should be “sober, and watch unto prayer.” Thus verse 7 has been appropriate for individual Christians throughout the age, but for the Church as a whole, it applies to the end of the age.

From God’s standpoint, two thirds of the permission of evil was over when Jesus died on the Cross, opening up the new and living way. Also from His standpoint, it could be said that today six sevenths of the Seventh Creative Day is over. But that concept is not realistically practical to us as individuals. Therefore, it is better to view this verse from the standpoint that the Christian’s personal life span is *short* no matter when he lives in the Gospel Age. And for the Church as a whole, the time is short at the end of the age.

In summary, verse 7 can be viewed three ways:

1. From a personal standpoint
2. From a dispensational standpoint
3. From God’s overall perspective

“Sober” has the thought of “earnest” in another translation. Because “the end of all things is at hand,” we are to be “earnest, and watch unto prayer.” Prior to consecration our time was generally spent in revelings, drunkenness, etc. (verse 3), but now we should live soberly and earnestly with watchfulness and prayer.

1 Pet. 4:8 And above all things have fervent charity among yourselves: for charity shall cover the multitude of sins.

“Above all things have fervent charity [love] among yourselves: for charity shall cover a [Diaglott] multitude of sins.” Peter emphasizes charity as a special need, but this does not mean

that we should be forgiving and kind *no matter what* the circumstances or that *nothing* should interfere with forgiving love. This “charity” is *agape* love, a disinterested love, which puts *God’s will first*, not our emotional love for one another and for our families.

The object of disfellowshipping a sinner is to bring him to godly repentance so that we can receive him back. Therefore, the door should not be slammed and bolted unless a person has sinned the sin unto Second Death. Only in these rare cases should an irrevocable stand be taken.

An illustration of repentance would be Peter himself, who denied the Lord with cursing. Then later, based on personal experience, he said in his epistle, “The Lord knoweth how to forgive.” But consider Peter’s case. He realized he had sinned, and when the Lord looked at him, Peter went out and wept bitterly. His attitude and action manifested repentance. Later, while the apostles were in the boat fishing, John called Peter’s attention to the Lord on the shore. Peter’s love for the Lord was so great that he jumped into the water and swam to shore. First, however, he covered his nakedness. His enthusiasm to not wait for the boat to reach shore but to cover himself and plunge into the water to reach the Lord sooner was commendable. This incident shows that certain conditions of repentance and recognition are conducive to reinstatement to the Lord’s favor.

Judas also denied and betrayed the Lord, and he also wept, but his weeping was not a sign of repentance. Judas had had previous opportunities to reconsider his plans, but he continued to pursue his *premeditated* course. In contrast, Peter was overtaken by a *momentary* surprise.

With us today, if God has given us previous opportunities to make proper judgments and we have done so in regard to others, then when the same situation occurs to one close to us—either in our family or in our ecclesia—we must be consistent and decide correctly. If we decide and act wrongly, we are accountable—and especially if one is an elder.

Having fervent charity means that the *desire and hope for the sinner to recover* is always there, but we must follow the steps for recovery that *God* has outlined. Our fervent love should be fair, reasonable, and just. We should desire the retrieval of a sinner.

Another example is the prodigal son (Luke 15:11–24). When he came to his senses through disillusionment with his life, he *returned* and went to his father *first*. Only then did his father emotionally receive him. Prior to his son’s manifestation of repentance, the father did not lavish gifts on him. The father *did not forsake principle*.

In this *same* chapter, in which Peter says to have fervent love above all, he makes another statement to counterbalance a too liberal interpretation: “And if the righteous scarcely be saved, where shall the ungodly and the sinner appear?” (1 Pet. 4:18).

Comment: We have to draw a line in our fellowship with those who have taken a wrong stand because if full fellowship is extended, as was the case before the violation of principle, the whole lesson will be negated. The entire household of faith will think the matter has been reconciled. Therefore, there should be reservations in fellowship until such time as, hopefully, the wrong is corrected. Otherwise, the whole lesson will go down the drain.

Peter’s statement “charity shall cover the [a] multitude of sins” reminds us of James 5:20, “He which converteth the sinner from the error of his way shall save a soul from [Second] death, and shall hide a multitude of sins.” James is saying that in the case of an individual who has sinned, his repentance will “hide” his own sins and save him from Second Death. The *repentant* sinner is the object of mercy.

Verse 8 directs Christians to “have fervent charity among yourselves [plural].” In other words, several brethren might be involved in the difference or differences, and charity should be exercised toward them. Here the beholder of those who have problems is told to have mercy toward them. These “sins” would primarily be shortcomings, although partially willful sins could be included.

The Lord’s Prayer gives the principle that we will be forgiven for our trespasses in accordance with our forgiveness of others who trespass against *us* (not against the Lord or someone else). There are certain things that we may not forgive. It is incorrect to say that we should forgive everybody everything. We cannot forgive what someone does to someone else. That matter is between those two individuals and the Lord. God will have mercy on those who forgive according to *Scriptural* reasoning and *His* mind.

Some sins are *impersonal* wrongs—that is, not against us or another individual but a wrong deed. And perhaps the one who committed the sin has brought the matter to the Lord in prayer, asking for and receiving forgiveness. In that case, we are merely a spectator on the sidelines, and we do not know what the situation is between that person and the Lord. In other words, the sin is not a public one.

It is not good for us to analyze one another like psychiatrists and psychoanalysts. This practice would tend to cultivate a superior attitude on the part of the beholder. However, the Scriptures do tell us to study deeds and actions—our own as well as those of others. God encourages critical (not hypercritical) examination.

We must guard against a provincial love. The basis upon which we can gather for conventions is having a general love for all of the brotherhood. Certain groups are prejudiced against other groups, but such prejudice should not prevent fellowship. Our nobility of thought should realize we are *all* imperfect, and therefore, we should be able to have at least *some* fellowship with others. Otherwise, everyone would polarize and there would be no conventions. If we look hypercritically at each other, we can all find faults to “justify” not meeting together even as a little ecclesia, let alone gathering in convention.

In 2 Peter 2:9, the apostle is partly referring to his own experience. “The Lord knoweth how to deliver the godly out of temptations, and to reserve the unjust unto the day of judgment to be punished.” Peter was really right-hearted, but he fell temporarily. If the Lord had not rescued him, Peter could have been swallowed up in the temptation or trial. Just as Jesus rescued Peter out of the water when he began to sink, so Jesus rescued Peter by giving him a look after Peter had denied him three times and also by appearing to him after his resurrection. If Jesus had not desired to retrieve Peter, he could have passed him by and disowned him. However, Jesus left the door open, and Peter took the steps necessary for retrieval.

Fervent charity goes beyond sweet fellowship to the point where we would gladly sacrifice a temporal matter, if necessary, in order to remove temptation from a brother or sister in Christ. An example might be the complete abstaining from wine in the presence of a brother.

A caution is needed. Verse 8 does not mean that we should put a blanket over everything. Just as a person puts a cloth over dirty laundry, so some erroneously think we should put a mantle of charity (love) over all misdeeds. It is one thing to have the desire to forgive when it is permissible to do so according to God’s Word, but it is another matter entirely to just give a *carte blanche* approval and forgiveness in cases that would be out of harmony with Scripture.

If we look for faults, we will find them quickly, but if we have fervent charity for the brethren

as a whole, we will overlook a lot of things. However, the Scriptures say we cannot overlook certain matters. For his three denials of Jesus, Peter had to make three confessions of faith. Some erroneously think Godlikeness and love mean to forgive without any conditions. That is not God's standard of love—it is weakness and pure emotionalism!

1 Pet. 4:9 Use hospitality one to another without grudging.

“Extend hospitality to one another without murmuring” (paraphrase). This exhortation is also conditional, for hospitality has limits. For instance, it should be made known in advance by the host what the terms of the visit will be so that the guest will not overstay. In 2 Thessalonians 3:6–15, Paul advised that a sponger should be denied the company of his host: “*withdraw yourselves from every brother that walketh disorderly, and not after the tradition which he received of us.... For even when we were with you, this we commanded ... that if any would not work, neither should he eat.... And if any man obey not our word by this epistle, note that man, and have no company with him, that he may be ashamed.*”

Fervent love is *controlled and disciplined according to principle*, and so is proper hospitality. It is one thing to be hospitable for an occasion or two, and it is another matter to be hospitable indefinitely.

1 Pet. 4:10 As every man hath received the gift, even so minister the same one to another, as good stewards of the manifold grace of God.

The talents, gifts, or abilities that a Christian has should be used in ministering to others. We should consider ourselves as a steward of whatever talents or gifts we possess. In other words, we are a steward of God's grace, and we are to use our gifts in the Master's service to benefit others.

1 Pet. 4:11 If any man speak, let him speak as the oracles of God; if any man minister, let him do it as of the ability which God giveth: that God in all things may be glorified through Jesus Christ, to whom be praise and dominion for ever and ever. Amen.

“If any man speak, let him speak as the oracles of God.” A wrong conclusion could be drawn; namely, that whenever we speak, we should speak with authority and conviction as though declaring the oracles of God. Instead the point is that we should *study a matter thoroughly before speaking* to make sure we are speaking according to and in harmony with the oracles of God. The result is then a qualified, limited, *disciplined* speaking. In fact, manifesting charity, extending hospitality, having a gift or talent, and speaking should all be done *judiciously*, in harmony with *God's Word*. All of these are to be *disciplined* qualities—disciplined according to the Word.

“If any man minister, let him do it as of the ability which God giveth.” When a Christian serves, he is to serve according to the ability or strength that God gives.

The purpose of so speaking and so serving is so “that God in all things may be glorified through Jesus Christ, to whom be praise and dominion for ever and ever. Amen.” In other words, we should speak or serve to glorify *God*. “To *God* be praise and dominion for ever and ever.”

1 Pet. 4:12 Beloved, think it not strange concerning the fiery trial which is to try you, as though some strange thing happened unto you:

1 Pet. 4:13 But rejoice, inasmuch as ye are partakers of Christ's sufferings; that, when his glory shall be revealed, ye may be glad also with exceeding joy.

This “fiery trial” is limited to a particular type of trial: being partakers of Christ’s sufferings. There are other types of trials, such as to develop patience or to endure sickness, but these trials are not necessarily suffering for Christ. The Pastor made a distinction between self-denial and cross bearing (suffering for Christ). The latter category is higher.

Instead of “the fiery trial which is to try you,” the *Diaglott* has “the burning among you.” This gives a *dispensational* aspect at the end of the age regarding a “fiery trial” within the Church itself (in addition to a general application all down the age). “Be not surprised at the burning among you, occurring to you for a trial, as though some strange thing has befallen you.” This verse hints of a condition to come where the faithful feet members will *seem* to be on the outs. Regarded as problem makers, they will be ostracized, but when this happens, if we are the recipient of such treatment, we are to “rejoice,” for we will be “partakers of Christ’s sufferings.” When Christ’s glory is later revealed, it will be apparent that the stand taken was the correct one.

1 Peter 2:20 speaks of suffering for well doing as, for example, when witnessing to the world. However, verses 12 and 13 are limited more to trials occurring in the professed Church. Verse 14 helps to verify this thought: we are to be *happy* if we are reproached for the name of Christ. Verse 17 also pinpoints the trial as pertaining to the professed Church: “judgment must begin at the house of God.”

1 Pet. 4:14 If ye be reproached for the name of Christ, happy are ye; for the spirit of glory and of God resteth upon you: on their part he is evil spoken of, but on your part he is glorified.

The faithful will be “reproached for the *name* of Christ,” for his *cause*, for his *Word*. If we stand up for a principle, even among the consecrated, we can suffer just as much as if we were doing this in the world.

1 Pet. 4:15 But let none of you suffer as a murderer, or as a thief, or as an evildoer, or as a busybody in other men’s matters.

“Let none of you suffer as a murderer [brother hater], or as a thief [robbing one’s reputation or influence through slander], or as an evildoer [including countenancing evil], or as a busybody.” Such may *think* they are doing God a service, but they are not.

If we practice being fair and just, we will be less apt to be prejudiced when a difficult situation arises that concerns us personally or those close to us. Instead we will be thinking of God’s Word and His principles, and we will not choose sides because of our emotions.

1 Pet. 4:16 Yet if any man suffer as a Christian, let him not be ashamed; but let him glorify God on this behalf.

1 Pet. 4:17 For the time is come that judgment must begin at the house of God: and if it first begin at us, what shall the end be of them that obey not the gospel of God?

Verses 17–19 are *dispensational*. “Judgment must *begin* at the house of God [at the end of the age].” And if judgment first begins with us, “what shall the end be of them that obey *not* the gospel of God [after hearing and understanding it]?” This contrast will occur *within the Church itself*. A *consecrated* class will not be obedient and thus will not be saved. (Verse 18 continues this thought.) The disobedient consecrated are compared with the obedient consecrated. The phrase “them that obey not the gospel” does *not* refer to the world, for if it did, the world

would be put on the same level with the Church. Many in the nominal system mistakenly use this text to try to prove that those who do not believe now, in the present life, are doomed. However, the context shows that Peter is talking only to the *consecrated*. The world does not have the standard of the Great Company or the Little Flock.

Therefore, verse 17 refers to those who are consecrated to obey but do not and thus go into Second Death. They are *eternally* lost, and the “righteous” are *eternally* saved (from *eternal* death). Verse 17 is saying, “If judgment begins with *us*, what shall the end be of those *of us* who obey not the gospel?” Tares are not included in this verse, just the consecrated or Spirit-begotten.

1 Pet. 4:18 And if the righteous scarcely be saved, where shall the ungodly and the sinner appear?

The “righteous” who will “scarcely be saved” would be both the Little Flock and the Great Company. The Church will get an *abundant* entrance into the Kingdom, but the Great Company will be “saved ... so as by fire,” that is, scarcely saved, saved by the skin of their teeth, as it were (2 Pet. 1:11; 1 Cor. 3:15).

“Where shall the ungodly and the sinner appear?” This verse is used incorrectly to prove there is no hope of salvation beyond the present life. For this interpretation, the “righteous” are said to be the Church, and the “ungodly” and the “sinner” are defined as the unsaved world of mankind. But this interpretation would contradict other Scriptures. Verse 18 is used as a basis for the church denominations to go out and try to evangelize the world.

The correct interpretation is that “if the righteous scarcely be saved” *in the professed Church of Christ*, “where shall the ungodly and the sinner appear” *in the professed Church of Christ*? The point is that the ungodly and the sinner *will not appear*—they will go into Second Death. Peter treats this subject in more detail in his next epistle.

This verse is *not* referring to the *nominal* Church but to *all* consecrated Christians living at the end of the age, *wherever* they may be. There will be a trial *within the true Church!*

1 Pet. 4:19 Wherefore let them that suffer according to the will of God commit the keeping of their souls to him in well doing, as unto a faithful Creator.

Our suffering should be “according to the will of God.” The Revised Standard reads, “Therefore let those who suffer according to God’s will do right and entrust their souls to a faithful Creator.” We do not always understand why we are suffering something, but we should be sure we are doing what is the will of God. Others may not be faithful, but *God* is. Those who busybody are manifesting a form of pride, for they think they can manage someone else’s affairs better than that individual can himself. If we think someone is acting unwisely, the proper course is to pray for him and *not interfere*. We must have faith that God will grant direction. After all, *our* thinking might be warped instead of the other person’s.

It can be difficult for someone who has been in the teaching profession or in business as an employer or in certain other professions not to be a busybody and, instead, to look at himself critically and be willing to be taught of God, that is, to assume the position of a *student*.

1 Pet. 5:1 The elders which are among you I exhort, who am also an elder, and a witness of the sufferings of Christ, and also a partaker of the glory that shall be revealed:

Verses 1–3 refer to elected elders. We know this because they are to “feed the flock ... taking

the oversight thereof.” However, these verses could also include chronologically older and more mature brothers who should help the younger brethren. Verse 5 brings in a contrast between those chronologically older and those younger, so the same thought might also be in the text here. At any rate, elected elders are definitely referred to. Elected elders are to serve willingly, and not for money or as tyrants.

Peter was “a witness of the sufferings of Christ.” Other translations are more powerful than the King James. Even in the early Church, there was a push for democracy. It was like the situation with Moses. Certain individuals such as Miriam, Aaron, and Korah wanted to share Moses’ authority. Similarly some in the early Church wanted coequal rights. In the Corinthian Church, some even tried to be on the same level as the apostles.

Here Peter is not being boastful; rather, he injects a touch of sarcasm. “I am an elder, so you elders should at least listen to me from that standpoint. But I have a further qualification which you lack: I was a witness of the sufferings of Christ.” The Living Bible is good: “Now a word to you elders of the church: I too am an elder. With my own eyes I saw Christ dying on the cross, and I too will share his glory and honor when he returns. Fellow elders, this is my plea to you: Feed the flock.” And Phillips reads: “Now may I, who am myself an elder, say a word to you, my fellow elders ... [This is a form of delicate sarcasm: ‘Do you mind if I interrupt?'] I speak as one who actually saw Christ suffer.”

Peter actually witnessed or saw the sufferings of Christ on the Cross. In 2 Peter 1:16, the apostle additionally mentions that he was favored by seeing Jesus transfigured. Peter was with the Master in a very intimate way.

1 Pet. 5:2 Feed the flock of God which is among you, taking the oversight thereof, not by constraint, but willingly; not for filthy lucre, but of a ready mind;

1 Pet. 5:3 Neither as being lords over God’s heritage, but being examples to the flock.

Verses 2 and 3 present a balanced-out instruction to elders. There is a definite responsibility to “feed the flock” as shepherds, but they are not to dominate as “lords.” A shepherd goes *before* the sheep; he does not drive them. An elder should not be a tyrant.

1 Pet. 5:4 And when the chief Shepherd shall appear, ye shall receive a crown of glory that fadeth not away.

The “chief Shepherd” is Jesus. He is over the elders, who are the *undershepherds*. Jehovah is the Shepherd in Psalm 23, for He is the Great Shepherd in the highest sense. In verse 2, the elders are exhorted to feed or tend the flock as shepherds. Christ is not just a shepherd like them but is the chief Shepherd (verse 4).

1 Pet. 5:5 Likewise, ye younger, submit yourselves unto the elder. Yea, all of you be subject one to another, and be clothed with humility: for God resisteth the proud, and giveth grace to the humble.

While the chief thrust of the earlier part of this chapter is on *elected* elders, those who are mature in the truth are inferentially included. The older brethren should be concerned with the welfare of the younger brethren, and the younger brethren should submit themselves unto the older ones. In other words, “You who are younger in age and in the truth, submit yourselves to the older brethren. Be more considerate.”

Thus there are three ways of being an “elder”:

1. An elected elder
2. One more mature and more knowledgeable in the truth
3. One who is chronologically older

Each way of being an “elder” should be balanced proportionately. The Old Testament says to respect the “hoary head.” Older people are to be respected but not idolized. They are to be given a certain deference but not just obeyed *carte blanche*. When someone is not only older but more mature in knowledge, he should be given more deference. And if one is an elected elder, then there should be still more deference. And *all*—even those in recognized positions of leadership—are to be clothed with humility; that is, responsive, sensitive, and humble.

1 Pet. 5:6 Humble yourselves therefore under the mighty hand of God, that he may exalt you in due time:

Jesus certainly humbled himself “under the mighty hand of God,” and Peter refers to him frequently in his epistles. Therefore, we could paraphrase: “Humble yourselves under the mighty hand of God, as Jesus Christ did, so that God may exalt you in due time.” *Reprint* article No. 5185 states that if we have a humble spirit, we will neither underrate nor overrate our acquirements or achievements. Properly assessing our abilities is a hard balance to achieve. Drastically underrating them is a *false* humility, for if we do not recognize and *use* our talents to serve the Lord, we are not faithfully serving Him. Paul says we are to soberly appraise ourselves as to the gift that has been imparted and then to serve the Lord accordingly (Rom. 12:3–8).

1 Pet. 5:7 Casting all your care upon him; for he careth for you.

We are to cast all our care upon *God*, for *God* cares for us.

1 Pet. 5:8 Be sober, be vigilant; because your adversary the devil, as a roaring lion, walketh about, seeking whom he may devour:

A lion paralyzes its prey with a *sudden* roar. A lion stealthily stalks its prey so that the attack comes as a surprise. The thought is that Satan goes with stealth, and then he roars. Therefore, “be vigilant,” that is, *keep awake!*

Comment: “Devour” is “gulp down” in the *Diaglott*. If we are not vigilant, Satan will suddenly devour or gulp us down.

Reply: We have observed how quickly one can plunge into darkness after yielding to Satan’s ways. With violence and hate, Satan will quickly devour us if we let him.

Satan “walketh about” stealthily, always observing and looking for moments of weakness when he can pounce upon the unsuspecting one. He has already devoured the world, but he is looking for more, for another meal, as it were, among the *consecrated*. He constantly wants to increase the size of his domain. Therefore, we must be sober and vigilant at all times. After all, if we were in an area where we knew there was a literal lion lurking, we would be watchful and sober, not careless, indifferent, or frivolous. Satan tries to pounce when we would least expect him.

1 Pet. 5:9 Whom resist stedfast in the faith, knowing that the same afflictions are accomplished in your brethren that are in the world.

The tendency would be not to resist steadfastly with faith but to waver and be shaky. For

example, if we lived under the threat of the Gestapo or the KGB and a knock came at the door in the middle of the night when we least expected it, that would be our “moment of truth.” How would we react? Would we “resist steadfast in the faith” or shake in our boots and compromise?

“The same afflictions are accomplished in your brethren that are in the world.” The thought is that brethren *throughout* the world are having the same experiences. The experiences are not peculiar just to us. Jesus had them, the apostles had them, and so do “your [other] brethren.” This is a reassuring statement. An individual Christian’s experiences are not unique, so he should not blame himself that he did something wrong or think the Lord has forsaken him. We have companions and associates in tribulation. Peter was saying, “Keep this thought in mind, and take your stand for God!”

1 Pet. 5:10 But the God of all grace, who hath called us unto his eternal glory by Christ Jesus, after that ye have suffered a while, make you perfect, stablish, strengthen, settle you.

Why does Peter call the Father “the God of all grace”? If one does not resist steadfastly (firmly) in faith but is in doubt and wavering, he might then begin to question his relationship with God, and vice versa. As a result, he might view his sufferings as punishment, whereas actually such experiences are needed in order to inherit the highest position in the universe as one of the elect. God tests us severely not because He does not love us but *because He does love us*. Even severe experiences are experiences of *love* from “the God of all grace,” who has permitted them. They are designed for our highest welfare and benefit.

God “hath called us unto his eternal glory.” When we have a momentary, sudden experience, when we are pounced upon by Satan as a lion pounces upon his prey, some are paralyzed with fear and others resist, steadfast in faith. Consider the three Hebrew children, who were faced with life or death. In that experience, they fearlessly answered the king himself (Dan. 3:16–18 paraphrase): “We will not be careful, O king, in this matter. Be it known unto thee, that our God, whom we serve, is able to defend us. But if He does not, we still will *not bow down!*” They resisted; they were not mute out of fear. When Jesus was in the Garden of Gethsemane, the soldiers and Judas came to him at night. Jesus said (Matt. 26:55 paraphrase), “Why do you apprehend me at nighttime as though I am a thief? Why didn’t you seize me in the daytime? I have taught *openly*.” Thus Jesus resisted steadfast in the faith, even though he submitted to the experience. We are likewise to face the danger and resist with faith.

Peter contrasts eternal glory with faithfully suffering for a while. Paul made this contrast too. Eternal glory comes *after* the faithful suffering. “[May] God, ... *after that ye have suffered a while, make you perfect, stablish, strengthen, settle you.*” This standing strong, resisting steadfast in faith, is part of the crystallization process.

1 Pet. 5:11 To him be glory and dominion for ever and ever. Amen.

To *God* be glory and dominion forever. This verse helps to clarify 1 Peter 4:11 as also referring to God at the end.

“Amen.” Peter, as well as the Apostle John in the Book of Revelation, was emotional and said, “Amen!” (1 Pet. 5:11,14; Rev. 1:6,7,18; 22:20,21). In the high priest’s breastplate, the pyrope and the fire opal picture emotionalism but from two different standpoints. Peter was zealously emotional, and John was emotional in temperament.

Peter talks a lot about the *physical* sufferings of the Christian. Consider, for example, 1 Peter 4 and 5. Sufferings come from the world (1 Pet. 4:4), from God’s professed people (1 Pet. 4:12,13),

and from Satan (1 Pet. 5:8). Although all Christians have had these experiences, the placement of Peter's epistle at the end of the Bible alerts us to be especially on guard in these areas. Christ "suffered for us *in the flesh [physically]*," so we should be prepared for like suffering.

1 Pet. 5:12 By Silvanus, a faithful brother unto you, as I suppose, I have written briefly, exhorting, and testifying that this is the true grace of God wherein ye stand.

Silvanus delivered the epistle to the churches in 1 Peter 1:1. Mark, who was with Peter at this time, did the writing as Peter dictated. A fisherman previously, Peter did not have the education that Mark had. Mark was very young, whereas Peter, being near the end of his ministry, was much older; that is why Peter called Mark "my son" (verse 13). The Gospel of Mark, written earlier, was called by the early church fathers "the Gospel of Peter." As for the four Gospels, Matthew wrote his own Gospel, Mark gives Peter's thinking, Luke expresses Paul's thinking, and John wrote his own Gospel.

Where Acts 12:12 speaks of "John, whose surname was Mark," it is referring to John Marcus. In other words, there were many Johns and adding the surname identifies which John—just as there were many Simons: Simon Peter, Simon Zelotes, Simon the Canaanite, etc.

Like Paul, Peter assumed a fatherly role. These two apostles were higher than the others in the sense of responsibility. Not only was Peter given the "keys" to the Kingdom, but also Jesus said to Peter, "Feed my sheep. Feed my lambs." Peter had a pastoral duty in a special sense, and so did Paul.

"By Silvanus, a *faithful* brother unto you, as I suppose"; that is, "By Silvanus, whom I regard as a *faithful* brother." A token of recognition and approval was being given to Silvanus when he went out on his ministry. Otherwise, when Silvanus delivered the letter, the brethren might not have regarded him as a faithful brother.

1 Pet. 5:13 The church that is at Babylon, elected together with you, saluteth you; and so doth Marcus my son.

The Revised Standard has "she who is at Babylon" instead of "the church that is at Babylon." However, the reference is to the church, or *ecclesia*, a *company* of believers, because (1) no individual name of a sister is given and (2) they are "elected *together* with you." Peter is saying, "The brethren here also send their love."

This "Babylon" was somewhere in Syria, where Peter was at the time. In other words, this is not the Babylon near Ur and Nineveh, which was destroyed.

The mention of "Babylon" could be providential to show that there are still some Spirit-begotten in the nominal system who will come out *before* the system falls—but at a *very late date*. The Great Company will be pushed out into the world through circumstances when Babylon *actually* falls, but this other coming out will occur *just before* Babylon falls. To come out at the very end will be harder, for it will mean definite persecution. If some consecrated ones leave Babylon because they will not cooperate with branding as cultists those who refuse the mark and number of the beast and its image, that will be commendable, for taking a stand at that time will be a very courageous act.

1 Pet. 5:14 Greet ye one another with a kiss of charity. Peace be with you all that are in Christ Jesus. Amen.

"A kiss of charity" is an embrace man to man or woman to woman on the cheek.

“Peace be with you all that are *in Christ Jesus*.” This message is addressed to *Christians*. Hence the “strangers” in 1 Peter 1:1 are *Christian Jews* not in the homeland but dispersed and in a strange land. Although some Gentile Christians would be included, Peter’s influence was mainly with the Jews. To Peter was committed the “gospel of the circumcision”; to Paul was committed the “gospel of the uncircumcision” (Gal. 2:7). Peter was given the “keys” to both Jews and Gentiles, but having the keys was different from having a ministry.

SECOND EPISTLE OF PETER

(Study led by Bro. Frank Shallieu in 1981)

2 Pet. 1:1 Simon Peter, a servant and an apostle of Jesus Christ, to them that have obtained like precious faith with us through the righteousness of God and our Saviour Jesus Christ:

The use of the two names “Simon Peter” is unusual. Why did Peter refer to himself this way? Jesus addressed him as Simon Peter both initially and finally. “And when Jesus beheld him, he said, Thou art *Simon* the son of Jona: thou shalt be called *Cephas* [*Peter*], which is by interpretation, A stone” (John 1:42). Later Simon *officially* got this name on a mountain in Galilee when Jesus named the apostles (Mark 3:13–19). After his resurrection, Jesus again used the name Simon when he rebuked Peter, saying, “*Simon*, son of Jonas, lovest thou me more than these?” (John 21:15–17). And in Matthew 16:17,18, Jesus used the two names: “Blessed art thou, *Simon* Barjona: for flesh and blood hath not revealed it unto thee, but my Father which is in heaven.... thou art *Peter*, and upon this rock I will build my church.”

There is a *humility* in Peter’s use of the two names here in his epistle, but they also serve to identify which Peter wrote the epistle. In his humility, Peter ever kept in mind his earlier denial of Jesus and his subsequent repentance, and the fact that Jesus had a thorough knowledge of him, inside and out. The thought is expressed in Psalm 139:1,2, “O LORD, thou hast searched me, and known me. Thou knowest my downsitting and mine uprising, thou understandest my thought afar off.” The Lord knows us more thoroughly than we know ourselves.

The use of Peter’s two names can also be significant regarding the severe trial at the end of the age. The pressures will be great to disown the truth as Peter did momentarily. The two names are guidance and instruction to stand fast for the truth—they are a warning not to waver! We would have more culpability than Peter had. To waver then would probably mean losing out on the Little Flock. Doubt is one thing; denial is another. Denial would mean Second Death. “Hiding” would be the Great Company attitude.

It is interesting to consider how often Jesus spoke to Peter in such a confiding way, identifying him with his parentage: “Simon Barjona” or “Simon, son of Jona[s].” With the other apostles, Jesus used such titles only in connection with naming them as apostles (for example, “sons of thunder” in Mark 3:17).

Of the two names, “Peter” was the *strong* name. It indicated he would be a *rock*, a stalwart champion in the Church (especially in the Jewish Church). “Simon” brings out “from *weakness* made strong.” He was Simon, but Jesus said, “Thou *shalt* be called Peter.” The two names show that a remarkable transformation took place. As stated in the *Volume 5* chapter entitled “The Spirit of a Sound Mind,” the remarkable power or spirit of the truth can make a “giant” out of one formerly weak. Many who are called are weak by nature in several aspects. In Peter’s case, he was *both* strong and weak. In some aspects, he was exceptionally strong; in others, he was weak and culpable. But after Peter was retrieved by the Master following the resurrection, he was a completely changed individual. From then on, he was “*Peter*,” *champion* of the Church.

Peter calls himself “a servant and an apostle of Jesus Christ.” In other words, he is giving his credentials as an apostle *with authority*. He addresses the epistle “to them that have obtained like precious faith with us [the apostles] through the righteousness of God and our Saviour Jesus Christ.”

This epistle is unusual in that it is not addressed to any particular church. Hence it is a general epistle. The first epistle was general in some respects, as it was addressed to Jewish Christians

scattered throughout Asia Minor, but the second epistle is even more general in that no geographic location or church is mentioned. The fact that it is simply addressed to those who have “obtained like precious faith” is a clue that this epistle has a special application at the *end* of the age. The first epistle of John and the books of Jude and Revelation are also especially applicable to the feet members, for they are not addressed to any specific geographic location, church, individual, or class. Placement at the end of the New Testament is another indication that they apply to those living at the *end of the age*.

2 Pet. 1:2 Grace and peace be multiplied unto you through the knowledge of God, and of Jesus our Lord,

Verse 2 is self-explanatory, and the greeting is similarly expressed elsewhere.

2 Pet. 1:3 According as his divine power hath given unto us all things that pertain unto life and godliness, through the knowledge of him that hath called us to glory and virtue:

2 Pet. 1:4 Whereby are given unto us exceeding great and precious promises: that by these ye might be partakers of the divine nature, having escaped the corruption that is in the world through lust.

Verses 1–3 emphasize virtue, godliness, knowledge, and the righteousness of *God*. Moreover, it is *God's* “divine power [that] hath given unto us all things that pertain unto life and godliness.” *God* “hath called us to [1] glory and [2] virtue.” The Father Himself extends the invitation.

Peter says that the capability of being made “partakers of the divine nature” comes about largely by giving heed to the “exceeding great and precious promises.” The promises are a great help in making our calling and election sure. To state the matter another way, *God* has called us to an ultimate *goal* of glory and virtue (that is, the divine nature), and the precious promises help us to obtain that *goal*. In addition, the epistle starts with “faith” as the bottom rung of a whole ladder in getting to that goal (verse 5).

2 Pet. 1:5 And beside this, giving all diligence, add to your faith virtue; and to virtue knowledge;

2 Pet. 1:6 And to knowledge temperance; and to temperance patience; and to patience godliness;

2 Pet. 1:7 And to godliness brotherly kindness; and to brotherly kindness charity.

Romans 10:17 tells us that “faith cometh by hearing ... the *word of God*” (including the precious promises). The Word of *God* is really involved in *all* the steps of the ladder. In calling us to the ultimate goal of the divine nature (glory and virtue), *God* would have us go through intermediate steps, which have compensating blessings and also requirements of obedience.

Peter gives the eight steps of the ladder from faith up to *agape* love. One who obtains this love has reached the mark, that is, full and mature development. At this “mark,” the test is to *stand*. The very fact that these steps are given in an ascending scale indicates that “charity” is the goal. However, there are rewards step by step. For example, one reward is escaping the corruption that is in the world (verse 4).

At what point can one be said to have “escaped the corruption that is in the world through lust”? A comparison can be drawn with those who left Egypt in the Exodus in that their escape was *tentative*. In the present life we are *tentative* partakers of the divine nature. We hope to

secure the divine nature eventually through the precious promises. God gives us power in the *present* life but will also give us power in the ultimate sense *in the future if we are faithful*, transplanting us from human to divine nature. Imagine!—a human being, by a process of God, can be made like unto *Himself* in the glory aspect in the immortal realm! Down here we are developing just the character aspect because once the divine nature is given, it can never be retracted. Therefore, the divine nature is given after the earthly course ends, and only to those who have developed a character likeness of Jesus. Peter is discussing both present and future aspects but always with the ultimate future goal chiefly in mind.

In other words, when we consecrate, we have already obtained like precious faith and escaped corruption, but Peter wants to remind us of the *future* aspect so that there will be no vacuum or void. There is a danger that we might initially experience wonderful things at the time of our introduction into the way of truth and God's family and then become lax afterwards. Peter is concerned lest that happen. We have already received the promises but have not yet obtained the reality, the ultimate goal. First, we must develop the fruits of the Holy Spirit.

Verse 5: "Giving all diligence, add to your faith"; that is, "Give all diligence to *add* to that which you have already received." It is like running a race—you give all diligence to running so that you will win a prize. Not a series of spurts and stops, the race is a thought-out, planned, continuous exercise. Having "obtained like precious faith" (verse 1), add virtue to that faith; that is, add to your faith fortitude and *strength, especially along moral lines*. In other words, develop armor. Withstanding opposition develops strength. Faith should grow deeper as we follow the Lord and obey.

Why is "knowledge" next? We must have some knowledge in order to consecrate in the first place, and we must obey that which we already have in order to receive further knowledge. For every step of obedience, we receive a corresponding portion of knowledge, generally speaking. We are tested for the knowledge we first have, and if we develop strength, character, fortitude, and righteousness, we will receive more.

Consider the human realm. After a child is born, he goes through learning processes in eating, walking, communicating, etc. However, the average adult, being satisfied with sports and pleasure, develops to the level of a 12-year-old and hence has only a modicum of knowledge. The average person never grows up regarding the deeper things in life but stagnates at a low level of adolescent development. Others, who have a goal or objective, study and learn a profession. To a certain extent, the same is true in the Christian field. One who keeps in mind the goal of the divine nature will try to develop up to "charity," the mark. He will have to "train" and become "educated." The "knowledge" of verse 5 is a *deeper* kind of knowledge; it is knowing God's will in greater depth and detail.

In the beginning, we take a stand for Jesus and consecrate. With some, this requires more courage, such as leaving a church or rupturing a family. Once a person manifests this faith, it is important to *maintain* it and not get discouraged like the seed that fell on stony places and could not endure when a little persecution arose (Matt. 13:20,21).

The progression thus far is (1) faith, (2) strength of character (taking a stand for the truth), and (3) growing mentally (gaining more detailed knowledge, which is *essential* to growth).

Verse 6: The next step (after knowledge) is "temperance," or self-control, in every avenue of life. When we grow in knowledge, it is a temptation to say of others, "Can't they see that?" We must not act rudely or crudely or be cynical, for such an attitude would make us proud in our knowledge. Instead we should always remember that we were called from darkness to light and be mindful of our own weaknesses so that we will have compassion on *others*. Also, we

should have patience with *ourselves*, for more knowledge shows us more of our own shortcomings (as well as those of others). Paul said, “I judge not mine own self,” meaning he did not *unduly* condemn himself (1 Cor. 4:3).

To temperance should be added “patience,” or cheerful *endurance*. We are in a long *marathon* race, not a 100-yard dash. In a dash, we would run “all out” for a very short time and not worry about knowledge, temperance, etc. However, in a marathon, we must know our own weaknesses and adjust for them, knowing that the prize is a long way off and that not pacing ourself will result in fatigue, discouragement, and hence failure. We should properly assess our own capabilities for this race of *endurance* (not speed).

To patience should be added “godliness,” or piety. Piety is the devout, controlling reverence for God that yields a hearty, cheerful, loving conformity to His will—fervency of spirit in serving the Lord.

There are two Greek words for endurance: long suffering and cheerful endurance. Long suffering is endurance for a long period of time, and the Apostle Paul says it is hard to be cheerful under that circumstance. The trial itself is grievous, but afterwards it yields the peaceable fruits of righteousness. Cheerful endurance does not necessarily occur while one is underneath the particular strain, but as the trial eases, there is an optimistic hope and zeal that it will ultimately work out for good. Consider Paul and Silas in prison. They did not sing while *being* beaten but afterwards, even though their backs were hurting. Realizing they were suffering for righteousness’ sake, they rejoiced in the experience. Thus there are two types of endurance: (1) a patient type while undergoing the affliction and (2) a rejoicing afterwards in spontaneous thanksgiving to God for having endured the experience and knowing it is working out a wonderful reward either in character or in the ultimate goal of the divine nature.

Verse 7: To godliness, add “brotherly kindness” (*phileo* love). There are many aspects to brotherly kindness. For example, when one consecrates, he should have a desire to fellowship with other brethren of like precious faith. As fellowship continues, he will find he has many experiences, both good and trying ones. The test is to develop a sincere brotherly love or kindness based on what the Word of God teaches on this subject. Being “kind” to a person does not mean that we should always speak softly and sweetly and that we should give more attention to those whom we respect less.

Another aspect of *phileo* love is that it makes allowance for the inherited weaknesses and circumstantial misfortunes of the brethren, dealing patiently and helpfully so far as wisdom may dictate with a view to correcting these faults. When we first consecrate, we are not aware of the faults of our brethren—we think the brethren are perfect. As we become aware of their weaknesses, we should make certain allowances.

Phileo love also includes thankfully accepting a brother’s proffered aid and meekly bearing a reproof. This type of “brotherly kindness” probably comes later in our walk, as is shown in this listing by Peter.

Desire to fellowship is the beginning experience when we think everyone is sweet and perfect, but then we find, in our *continued* fellowship, that it involves both pleasant and unpleasant or trying experiences. Hence this brotherly kindness is not developed immediately, but in the *perseverance and continuity* of fellowship as time goes on, it should prevail. In properly evaluating the shortcomings of others as well as of ourselves according to the standard in God’s Word, we learn how far to go in dealing one with another and how far others should go in dealing with us. Thus it is a give-and-take situation—being willing to both give and receive instruction.

2 Pet. 1:8 For if these things be in you, and abound, they make you that ye shall neither be barren nor unfruitful in the knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ.

“If these things be in you, and *abound*.” These qualities are to be developed more and more. Even if we reach the mark of perfect love, there is still *more* fullness to be desired. If these fruits of the Holy Spirit abound in us, we will be neither barren nor unfruitful “in the *knowledge* of our Lord Jesus Christ.” Again knowledge is stressed as important (see verses 2 and 3). This is a *growing* knowledge. Just as Jesus knew God in the full sense, so should we. Hence this verse is referring to reaching the full stature of a man in Christ Jesus (Eph. 4:13). We should develop the same mind in us that was in Christ Jesus, i.e., to do the will of God (Phil. 2:5).

Jesus was made perfect through the things that he suffered, and likewise our sufferings should develop us if we are rightly exercised. There is a *progressive* suffering that disciplines and develops us, and there is a *crystallized* suffering after we have reached the mark. When the clay is being shaped, it whirls around swiftly. As the clay gets harder, markings are put on it with a chisel. These are the progressive disciplinings. Later the pottery is put into the kiln or furnace to crystallize it. Even crystallization can be a process where the pottery is removed, painted, and rebaked or glazed. This latter process is comparable to the Christian’s adding little features of beauty. The earlier moldings and markings are more basic and are what Peter is referring to in progressing toward the mark. But after the mark is reached, the character can still be further embellished or ornamented; that is, it can *abound*.

“Barren” means idle or negligent. “Unfruitful” means lacking in fruitage and character development.

2 Pet. 1:9 But he that lacketh these things is blind, and cannot see afar off, and hath forgotten that he was purged from his old sins.

The objective of our being purged from old sins is to *grow in character*. We should ever keep this goal in mind. If we do not, we are nearsighted and will lack the fruitage of the Holy Spirit. We are to be farsighted!

When we consecrated, we escaped the corruption that is in the world and were purged from our old sins. When the children of Israel left Egypt, it was a radical departure, one that was very discernible. However, while they were in the Wilderness of Sinai, it became apparent that many of them still had the spirit of Egypt. To some extent, they were sorry they had taken such a stand, and they wished to have the things they had left behind. Also, it was a *mixed* multitude that came out of Egypt. Therefore, just the act of “coming out of Egypt” did not mean that their trials were over. The *spirit* of immersion (consecration) has to be continually maintained and cultivated. In other words, the act of consecration does not guarantee us anything. We must *continue* in the spirit of consecration, *progress* toward the mark, and then *stand* when we reach it.

It is interesting that Peter is the one giving this instruction. He certainly got the spirit of a sound mind (instead of the spirit of fear—2 Tim. 1:7). If we think of Peter as we knew him in the earlier days of the gospel, we have difficulty realizing he is giving this mature step-by-step advice. Impetuous Peter, who was given to instant rebuttal and acting in haste, now writes in a slow, methodical fashion. He is a changed man! This epistle, which was written just before his death (verses 14 and 15), shows how Peter looked back on his own life and traced his gradual character development. One by one, these fruits were added to him through his experiences until he was changed completely.

As shown in the high priest's breastplate, the order of importance of the first four apostles is Paul, Peter, John, and James Zebedee. Peter was appointed the apostle (leader) of the circumcision because he had leadership qualities (Gal. 2:8).

2 Pet. 1:10 Wherefore the rather, brethren, give diligence to make your calling and election sure: for if ye do these things, ye shall never fall:

“If ye do these things, ye shall never fall.” In other words, if we add to our faith virtue, and to virtue knowledge, etc., we will never fall. For the development of these fruits, there must be *constant diligence* and diligent application. Many years ago Bro. Webster read a definition of the difference between reading and study. It was more or less to the effect that “reading” is the accumulation of facts, the acquisition of knowledge, and “study” is reading with the *intent to perform* or to do. The point is that there is a purpose behind the reading, and that purpose is to *apply the instruction given*. To “give diligence,” then, would be to study with the *intent to perform*. As long as we are in the flesh, our performance cannot be perfect, but our will can be, and *must be*, if we are to make our calling and election sure.

How do we harmonize Proverbs 24:16, “A just man falleth seven times, and riseth up again,” with this verse that “if ye do these things, ye shall *never fall*”? Falling in the context of 2 Peter 1:10 would mean failing to be of the Bride class, failing to *abundantly* enter the Kingdom of Christ (verse 11). Regarding the proverb, if a person falls and asks for forgiveness, he is reinstated to favor. Peter is talking about failing to gain the prize of the high calling from the standpoint of God's judgment, and that can occur not just at the end of one's life but also at an intermediate stage. One who fails in the sense of 2 Peter 1:10 will *not* be reinstated to the Little Flock.

2 Pet. 1:11 For so an entrance shall be ministered unto you abundantly into the everlasting kingdom of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ.

The point is that no one will just squeak into the Little Flock. *Any* entrance will be *abundant*, even if one is on the bottom rung of the Little Flock. The Great Company class does not get an abundant entrance but is saved “so as by fire” (1 Cor. 3:15).

The Millennial Age is for an appointed time only, so the expression “*everlasting* kingdom of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ” indicates that God will have other work for the Little Flock to do after the Millennium ends. The word “*everlasting*” depends on context for its meaning; it can mean either age-lasting *for an appointed time* or age-lasting *forever*. (The Greek *aionion aionion*, or forever and ever, always means perpetually or eternally.)

The *Diaglott* reads, “For thus *richly* will he furnish to you the entrance” into the Little Flock. The thought would be as follows: If we go to a house as a guest and the host is eagerly watching for us, then as we go through the outside gate, he will open the door of the house to welcome us and express his happiness at our arrival. In other words, we will not have to knock, for we will find him enthusiastically waiting.

2 Pet. 1:12 Wherefore I will not be negligent to put you always in remembrance of these things, though ye know them, and be established in the present truth.

Peter felt it was necessary to keep the brethren “in remembrance of these things” (adding to faith virtue, to virtue knowledge, etc.), which are the various objectives of a Christian. However, it was not enough for them just to know of these objectives, for in addition, they were to “be *established in the present truth*,” that is, in the *high calling*. There have been many truths down through the ages, but the *particular* truth of this age is not restitution but the high

calling, which is the gospel, the good news. The restitution aspect is the privilege that Christians who make their calling and election sure will have of helping mankind up the highway of holiness, but the *real* good news is the *Kingdom* itself—the privilege of being *with Jesus*. This privilege far transcends the work of the Kingdom. Many feel it is selfish to think of what we will get if faithful, but the Scriptures say that if we are obedient, our residence will be *with God*. Precious promises such as this one (and not restitution promises) are held out to Christians to encourage faithfulness. The hope of being in *God's own home* and in *His very presence* should be our motivating force. That is the *exceeding* good news—not that members of a dying race can be reinstated but that the faithful Church class will be far higher than any human aspirations could ever justly hope for. They will have the *divine* nature itself.

2 Pet. 1:13 Yea, I think it meet, as long as I am in this tabernacle, to stir you up by putting you in remembrance;

2 Pet. 1:14 Knowing that shortly I must put off this my tabernacle, even as our Lord Jesus Christ hath shown me.

2 Pet. 1:15 Moreover I will endeavour that ye may be able after my decease to have these things always in remembrance.

This second epistle of Peter appears near the end of the Bible, and it was written not long before his death in AD 66–67. From his statement “Shortly I must put off this my tabernacle,” the epistle seems to have been written the very year of his death. The implication is that the Church would still be here in the flesh after he was off the scene.

Peter was a leading light of the apostles, as were Paul and John. After they died, there would be a long wait until the resurrection of the Little Flock. Therefore, as long as Peter lived, he felt an urgency to keep reminding the brethren of “these things.” He did not feel sorry for himself and think about his own death in a negative way, but kept urging the brethren to be faithful. Paul said these things can easily “slip.” “Therefore we ought to give the more earnest heed to the things which we have heard, lest at any time we should let them slip” (Heb. 2:1).

The theme of the Tabernacle was constantly on Peter’s mind, and here he uses that very word. Apparently, he particularly appreciated the subject, for he alluded to it in both epistles. Here he refers to his body as a “tabernacle,” or temporary residence.

2 Pet. 1:16 For we have not followed cunningly devised fables, when we made known unto you the power and coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, but were eyewitnesses of his majesty.

2 Pet. 1:17 For he received from God the Father honour and glory, when there came such a voice to him from the excellent glory, This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased.

2 Pet. 1:18 And this voice which came from heaven we heard, when we were with him in the holy mount.

Consider the Apostle Peter. He was an old man about to die when he mentioned a highlight experience from his memories of the days he was with Jesus. It was the vision on the Mount of Transfiguration where Jesus’ face and raiment shone and Elijah and Moses appeared. (Paul’s highlight experience was the glimpse he had of the glorified Lord on the way to Damascus.) Peter appreciated being favored with John and James in having this unusual experience.

What was it about the vision that so astounded Peter? On that occasion, Jesus received honor and glory *from God* (verse 17). Jesus’ garments were given an iridescence that was astonishingly

white, pure, and glorious. It is true that Peter had previously seen Jesus heal, do miracles, walk on the water, preach remarkable sermons, etc., and Peter would have believed by faith that such capability and knowledge could only have come from Almighty God Himself and that Jesus truly was the Son of God. However, having this experience himself, where there was a *tremendous* illumination about Jesus along with glistening garments, was a manifestation of *God's approval* of Jesus and proof that the Son was unusual. A supernatural, superhuman manifestation of glory was bestowed on Jesus, and in addition, a voice from heaven confirmed the vision: “*This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased.*” This was not a “cunningly devised fable,” for Peter was an “eyewitness” of Jesus’ majesty.

“There came ... a voice ... from the excellent glory.” In the vision, a cloud was approaching. As the cloud drew near, Jesus’ appearance changed, and out of the cloud came the voice. Peter, James, and John felt fear when the cloud overshadowed them. When the cloud departed, Jesus was as he had been previously.

The vision left an indelible impression on Peter for the rest of his life. He both *saw and heard*—it was not his imagination. After the vision, the mountain took on a different aspect: it was “the *holy mount*” (verse 18). Mount Tabor is the Mount of Transfiguration.

They probably heard *God's actual voice* here, just as John the Baptist literally heard it at the time of Jesus’ baptism (Matt. 3:17). It is also possible that God literally spoke with Moses.

This vision, which was a representation of the majesty and glory of the Kingdom, was so real that it was like a reality to them. Peter, James, and John had no doubt that Jesus was appointed by God as the Messiah. The vision was a preview or abortive experience, such as Paul had when he was as one “born out [ahead] of due time” (1 Cor. 15:8). Paul was caught up, as it were, into the new age and saw Christ in an experience that seemed very real.

2 Pet. 1:19 We have also a more sure word of prophecy; whereunto ye do well that ye take heed, as unto a light that shineth in a dark place, until the day dawn, and the day star arise in your hearts:

2 Pet. 1:20 Knowing this first, that no prophecy of the scripture is of any private interpretation.

2 Pet. 1:21 For the prophecy came not in old time by the will of man: but holy men of God spake as they were moved by the Holy Ghost.

Peter moved from his personal experience (with only *two* others) to the Word of God, which establishes faith in *all* Christians. In the Word, we have a *continual* presence as contrasted with Peter’s memorable experience that was of *short* duration. In the Word, we have a *continuity* of experience, as illustrated by the picture of a lamp that shines more and more unto the perfect day. “The path of the just is as the shining light, that shineth more and more unto the perfect day” (Prov. 4:18). The Word *continues*. Not just one event, the Word of God is concrete, and it shines ever brighter in the Christian’s walk.

“We have also a more sure word of prophecy.” The Word gives instruction to the Christian along many lines, such as character building, history, and parables, but why did Peter state here that it is “a more sure word of *prophecy*” rather than “a more sure word of *God*”? The reason will become apparent later.

“Take heed [unto the word of prophecy], as unto a light that shineth in a dark place, until the day dawn.” Has the day dawned yet? If the answer is yes, there is no more need to use the

lamp. It is one thing for the Millennial morning to come while it is still dark, but it is quite another for the Millennial *dawn* (of the morning) to come. “The morning cometh, and also the night [*before the day will dawn*]” (Isa. 21:12). The dawn of the morning occurs when the sun comes above the horizon; then it is day with the sun manifesting its light. A lamp is needed only when it is dark. “The Sun of righteousness [will] arise with healing in his wings” (Mal. 4:2), and the Church is part of that “Sun,” as shown by Daniel 12:3, “They that be wise shall shine as the brightness of the firmament.” (The rest of that verse “and they that turn many to righteousness [shall shine] as the stars for ever and ever” refers to the Ancient Worthies, who will be rewarded ultimately with a lesser glory than the sun but with a celestial change, nevertheless. In other words, the Ancient Worthies will get a spiritual resurrection at the end of the Millennium.)

“Take heed [unto the word of prophecy], ... until ... the day star arise in your hearts.” The sun is a star. As the central luminary of this universe, the sun is the predominant light, or day star, and the spiritual “day star” is Jesus. When the day dawns, the complete Church will be with Jesus and in heart-likeness to him, sharing his glory. As part of the composite “Sun,” the Church will be honored in the Kingdom, and the world will be apprised which individuals made their calling and election sure. To be a part of that composite Sun, one must have a full development of character in his heart. If one adds to his faith all the fruits of verses 5–7, he will have Jesus in his character and will thus receive an abundant entrance into the Kingdom and be a participant in the “Sun.”

The day dawning and the day star arising in the hearts of the feet members are synonymous events but viewed from two different standpoints. The feet members will no longer need the Bible when these events occur. The *Diaglott* renders “day star” as “light bringer.”

“No prophecy of the scripture is of any private interpretation.” In other words, the Bible is inspired and not of any *man’s origin*. This verse is often misunderstood. Out of eight translations, six give an erroneous thought, including the King James. Clerical prejudice gives the wrong thought, for the clergy do not want Christians in general to realize their privilege of searching out and trying to understand the Word without clerical guidance. The attitude of the clergy is that the laity have the right to read their Bibles but only in the light of interpretation furnished by the ordained ministry. They claim the Christian has no right to interpret Scripture differently from the way they see it. Several translations follow:

Phillips: “You must understand that this is of the highest importance, that no prophecy of scripture can be interpreted by a single human mind.” This statement would stop an individual from bringing forth a thought which differs from that of the theologians. Such a wrong interpretation of this verse counters the good effects of the Reformation and Martin Luther.

Jerusalem Bible: “We are careful to remember that the interpretation of scriptural prophecy is never a matter for the individual.” New English Bible: “First note this: No one can interpret prophecy of scripture by himself.” Revised Standard Version: “No prophecy of scripture is a matter of one’s own interpretation.”

All of the above translations are erroneous. The following versions are somewhat better:

Living Bible: “No prophecy recorded in scripture was ever thought up by the prophet himself.” New International Version: “Above all, you must understand that no prophecy of Scripture came about by the prophet’s own interpretation.” At least these two translations do not prohibit personal investigation and interpretation, but they still do not get the thought as accurately as it should be stated. We are to *diligently* search the Word, and if these translations were correct, our efforts would be useless.

With the vast majority of the religious world having erroneous interpretations and concepts of verses 19 and 20, recognition would not be given to any of our interpretations.

Verse 20 should read: "... no prophecy of the scripture is of any private *origin* [or inspiration]." The word of prophecy is not begotten of man; it does not come from man. The thought of interpretation should not have been interjected. Prophecy of Scripture is not man-made, man-originated, or man-inspired; it is of *God*. Regardless of the number of translations that indicate a person should not study the Word of God as an individual and come to conclusions on his own, that is not the thought in the Greek. Verse 21, the next verse, clarifies the thought.

Verse 21 tells us what Peter had in mind in the preceding verse; namely, no Scripture is of private origin because it came not by the will of man but by the will of God (through the Holy Spirit). The clergy justify their separation from the laity by the misapplication of verse 20. Because they are schooled in seminaries, they feel they alone have the right to interpret Scripture, but the Bible tells us to "study to show thyself approved unto God, ... rightly dividing the word of truth," and to "prove all things; hold[ing] fast that which is good" (2 Tim. 2:15; 1 Thess. 5:21). For one to "prove all things," he has to, of his own self, make a decision as to the veracity of a certain interpretation. He must decide whether or not a thought or teaching is correct. A man should be persuaded in his own mind.

The *Diaglott* word-for-word rendering is as follows: "This first knowing, that all prophecy of a writing of its own loosing not it is." "Loosing" in the Greek has the thought of its own out-breathing. Earlier Peter said (paraphrased), "We have not followed cunningly devised fables but were eyewitnesses of Jesus' majesty, and we heard a voice from heaven. Yet we have a *more sure word* of prophecy because the Scriptures are from *God*." The Scriptures are not of themselves, and they are not a fantasy or a creation of the mind. Nor did they come by the will of man, but they are *of God* and through *holy men* who spoke *mechanically* as they were moved by the Holy Spirit. Man merely transmitted the message.

The word "out-breathing" is significant. Just as God breathed into Adam the breath of life, so He breathed into the Word His mind and thinking (the Holy Spirit). Holy Writ *originated with God*; it did not come miraculously by itself, and it did not come by man. Holy Writ is not of its own out-breathing but is of the out-breathing of God.

2 Pet. 2:1 But there were false prophets also among the people, even as there shall be false teachers among you, who privily shall bring in damnable heresies, even denying the Lord that bought them, and bring upon themselves swift destruction.

Verses 1–3 are intimately tied in with the counsel in the previous chapter. The Scriptures originated with God, and as holy men of old were moved by the Holy Spirit, the Word of God has come forth. But just as there were *holy men* back in the Old Testament, moved by God's Holy Spirit, so there were *unholy men*—namely, *false teachers* and *false prophets*—who *purported* to speak in the name of God but were not His messengers. This is true also of the Gospel Age, for some who profess to be teachers and exponents of the Word and who prophesy in the name of the Lord are actually *false prophets* who bring in "damnable heresies." The *plural form* ("heresies") indicates that *various facets* of false doctrine would be introduced into the Church and that the false teachings would be subtle yet pernicious and far-reaching, like a cancer that keeps progressing until the victim finally dies.

Peter first introduces the thought of false teachers as a general lesson, but as he continues, he applies the warning more and more to the *end* of the age. The Epistle of Jude gives almost the same lesson but applies it to the end of the age *only*. In 2 Peter 1:14,15, the apostle says that

shortly he will die, but first, he wants to remind the brethren that they must be diligent and study to develop their characters and make their calling and election sure. In developing character, the Christian must heed God's Word as light in a dark place and apply himself *diligently to that Word because after Peter's death, false teachers and false prophets would come into the Church, professing to be Christians, and their message would be very damaging.* Therefore, Peter admonishes Christians to give *strict heed* to the Word to see if what is being proclaimed comports with Scripture.

In promulgating these "damnable heresies," the false teachers are, in effect, "denying the Lord that bought them." How does one deny the Lord? Peter narrows down his reasoning to one direction, but there are several ways of denying Jesus. For instance, by assuming the role of doctrinal instructor and claiming to be on a par with Christ, Papacy nullified Jesus as the Head or Lord of the Church, and the Word of God became less and less important in the minds of the people. Some popes were so presumptuous that they even placed themselves *above* Christ, implying that he was all right in his day but that Papacy was the current enunciator of truth. That attitude was actually a denial of the Lord, and those who accepted their line of reasoning were also denying the Lord because they were taking their eye off Scripture and hearkening to "Jezebel," that prophetess who "teach[es] ... my servants to commit fornication" (Rev. 2:20).

The Apostle Peter takes a different slant and warns about a class who will deny the Lord at the end of the Gospel Age and thus "bring upon themselves *swift destruction.*" How do we know the time frame is the *end* of the age? Because Christians did not get "*swift destruction*" in the past. Down through the age, false teachers usually lived and died as authorities and in positions of prominence; they did not get "*swift destruction.*" By applying this phrase to the whole Gospel Age and saying destruction is swift in the sense that with God a thousand years are as one day, we would not be giving a full explanation. 1 Thessalonians 5:3 is related to the *sudden or swift* application being at the *end* of the age: "When they shall say, Peace and safety; then *sudden destruction* cometh upon them, as travail upon a woman with child; and they shall not escape."

2 Pet. 2:2 And many shall follow their pernicious ways; by reason of whom the way of truth shall be evil spoken of.

"By reason of ... [these false teachers] the way of truth shall be evil spoken of." Jesus said that during the Gospel Age men would misrepresent and cast out his followers, speak evil of them, and devise all manner of evil falsely against them for his name's sake, but that treatment is not what Peter is referring to here. Jesus was speaking about his *faithful* followers, who follow the *right* way, being *falsely accused*, whereas Peter is talking about an *unfaithful, ungodly* class who teach *false* doctrine and follow in their pernicious, *false* ways, causing "the way of truth ... [to] be evil spoken of" and bringing upon themselves *swift destruction*. Through their promulgation of certain wrong doctrines, this class will blaspheme the Christian calling and cast an odium on the truth. In other words, Jesus prophesied of his *true* followers being *wrongly accused of heresy*, but Peter, speaking of an *ungodly element* in the *true* Church, *rightly accuses them of heresy*. Their ways are pernicious, odious, evil, and harmful.

The *swift destruction* and the fact that it is a *proper* charge against the false teachers show that this text applies to the *end* of the age and to a class who *KNOW THE TRUTH*. As the epistle continues, it will become increasingly apparent that this evil class have some *knowledge* and then go into *disobedience*, thus incurring responsibility. This class will be among the *consecrated*, not among tares in the nominal Church. In the nominal Church, many profess to be Christians without having much knowledge; they have prospered by becoming identified with the Christian religion but do not know the mind of God.

Back to verse 1: “Even denying the Lord that bought them.” In going *contrary* to what Jesus taught, this class is “denying” him. In other words, we deny Jesus if we do not obey his principles, his Word, his commandments, and his instruction to the Church. Failure to heed the apostles’ instruction is also a denial of Jesus. But to *teach* contrary to the instruction in the Word is even more reprehensible. Peter is talking about a class of individuals who *teach falsely*, and many will respond to the teachings, thus incurring condemnation. *Both* the teachers and those accepting the false teaching will be responsible.

The “denial” Peter warns about is not a denial of the Ransom, but a harder-to-recognize, more subtle type of false teaching, the net effect of which is a hearkening to the counsel of *men* instead of to the counsel of Jesus and the apostles. Now Peter’s words in 2 Peter 1:20,21 take on even more significance as a warning against false teachers who have *man-made* thoughts regarding deep doctrinal matters: “No prophecy of the scripture is of any private interpretation [that is, no prophecy originated with man]. For the prophecy came ... by the will of ... God.” We are to heed the “light” in darkness and not the man-made teachings of false prophets! It is not that we should be hypercritical or refuse to let anyone teach us, but that we should be careful of what we hear and should search the Scriptures accordingly.

2 Pet. 2:3 And through covetousness shall they with feigned words make merchandise of you: whose judgment now of a long time lingereth not, and their damnation slumbereth not.

“Through covetousness shall they with feigned words make merchandise of you.” “Feigned words” are false, subtly deceiving, smoothed-over words that are not what they appear to be. With feigned words, the false teachers “make merchandise” of those whom they influence; that is, the ones who succumb to the false teaching become the property of the false teachers, as it were. We must beware of obedience to false doctrine! The same principle applies when a crime is committed. The accomplices, as well as the ringleader who shoots the gun, are all culpable. Those who allow themselves to be deceived by the false teachers have been bought like a parcel of goods. Therefore, any condemnation that comes on the false teachers will likewise come on those who are their property. Both the exponents and the defenders of this particular type of wrong doctrine are responsible.

“Whose judgment now of a long time lingereth not, and their damnation slumbereth not.” In Ezekiel 38:9,18–32, God predicts that the forces of Gog will come down into the land of Israel and a judgment will follow. In verse 17, God says, “Art thou [not] he of whom I have spoken in old time by my servants the prophets of Israel, which prophesied in those days many years that I would bring thee against them?” This prophecy has been in the Word of God for “a long time,” but Gog will not come down until the *end* of the age. History has been slowly progressing to this point in time, but when the due time comes in the near future, God’s wrath will be *swiftly* manifested, for He *does not forget* His predictions. The judgment was foreknown and decreed a *long time ago*, and the day will come when the judgment will *linger no longer*.

“Damnation” (verse 3) and “swift destruction” (verse 1) mean *Second Death* for this *disobedient, enlightened* class. Verses 21 and 22 are clues that this unfaithful element is a consecrated, formerly righteous class who will turn and fall back into willful sin.

The Apostle Peter’s reproach and judgment are especially strong on the false prophets and teachers that will arise in our day among the truly consecrated as they did in the type in natural Israel in the past. The documentation of Old Testament examples in verses 4–6 reinforces this thought. As will be seen, this judgment will come not only on the false teachers but also on those who follow their counsel and do not repent. In other words, those who are only *temporarily* deceived and *then repent* will not perish. However, the chances of the teachers repenting are practically nil.

2 Pet. 2:4 For if God spared not the angels that sinned, but cast them down to hell, and delivered them into chains of darkness, to be reserved unto judgment;

Verses 4–6 discuss judgments in the Old Testament as examples of the judgment that will come primarily on the false teachers in the true Church at the end of the age.

In Noah’s day, the disobedient angels were not spared but were cast down and confined to *tartaroo*, a particular locality in earth’s atmosphere from which they have subsequently operated for thousands of years by remote control, as it were, to exercise a baneful influence on society and the human race. Of the angels who sinned at that time, we know some will be recovered, for the Apostle Paul said, “Know ye not that we shall judge angels?” (1 Cor. 6:3). The Greek word for “judge” indicates a trial period and thus a hope of recovery, an age of probation. But if God grants the fallen angels an opportunity of recovery, what is the lesson in the antitype? Verse 6 gives the answer: these were examples “unto those that after should live ungodly.” In other words, these Old Testament examples picture the judgment that will come upon the false teachers at the end of the age and upon those who persist in following their counsel. The fallen angels were cast into the “darkness” of *tartaroo*, but the false teachers will be cast into the “darkness” of Second Death. Stated another way, what was *tartaroo* back there will be *Second Death* at the end of the age.

Q: What is the thought behind the term “chains of darkness”?

A: The term “chains of darkness” means confinement to *tartaroo*. Some say that knowledge or enlightenment is a restraining influence on the Adversary, but that is not true for several reasons. Satan and the fallen angels are not in “chains of *light*” but in “chains of *darkness*”—just the opposite. From *tartaroo*, the fallen angels operate *mightily*, and for a long time, their operation and influence have been the strongest in literal darkness, such as at seances and at night. *Intellectual* knowledge (*light*) does not bind Satan, but the knowledge of *Bible* truth is an effective protection for the Christian. The world has no such protection.

Jude 6 is similar to verse 4: “And the angels which kept not their first estate, but left their own habitation, he hath reserved in everlasting chains under darkness unto the judgment of the great day.” The reason for the close similarity between Jude and this chapter in Second Peter is to provide a second witness, for out of “the mouth of two or three witnesses shall every word be established” (Deut. 17:6; Matt. 18:16; John 8:17; 2 Cor. 13:1). Because this message is *so strong*, we need an assurance that our interpretation is correct—and that we are not overreacting to a certain situation. Therefore, the Lord inserted the thinking and/or warning twice in Holy Writ and worded it in an unmistakable way.

2 Pet. 2:5 And spared not the old world, but saved Noah the eighth person, a preacher of righteousness, bringing in the flood upon the world of the ungodly;

Why did Peter say that God spared “Noah the *eighth* person”? Jude 14 states that Enoch is the “seventh from Adam”; that is, the seventh *generation* from Adam. However, Noah was the *tenth* generation from Adam, not the eighth, so why did Peter introduce the fact that Noah was the “eighth” person in the Ark? Why didn’t Peter say, “And spared not the old world, but saved Noah, a preacher of righteousness, *and his family*”? Why did the Holy Spirit deliberately single out Noah as the eighth person? The number 8 signifies a *new* beginning, a *new* start, the beginning of a *new* week, and *resurrection* (because Jesus appeared to his disciples on the eighth or first day of the week after his resurrection).

But what bearing do the words “eighth” and “seventh” have on the subject of judgment

coming on false teachers in the true Church at the end of the age? In order to show that his message has a special application to the closing events of the Gospel Age, Jude introduced two factors: (1) Enoch was the *seventh* from Adam, and (2) Enoch prophesied of the *Second Advent of Christ*. In other words, during the Second Advent, in the seventh period of the gospel Church, this judgment will take place whereby some of the consecrated will go into Second Death. Throughout the Gospel Age, various individuals have gone into Second Death, but it could not be said of these that they were *reserved* in judgment *until the end* of the age (2 Pet. 2:9), for each one got his judgment before or as he went into the grave and simply will not get a resurrection—period! The Enoch picture is different, for it pertains to the end of the age when a Second Death judgment will come upon a consecrated *class* unworthy of life. And when will this judgment occur? It will take place in the seventh stage of the gospel Church, that is, the seventh from the *Second Adam*, or Jesus. Just as Enoch was the seventh from Adam, so the Enoch class are the seventh from the antitypical Adam (Jesus).

Instead of using “seventh” in regard to Enoch, Peter uses “eighth” in regard to Noah. But why? There is a peculiarity about the day in which we live. Not only are we in the *seventh* stage of the Church, but we are in the Millennial or *eighth* day. The Gospel and Millennial ages overlap. We are in the beginning, or dark period, of the eighth day, prior to the sunrise. Jude locates us at the end of the Gospel Age by saying Enoch is the *seventh*, and Peter locates us at the beginning of the Millennial Age by saying Noah is the *eighth* person.

An unusual feature with Noah is that he lived in *two* worlds—he was carried over from the dispensation prior to the Flood to the dispensation after the Flood, from the “world that then was” to the “present evil world” (2 Pet. 3:6; Gal. 1:4). He was the last of the old world and the first of the new one. Moreover, the Second Advent is equated with the 120 years of the preaching of Noah. “As it was in the days of Noe [Noah], so shall it be also in the days of the Son of man” (Luke 17:26). The fact that Noah was a “preacher of righteousness” implies that at the very end of the age, one of the functions of the feet members will be along this line. The Pastor emphasized that the world will not know (will be *unaware*) until the Flood actually comes. *Unawareness* has been the peculiar characteristic of the whole Laodicean period, for the world has been unaware of the Lord’s Second Presence. Luke did not primarily emphasize the immorality that would occur but a coming judgment. Peter, however, emphasizes both the immorality and the unawareness as characterizing the Lord’s Second Presence. The Gospels tell of the unawareness—that the world will be continuing with business as usual during the secret phase of the Lord’s presence, oblivious of the coming judgment. Using the same Scriptures, Peter reemphasizes the unawareness (2 Peter 3) but also tells of the evil conditions and moral iniquity that will exist (2 Peter 2).

2 Peter 2 warns particularly of evil conditions that would occur during the Lord’s Second Presence. When the Laodicean message first went out in 1878, the people, generally speaking, were quite strict in their Christian living, but as we get deeper and deeper into this period, things are becoming *worse and worse*. It is like Noah’s day. As he was building the Ark, conditions continually deteriorated. As things get still worse in our day, righteousness will become the *main* theme, rather than the building of the antitypical Ark. Satan is NOT bound! The reign of Christ has NOT begun! In the hour of the beast yet future, Satan will get more power (Rev. 17:12). The “hour of temptation” on the Church is still future (Rev. 3:10). Conditions will get so bad that if it were possible, even the Very Elect would be deceived (Matt. 24:24). The Very Elect will be few and far between, a real *minority*. In other words, *all will be deceived*, at least temporarily, except the Very Elect.

In the near future, God will again bring “in the flood upon the world of the ungodly” as He brought it upon the ungodly in Noah’s day. When the Flood came in Noah’s day, all the ungodly and the hybrid race were destroyed. When the flood of great trouble comes in our

day, the ungodly will cease to prosper. The fact that evil is prospering today as never before is proof that the Time of Trouble is yet future. Stated another way, we know the flood of divine judgment to come on the ungodly is future because now the ungodly are prospering, not perishing.

Revelation 12:15,16 also talks of a “flood,” but this flood was designed by *Satan* to overwhelm the “woman” (the true Church) at the time of the French Revolution. Noah’s Flood, which Peter talks about, is entirely different: it was *divine* retribution or judgment upon the ungodly. What Satan tried to do at the time of the French Revolution is happening again today—he is trying to overwhelm with a flood of “truth” but not Bible truth. The Adversary is manipulating intellectual truth for his own purposes. For example, young children are taught all about sex in the public schools. What they are taught is true and the pictures they are shown are true, but this knowledge is slanted to do great evil. Satan is using a flood of truth to tear down morals and build up himself, and in the process, he destroys faith in God. As another example, consider what has happened to the institution of marriage, how it has been destroyed and vitiated. Satan is the god of this world, and this is his kingdom (2 Cor. 4:4). Instead of binding Satan, such “truth” is giving him *more* control.

2 Pet. 2:6 And turning the cities of Sodom and Gomorrha into ashes condemned them with an overthrow, making them an example unto those that after should live ungodly;

2 Pet. 2:7 And delivered just Lot, vexed with the filthy conversation of the wicked:

Two illustrations are used: (1) the Flood in Noah’s day and (2) Lot and the destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah. Both of these illustrations are needed to tell the story at the end of the age. In Noah’s day, there was a judgment of water; in Lot’s day, there was a judgment of fire. In addition to Noah being saved (picturing the Little Flock) and Lot being rescued (picturing the Great Company), the unholy angels were all cast down to *tartaroo* (picturing Second Death), and most of the people (picturing the world) were destroyed by the Flood and the burning cities of Sodom and Gomorrah (picturing the great Time of Trouble). Just as Noah entered the Ark *before* the Flood, so the Church will go beyond the veil *before* the great Time of Trouble. Lot represents those of the consecrated who will be *rescued* at the end of the age to be part of the Great Company. Noah, a preacher of righteousness, was delivered earlier. Lot, a just man, was also delivered, but it is significant that his experience had to do with the “filthy conversation [conduct] of the wicked,” that is, with moral depravity.

Peter is saying that if God did not spare the angels who sinned and the ungodly at the time of the Flood, then neither will He spare the ungodly element *in the Church* at the end of the age. In the Time of Trouble, a distinction will be made between the ungodly in the world and the ungodly in the Church. Those of the world who die in the trouble will come forth in the resurrection. However, the ungodly in the Church will truly perish in Second Death. In other words, the “perishing” aspect of this chapter has a Second Death application to the Church, as contrasted with the general picture elsewhere of the world coming forth from the grave in the Kingdom for a trial or judgment period.

2 Pet. 2:8 (For that righteous man dwelling among them, in seeing and hearing, vexed his righteous soul from day to day with their unlawful deeds;)

In what way was Lot’s “righteous soul” vexed from day to day with the unlawful deeds of the people? Lot was locked into the situation for a long time—until he was *shocked* into a realization of what was taking place. In the antitype, the situation will become *so bad* that even those who are deceived for a time and do not take a stand will be forced to make a decision. Lot and his family were delivered, but they needed help—hence they were *rescued* by another element.

Lot is called not only “just” (verse 7) but also “righteous.” Notice that he both *saw* and *heard* the things that were done. In other words, the evil was done *openly*, not secretly.

2 Pet. 2:9 The Lord knoweth how to deliver the godly out of temptations, and to reserve the unjust unto the day of judgment to be punished:

“The Lord knoweth how to deliver the *godly* out of temptations.” This statement shows that the Great Company are a godly class in the final analysis but that they allow their robes to get contaminated. They fall from the chief blessing of the high calling, but at heart, they love the Lord and He knows how to deliver or rescue them. What did God do in the type? He sent two angels to yank Lot, his two daughters, and his wife out of Sodom at the last minute. Thus Lot did not come out of his own volition but needed leadership or help. If the angels had not come, Lot would have perished in Sodom and Gomorrah’s destruction. In other words, in spite of being “vexed,” he evidently lacked the necessary understanding of the need to leave. Instead he sat in the gate trying to help the people. Lot was a judge, and he probably reasoned that he did more good by staying in Sodom. No doubt he rationalized that if he left, things would get still worse. However, in trying to help the people, he got contaminated, or affected, to the extent that in the antitype he lost out on the high calling. Tarrying in that condition brought a corresponding loss. Nevertheless, the Lord had compassion on Lot, who had good intentions but very poor judgment. He was, as it were, plucked out of the fire of Sodom and Gomorrah. Lot pictures the scapegoat class, who are taken by the hand of a fit man into the wilderness to die. The scapegoat class will not go willingly but will be conducted out into the wilderness.

When Paul delivered “such an one” over to the Adversary for the destruction of the flesh, he was really leading him out for the deliverance of his life from Second Death (1 Cor. 5:5). Otherwise, that individual would have died in his sin, and there would have been no hope of recovery. Instead the ecclesia was told to excommunicate him so that, hopefully, there would be godly repentance and he could be saved. Two other individuals, Hymenaeus and Alexander, were remanded by Paul over to the Adversary for the destruction of their flesh (1 Tim. 1:19,20; 2 Tim. 4:14). Their outcome is not given in Holy Writ.

The hope in remanding any over to the Adversary for the destruction of the flesh is that their spirit will be saved in the day of the Lord’s visitation. The Adversary actually takes over for a while in these instances, and then the individual is forced to make a decision. Sometimes when Satan takes an individual, such grief results that the person is almost swallowed up—even possibly to the point of contemplating suicide. For this reason, the erring one is to be restored when repentance comes. Great sorrow can be a method permitted to bring one back to the Lord, to get him to come to his senses.

The Parable of the Prodigal Son teaches this lesson. Because of severe circumstances, the Prodigal Son came to his senses and decided to return to his father, an act that showed *humility* and involved *confession* of the wrong. He confessed he had done wrong not only to his father but also to God in heaven and said he was no longer worthy to be called a son. Such deprecation is the proper attitude on the part of the erring one, and we would be *joyful* over the reinstatement of one who has thus changed.

The point is that there *must be repentance!* We are not to receive back a consecrated individual *with his sin*. Such a one *must separate himself* from the evil.

2 Pet. 2:10 But chiefly them that walk after the flesh in the lust of uncleanness, and despise government. Presumptuous are they, self-willed, they are not afraid to speak evil of dignities.

In the days prior to the Flood, lust was a big factor, and things got worse every day. Sins of the flesh were likewise a problem in Sodom and Gomorrah. The wording here in 2 Peter 2 is so repetitious in verses 4–8 that the implication is the same thing will happen again in our day. The erosion will occur first with *doctrine*. What doctrine, teaching, or heresy would produce a condition in which these abnormalities would happen in the Church? One would be the promiscuous teaching that *God is all forgiving*. Some preachers proclaim that God saves anybody, that *regardless* of condition or who one is or where he is, God loves him and *cannot* give him up or stop loving him. The implication is that *no matter what* a person does, he can be recovered. This is WRONG!

Back in the 300s, Constantine enunciated a doctrine before the whole church council to the effect that if any priest had committed fornication, the emperor would remove his own kingly robe and hide the sinner lest the people know of the sin and the Church be shamed. Instead of excommunicating the individual, Constantine would cover the sin. *Sin should be cured*, not covered. Hiding grievous sin is not love from God's standpoint. Love does not cover up and ignore certain conditions but requires repentance and cleansing.

This second chapter of Peter's second epistle does not compare the Christian with the world. The analogy of God bringing a flood on the ungodly refers to a situation right *in the Church itself!* Peter is comparing Christian with Christian, and to do this, he uses an illustration that came upon the world in the past. The principles of God's displeasure back there will operate on the Christian and be even *more stringent*.

Back in the type, the disobedient angels and people were lawless, and in the antitype, the lawlessness is described as "despising government." But *what* government is being despised? *God's* government. It is true that the world is "lawless" by being lovers of pleasure more than lovers of God, by being disobedient to parents, etc., but Peter is not referring to this type of anarchy. He is saying that the ungodly element *in the Church* is presumptuous and self-willed, despises government, and speaks evil of "dignities." However, a caution is needed against the other extreme. Peter's warning does not mean that we should be governed by the brethren or by the ecclesia *regardless* of their intentions. In the final analysis, it is *God's* government that we have to obey. We should obey the laws of the ecclesia *only as long as they are in harmony with the laws of God*. Those who "despise [God's] government ... speak evil of dignities [of God's representatives, of those who are *truly* God's, whoever they might be]." This is a stern warning to try the spirits (doctrines) and to make sure that we are accepting the true message from the Word of God. Otherwise, we would be despising not only God's Word but also His "dignities," who are giving the true message.

"Dignities" in the Greek would be "God's glorious ones." In other words, God's *true* people are being slandered. In not being afraid to speak evil of God's dignitaries, this ungodly element in the Church is despising both God's government and His representatives.

"Speaking evil" in this context does not necessarily have to be from the platform, for it can also occur in private conversation. Moreover, these false prophets or teachers do not necessarily have to be elders. In social activities and private conversation, *sisters* as well as brothers can raise trouble by "teaching" and promoting *false* doctrines and by speaking evil of those who might be the Lord's true people. Sisters can also be guilty of bringing in "damnable heresies" (verse 1). Thus, in the final analysis, the false teachers Peter is speaking about can be *either* male or female. Many, of course, will be male from the standpoint that they have more opportunities to speak both in the class and from the platform. However, plenty of fellowship and social activities afford sisters an opportunity to "teach." This ungodly element will be a little more aggressive whether they teach from the platform or privately. The point is that they

will be *active* in disseminating certain doctrines or teachings *inimical* to the Lord's cause and the Lord's true people.

While the Greek uses the male gender in 2 Peter 2, that does not mean females are not included. For instance, the promises to the seven churches begin: "To *him* that overcometh" (Rev. 2:7). "Him" includes both male and female. Peter's second epistle is a *general* message to *both*. If sisters read this epistle and think it applies only to teachers (elders) on the platform, they will be overlooking the teaching capacity of deacons, let alone their own capacity. Any brother or sister who is *active* in disseminating certain *ideas* is teaching. Doctrines, or "heresies," could just as well have been translated "ideas," which can be transmitted both verbally and in writing.

Peter is cautioning *every* consecrated individual living at the end of the age—male or female—to closely examine what he or she believes and says (teaches). If we give this chapter only the male slant, we might critically analyze everything we hear from the platform but be off guard in our private conversations. Much teaching is done privately in little groups.

Based on experiences down through the age and even in the Harvest period, there is a danger of being too narrow and not recognizing the broad basis of the Ransom (etc.) determining our status as consecrated brethren, but there is also a danger of being so broad in our thinking that we do not come to definite conclusions on certain matters. That was one of Lot's problems. He tried to do good by helping here and helping there instead of taking a stand for righteousness. To be balanced, we must recognize the broad basis for consecration but then prayerfully and through the Lord's Word come to definite decisions on issues that arise.

2 Pet. 2:11 Whereas angels, which are greater in power and might, bring not railing accusation against them before the Lord.

Peter says, "Angels ... bring not railing accusation against them before the Lord." Jude 9 says, "Michael ... durst not bring against him [Satan] a railing accusation, but said, The Lord rebuke thee." These two verses are similar. Just as Michael the archangel would not bring a railing accusation against the Adversary, so the holy angels, who are *mighty* in power, would not think of bringing a railing accusation against the Lord's true representatives or dignities.

The Living Bible reads, "The angels in heaven, who stand in the very presence of the Lord, and are far greater in power and strength than these false teachers, never speak out disrespectfully against [the Lord's dignities]." (The end of the verse is translated incorrectly in the Living Bible, but the rest is excellent.) Many do not realize that when they speak disrespectfully against someone, they are speaking evil. They are undercutting the individual and injecting seeds of doubt and distrust.

For "reviling accusation" the Revised Standard has "reviling judgment." If Michael was careful not to bring a railing accusation against *Satan*, the ungodly element is extremely bold and presumptuous to make railing judgments.

The ungodly element can simulate obedience and respect for authority and law and order, and yet be very rebellious because of not obeying God. They could be polite and gentle and seem to be very law-abiding, but their concept of law and order is completely out of harmony with God's standard. On the other hand, those who take a *proper* stand may be regarded as self-willed, presumptuous, out of order, and carrying things too far. Consider Noah, who was misunderstood. All alone with the whole world against him, he was ridiculed and mocked. He was not simply ignored but *openly* jeered because he was different. The masses wanted to bring him down to their level, and this same psychology is used in labeling one derogatorily as a

“goody-goody.”

2 Pet. 2:12 But these, as natural brute beasts, made to be taken and destroyed, speak evil of the things that they understand not; and shall utterly perish in their own corruption;

“But these [the false teachers], as natural brute beasts, ... speak evil of the things that they understand not.” Why are the false teachers in the Church at the end of the age likened to natural brute beasts? One reason is that they, like the beasts, will get no resurrection. “Natural brute beasts” are irrational animals, *creatures of instinct* (RSV), irrational living beings. In other words, the false teachers will operate according to basic desires rather than according to the Holy Spirit. They do not use a reasoning process but are motivated by instinct. “Beast” is the Greek *zoon*, as in Hebrews 13:11.

Verse 12 is saying that these false teachers, having *lost* their Spirit begettal, are going by animal instincts and *human* desires and reasoning. They are presumptuous, bold, and self-willed in speaking evil of (criticizing unjustly) the *true* dignitaries (representatives) of the Lord (verse 10), and they speak evil of things they do not understand. This class has lost its spirituality and goes by human instincts, which, compared to the new mind, are just like those of an animal. Solely human reasoning is used, and not spiritual. This is a Second Death class, who “shall utterly perish in their own corruption.” They are no longer motivated by God’s mind and, in fact, seem to be oblivious to proper instruction in the Word, having *lost* their spiritual standing.

In addition to those who were Spirit-begotten but lost their begettal, Jude talks of a Second Death category who never were Spirit-begotten. Thus there are two categories of this ungodly Second Death element: (1) those who are among the spiritual ones but who are human- and natural-minded, *never having been begotten by the Holy Spirit*, and (2) those who once had a spiritual mind but *lost it* (the *vast majority*). Peter mentions only the second condition, namely, false teachers who lose their Spirit begettal. Of those in the parable who come to the wedding feast without robes, one class never had the robe and the other class formerly had the robe but took it off (Matt. 22:2–14).

“These [false teachers are] ... made to be taken and *destroyed*.” The Weymouth translation has, “Some animals, if captured, can be tamed; others, always dangerous, can only be destroyed.” Those of this class are not submissive but are a dangerous element, refusing to follow or be governed by God and His Word. They cannot be tamed but are governed by instincts and their own thinking.

This ungodly class speak evil of things they do not understand; that is, they *misrepresent* “dignities” (the Lord’s *true* people) and their teachings from *Scripture* (2 Pet. 2:10; Jude 8,10). As “teachers,” this element *aggressively* promote wrong thoughts. One way this can be done is in discussions where a disparaging remark is made, downgrading or undermining the influence of a brother who teaches or thinks differently. If the one who so speaks has good intentions but just misunderstands, that is one thing, but to misrepresent and disparage a *true* saint of the Lord who is speaking *truth* on a Scripture would be *dangerous* slander.

We are not to conclude, however, that criticism is not in order because the Word tells us to critically analyze public statements (“try the spirits”—1 John 4:1). But a caution is necessary: before criticizing public statements made by individuals, we must be very careful not to overstep the proper way of doing so. “Trying [or discerning] the spirits” pertains to doctrines promulgated *publicly* from the platform (and not to statements uttered in secret). In discerning a public talk or teaching, we should be sure that we *accurately* represent what was said. If we feel that a teaching is wrong, we can rebut the error but not judge the destiny of the individual. It is not wrong to give the identity of one who is teaching an erroneous doctrine. In other

words, if a brother promulgates a certain subject or doctrine in a public talk at a convention, we can properly disagree with that talk and give our reasons for disagreeing. (Caution: We should not react to an isolated statement because that can sometimes be unintentionally garbled. A teaching at length is what can be rebutted.) We are to “try the spirits,” that is, a *line* of teaching and reasoning. But in offering criticism, we must be *absolutely sure we are right*. If not sure, we should say nothing because in speaking, we incur judgment *for good or for bad*. And we must not misrepresent, for it would be better to say we cannot understand a matter than to bluff an answer. *Attitude* and the way we handle a matter are very important.

Here is a class who merit Second Death for the dangerous habit of speaking evil of those whom God regards as dignitaries. They will be *unaware* of their jeopardy, unable to discern that what they are doing is thoroughly out of line with God’s mind or thinking.

Peter uses strong language when he says this class “shall *utterly perish* in their own corruption.” Teaching entails culpability. As soon as one speaks in the name of the Lord, he right away incurs great responsibility for good or for evil.

2 Pet. 2:13 And shall receive the reward of unrighteousness, as they that count it pleasure to riot in the day time. Spots they are and blemishes, sporting themselves with their own deceivings while they feast with you;

This class “shall receive the reward of unrighteousness,” that is, just retribution. In the clause “they ... count it pleasure to riot in the *day time*,” two thoughts are involved:

1. This condition occurs at the end of the age, in the *day* of the Lord’s presence, when much more information is available through the Word as to what is right and proper, yet this class will ignore the instruction.
2. The rioting occurs in the *daytime* (as opposed to under cover of darkness and at night); that is, they are brazen and *open* in their sin. This verse is a *shocking* revelation about developments that will take place in the true Church in the future! It seems impossible, but it *will happen*. The impossible can take place—just like Papacy’s coming back into great persecuting power. Feeling justified in their actions, this class will not fear reprisal.

The fact that this class will “feast with you” indicates they will be in the *true* Church. The word “feast” reminds us of a love feast. At the end of a convention, there is sometimes a “love feast” where hands are shaken, but that is superficial and not what Peter is referring to here. The real “feast” is study meetings where the *Lord’s Word* is feasted upon, where there is a *communion* of thought around the Word, a mutual partaking of the Word. This class of false teachers will be in the midst of the consecrated.

Why is this class called “spots” and “blemishes”? Peter is saying that if we are not careful, we will drift into this condition, for it is not obvious and it will happen *gradually* like leaven and be unnoticed unless we are looking for it. (If the condition occurred suddenly, the striking contrast would be obvious.) The Little Flock will not get entangled. Although the Great Company will become somewhat entangled, they will eventually recognize what is happening and desire to extricate themselves. “Spots” and “blemishes” convey two separate thoughts: (1) The class themselves are polluted, and (2) they exercise a staining or polluting effect on others.

2 Pet. 2:14 Having eyes full of adultery, and that cannot cease from sin; beguiling unstable souls: an heart they have exercised with covetous practices; cursed children:

These false teachers beguile “unstable souls.” In other words, with their false teachings, they

influence others (“unstable souls”) who are not well grounded in the Scriptures.

“Having eyes full of adultery” refers to false doctrine as well as to *literal* fornication. Adulterated foods contain undesirable elements, or non-food, yet are presented as nutritious food. Just as people desire adulterated food—that is, they have a depraved desire—so they are not interested in what the Lord has to say but prefer man’s thinking *whether or not it is true*. The point is that this class will prefer error (impure food) to the pure truth. “Adultery” is “an adulteress” in the King James margin, meaning *accumulated* illegitimate desires.

Their “eyes ... cannot cease from sin.” Just as one can get addicted to a drug, so those who feed on these illegitimate desires become “hooked” and cannot get extricated.

“An heart they have *exercised* with covetous practices.” In other words, this has been a prevailing condition for some time, and this class are hooked. A fishhook has barbs in addition to the point of penetration so that the fish cannot get away.

“Cannot cease from sin.” This condition will be subtle to start with but grotesque in the final analysis. Whatever habit one gets—smoking, drinking, drugs, etc.—there are usually undesirable side effects initially, such as choking when smoking the first cigarette. But subsequent times become easier and easier until a person is addicted. A person craves certain effects so much that he loses sight of the obnoxious traits. Stated another way, he becomes oblivious to the initial unattractive feature because he wants the end result.

This chapter in Peter’s second epistle is a *most solemn* admonition to the *true Church*, out of which this ungodly class will experience the following *downward progression* ending in Second Death unless halted and corrected. First, an individual will have the effrontery to contradict Scripture. If his thoughts and words are not checked, they will lead to ingrained habits (that is, to a change of character). Then will follow open, flagrant disobedience to Scripture. In other words, if this progression is not halted, it will become incurable.

These false teachers are “cursed children,” which is another way of saying they are cut-off children; that is, they are no longer recognized by God as legitimate spiritual children. As such, they will have no life, will go into Second Death, etc.

2 Pet. 2:15 Which have forsaken the right way, and are gone astray, following the way of Balaam the son of Bosor, who loved the wages of unrighteousness;

The fact that this class “*have forsaken* the right way, and are gone astray” proves the emphasis is on those who were Spirit-begotten at one time and then *lost* their spirituality. In other words, they had to be Spirit-begotten previously in order to leave or *forsake* that right (consecrated) way later.

An act of disobedience followed by repentance would not result in the loss of Spirit begettall. Rather, this refers to a condition where there is no repentance and the erring one refuses to extricate himself because the wrong has become a habit or practice.

Balaam “loved the wages of unrighteousness.” His covetous desire was to obtain money or wages. God rebuked him for this desire, having an angel, invisible to Balaam but visible to the ass, obstruct the way and speak through the animal when Balaam beat it. Momentarily Balaam came to his senses, but then later he went on to give evil counsel in regard to getting the daughters of Moab to intermarry with the Israelites, thereby introducing heathen religious practices and knowing God would punish or “curse” Israel for idolatry.

2 Pet. 2:16 But was rebuked for his iniquity: the dumb ass speaking with man's voice forbad the madness of the prophet.

What is the analogy of the “dumb ass speaking with man's voice” to forbid “the madness of the prophet”? Originally Balaam was a *true* prophet, but he ended up being a *false* prophet because of giving bad advice. (He was not a prophet in the sense of the prophets of Israel but was a prophet of Boshor in Mesopotamia.) The dumb ass represents worldly people. This ties in with 2 Peter 2:2, “By reason of whom [the false teachers] the way of truth shall be evil spoken of [by worldly people].” In other words, the time will come when certain things will be done by individuals in the truth movement that the world will recognize and call attention to as a disparity between their profession of godliness and true godliness—and it will be a *proper* criticism. Jesus was falsely accused, but these will be rightly accused. A “*man's voice*” coming from the “dumb ass”—that is, *natural* thinking from *worldly* people—will recognize the impropriety of these consecrated “teachers” who have lost their Spirit begetting.

Notice, however, that the ass speaking did not change the situation, and neither will those of the world who speak out against these false teachers. The ungodly class will hear the criticism, but no beneficial result will be forthcoming.

2 Pet. 2:17 These are wells without water, clouds that are carried with a tempest; to whom the mist of darkness is reserved for ever.

Part of Jude 12 is similar to this verse: “These are spots in your feasts of charity, when they feast with you, feeding themselves without fear: clouds they are without water, carried about of winds; trees whose fruit withereth, without fruit, twice dead, plucked up by the roots.”

The false teachers in the true Church, especially at the end of the age, are “wells without water.” They presume to be sources of instruction and truth, but their words have no substance because they do not speak according to the Scriptures. These false teachers are also likened to “clouds that are carried with a tempest,” meaning they are unstable and are blown about with a gust of wind. Some translations use “mists” or “fogs” instead of “clouds,” suggesting an even more nebulous condition—nebulous in content and without substance.

The phrase “to whom the mist of darkness is reserved for ever” indicates the false teachers will go into Second Death. Therefore, we know this element is closely associated with the true Church and is very responsible. The nominal Church has little contact with us, so this verse does not refer to false teachers in the nominal system. We must watch lest we become part of this class in the true Church at the end of the age.

2 Pet. 2:18 For when they speak great swelling words of vanity, they allure through the lusts of the flesh, through much wantonness, those that were clean escaped from them who live in error.

“They [the false teachers] speak great swelling words of vanity.” In other words, *popularity* will be involved in this false teaching or message. The false teaching will be a generally accepted message, and the false teachers will exert a lot of influence and have prestige *even though their message is vain and empty*. Their meaningless “great swelling words” will be presented *authoritatively*. Like a frog speaking with pomposity, this class will not be afraid to enunciate their thinking.

The false teachers will also “allure [attract] through the lusts of the flesh ... [and] much wantonness.” What tactics will they successfully use? Their thinking will be *natural*, not spiritual, and thus will be related to feelings and emotions. Since much of natural thinking is

related to feelings and emotions, the decisions of this class will be based on *natural reasoning*. Natural feelings based on impulse are *dangerous* to the new creature, for we are to judge matters strictly according to the counsel or thinking of *God* as set forth in *His Word*, the only reliable source. “Lusts of the flesh” and “wantonness” refer particularly to natural reasoning, although eventually even literal lust could be involved.

Many, whether they realize it or not, are impressed with and swayed in their doctrinal thoughts by those in higher positions, such as teachers, orators, the wealthy, or the influential. In other words, they fail to analyze doctrines strictly on the basis of God’s Word. James 2:2–4 tells of an instance in the early Church where the rich were given favored seats in the front while the poor were told to sit in the back row. We must beware lest we do something like this subconsciously, let alone overtly. Beware of outward show! Although it is true that some very faithful Christians have been great orators, their number is extremely small, for there are not many like David or Moses. Paul lacked appearance, personality, and oration, but he had GREAT logic in speaking and writing. We should weigh the *content* of the message rather than the manner of delivery and not be swayed by oration for oration’s sake or by personalities.

“Those that were clean escaped from them who live in error” are the *newly* consecrated who are *sincere* but not mature in their thinking. Thus they tend to be easily influenced by appearance, diction, etc. Lacking the background of information and reasoning from the Bible and not being able to rightly divide the Word of truth, the newly consecrated will be easily impressed by the false teachers and unprepared to withstand the natural reasoning. With “great swelling words” that are really meaningless, plus the allurements of natural reasoning, the false teachers will adversely affect *immature* yet sincere Christians. This will be a testing *within the true Church*.

2 Pet. 2:19 While they promise them liberty, they themselves are the servants of corruption: for of whom a man is overcome, of the same is he brought in bondage.

The false teachers promise “liberty” to the newly consecrated. What is this “liberty”? It is the *false* liberty of a *libertine philosophy* that does not hold to the high standard of the Word. Among other things, *love and forgiveness* are stressed regardless of circumstances. Jude 4 reads in part: “Certain men crept in unawares [infiltrated the true Church] ... ungodly men, turning the grace of our God into lasciviousness.” In other words, this element speak *beyond* the authority of the Word of God, overemphasizing God’s mercy and thus leading to a libertine style of conduct. *Without showing that necessary and proper repentance is the prerequisite for forgiveness*, the false teachers say that God is merciful and kind and that although we should not do this and that, He forgives us. Their counsel and words sound great and magnanimous but are very dangerous to follow or obey. Those who give and/or heed such advice are presuming on the grace of God. In Romans 6:1,2, Paul said, “Shall we continue in sin, that grace may abound? *God forbid!*” And of the Corinthian church, Paul said, “Your glorying is not good. Know ye not that a little leaven leaveneth the whole lump?” (1 Cor. 5:6). Then he instructed the Corinthian brethren to put the fornicator out of their midst instead of retaining him and trying to be *more merciful than God*. In not following God’s teaching, they were disobeying and presuming on His grace. They were disobedient to the instruction of “the only Lord God, and our Lord Jesus Christ” (Jude 4; 2 Peter 2:1). A libertine philosophy is inimical to the life of a Christian and to his proper development. Although this condition has existed throughout all stages of the gospel Church, the suggestion in Holy Writ is that it will be an especially grave danger at the end of the age.

The false teachers promise liberty to the immature Christian, but the teachers “themselves are the servants of corruption.” Many interpret the portion of the Lord’s Prayer that says “Forgive us our trespasses, as we forgive those who trespass against us” to mean that if we forgive others, God will forgive us. Although the prayer *seems* to be saying this, it does not, for the

petitioner is *asking God for forgiveness* to start with. Forgiveness that is exercised for others has to be done in *God's way*. We cannot forgive those who sin *against God*—we can only forgive those who trespass *against us personally*. However, if we see a Christian who has sinned follow the *Lord's direction*, then we can be more bold in encouraging him that his sins are forgiven. We ourselves must ask God by prayer and supplication to have spots removed from our imputed robe of righteousness. Forgiveness is not granted unless we ask Him for it.

2 Pet. 2:20 For if after they have escaped the pollutions of the world through the knowledge of the Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ, they are again entangled therein, and overcome, the latter end is worse with them than the beginning.

This verse refers to the immature, newly consecrated Christians of verse 18, who *recently* fled away from those who live in error and now follow the false counsel of the false teachers. The clause “after they have escaped the pollutions of the world” corresponds to “those that were clean escaped from them who live in error” in verse 18. Of these newly consecrated ones, Peter says, “The latter end is worse with them than the beginning.” In other words, it would have been better for this class *not to have accepted the truth* than for them to be nurtured and influenced by this false teaching. The distinction with those who *do* the false teaching is that for them “the mist of darkness is reserved for ever” (verse 17), that is, Second Death. At the very least those who are influenced by the false teaching will get a severe judgment, and it would have been better had they not allowed themselves to become contaminated.

To explain further, the clause “The latter end is worse with them than the beginning” does not necessarily refer to Second Death as the destiny for those who are influenced by the wrong teaching. However, they are more liable to Second Death than if they heard the truth for the first time in the Kingdom when all instruction will be done by sight. Their chances for life would be better in the Kingdom. “Be not deceived: evil communications corrupt good manners [conduct]” is the principle, and there are varying degrees in which it applies (1 Cor. 15:33).

“For if after they have escaped the pollutions of the world [if after initial consecration] ... they are again entangled therein, and *overcome*, the latter end is worse with them than the beginning.” In 1 Corinthians 5 and 2 Corinthians 2:1–11, the grievous sinner was temporarily overcome and then released later. The fornicator in Corinth is not said to go into Second Death, but he was very dangerously “entangled therein.” Had the class not followed Paul’s advice, his chances would have been nil because he would not have seen the error of his way and hence would have died in it. His repentance indicates that his chances of getting life are encouraging. In other words, after previously escaping the corruption of the world through consecration, the individual again became entangled, but because he extricated himself, there is hope that he will get life. Note, however, that the mathematical possibility of extrication after again becoming entangled is *small* indeed—especially if those Christians who should know better do not encourage the right course. There is little likelihood of extrication after a second entanglement, but the door is not completely closed. In the Kingdom, with *correct* teaching, the chances of success (life) are much greater.

2 Pet. 2:21 For it had been better for them not to have known the way of righteousness, than, after they have known it, to turn from the holy commandment delivered unto them.

2 Pet. 2:22 But it is happened unto them according to the true proverb, The dog is turned to his own vomit again; and the sow that was washed to her wallowing in the mire.

Verses 21 and 22 are a confirmation that the mathematical possibilities of extrication are very, very slim. The proverb shows that in the overall picture, generally speaking, those who get entangled again go into Second Death. With the teachers there is no possibility of getting life,

for they have deliberately given counsel *above* God's Word. Compare Revelation 22:18,19 (especially verse 19) in regard to the Christian's attitude toward God's Word. "For I testify unto every man that heareth the words of the prophecy of this book, If any man shall add unto these things, God shall add unto him the plagues that are written in this book: And *if any man shall take away from the words of the book of this prophecy, God shall take away his part out of the book of life.*" That is why James said, "Let not many of you become teachers, my brethren, for you know that we who teach shall be judged with greater strictness" (James 3:1 RSV). Teaching is a very responsible position. The rewards are greater for faithfulness, but the dangers and punishments are also greater for unfaithfulness and disobedience. "Unto every one that hath [faithfully used] shall [more] be given" is the principle (Matt. 25:29). The rich and many-talented whom God considers faithful will be rewarded proportionately because it was harder for them to give up for the Lord's service what they had. If *equally* faithful, such will get more than the average Christian, but the mathematical possibility is that very few of that class and of the teachers will be so rewarded and given more. The mathematical possibility of reward with the high calling is *much higher* for those who are *not teachers*.

Q: In regard to the great responsibility of teachers, wouldn't there also be a responsibility on the part of all the consecrated in electing elders? If a class pushes forward one who is still a babe either in years of consecration or in understanding and elects him elder, wouldn't they share some of the responsibility?

A: Yes, they would share some of the responsibility, but there is another standpoint too. If a brother is elected before he sins, the class does not have as much information on which to base a decision. For instance, Jesus washed the feet of Judas *before* the betrayal. Thus a judgment based upon unknown factors is one thing, but if a class elects as elder one who is known to be not in harmony with the Word, then the responsibility is much greater.

There is a certain degree of chance with regard to electing elders, but when a wrong spirit or doctrine is exposed, then each member of that ecclesia has a responsibility to terminate that eldership, at least temporarily.

Turning away from the "*holy commandment*" implies the sin will be literally along the lines of fleshly weakness. Liberty will be promised regarding the flesh. For example, practicing homosexuals have great familiarity among themselves, and some churches not only accept them as Christians but ordain them to the ministry. Moreover, some churches encourage the familiarity of hugging and touch. Along spiritual lines, we are told to be separate and to "touch not the unclean thing" (2 Cor. 6:17).

"Holy commandment [singular]" is used in a *collective* sense to indicate a *system* of thinking and *unsound doctrine*. The term does not refer to one Scripture but to the adducing from a *group* of Scriptures a certain teaching or doctrine of a practice or habit that is to be pursued in certain situations. If wrong advice is given based upon the misuse or abuse of a collective group of Scriptures, responsibility is incurred. "Holy commandment" means the summation of what the Bible teaches.

2 Pet. 3:1 This second epistle, beloved, I now write unto you; in both which I stir up your pure minds by way of remembrance:

2 Pet. 3:2 That ye 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 Saviour:

2 Pet. 3:3 Knowing this first, that there shall come in the last days scoffers, walking after their own lusts,

2 Pet. 3:4 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 the creation.

“Knowing this first” means that before going into the exhortation specifically, Peter considers it necessary for the reader to have certain background information. In other words, in order to appreciate or understand the setting in which Peter’s advice is given, one must first go back to the conditions that existed in Noah’s day. Then Peter will be able to explain more intelligibly the counterpart at the end of the age.

Jude and Peter approach this same matter but with the following distinction. The setting of Jude is the experience of only the *true* Church at the end of the age, whereas the application of 2 Peter 3:3 is primarily to the *professed* Church of Christ but also includes the *true* Church. The similar wording of Jude 18 and 2 Peter 3:3 proves that the application of Peter includes the true as well as the nominal Church. “How that they told you there should be mockers in the last time, who should walk after their own ungodly lusts” (Jude 18).

In regard to the professed Church, some theologians in the recent past were bold enough to conclude that we should just draw moral principles from the Bible and not overemphasize its lessons or view it so literally. They questioned the idea of a *revealed* God and a *revealed* religion. Such thinking is infidelism. An infidel believes in a God but not in a revealed God who communicates with His subjects. (An atheist does not believe in God at all, and an agnostic does not know whether or not there is a God.)

Since *parousia* is the Greek word translated “coming,” it is more accurate to say, “Where is the promise of his *presence*?” Even if there is a larger application to the nominal Church, the word “presence” forces us to connect 2 Peter 3:3 with Jude and his warnings about conditions that will occur in the *true* Church at the end of the age. Although the secret, invisible presence of Christ at his Second Advent is an important doctrine to us, the world could not care less. They are not even concerned about Jesus’ coming, let alone about the presence, and if they do hear anything at all about the Second Advent, they think of Jesus as “coming,” not as his being “present.” The same is true of the nominal Church, for they think of the Second *Coming* of Jesus, not of his invisible *presence*. Therefore, the nominal Church would not even be in a position to combat this subject and/or take it as their stance. Instead of asking, “Where is the promise of his presence?” they would ask, “Where is the promise that he will even come?” The fact that *parousia* is used makes this experience applicable to the Lord’s people. The confrontation will be in the true Church. The consecrated of present-truth circles will debate this type of reasoning.

Some in present-truth circles, not being sufficiently established in the doctrine of the presence, will be liable to lying signs and wonders that *seem* to indicate Jesus is literally and visibly returning (Matt. 24:23–26). First, a questioning will begin. For instance, we currently believe certain doctrines, but we might later change our viewpoint on them. Whether the doctrine is proper or improper to begin with would determine whether the change is for better or for worse. Suppose that over a long period of time, one begins to question whether or not the Lord is present because existing conditions are similar to those prior to the Flood. When God did not intervene to stop the unholy angels and to restrain them but allowed conditions to get worse and worse, the obvious questions were, “Where is God? Why isn’t He stopping this deplorable condition?” Then questioning and doubting ensued, especially in regard to the validity of the message of a coming Flood. The people were willingly ignorant back in Noah’s day, for they certainly knew that Noah was preaching about an impending Flood and that he was building a boat, but they were reasoning and proceeding on their *present* experience. After witnessing many things being done that they thought would disquiet God and make Him

angry and then seeing nothing happen, the people began to question whether or not Noah's message was true, and over a period of time, the people became hardened against his message. Thus they were ignorant not in the sense of not having heard a report but in the sense of turning a deaf ear to the report over a period of time. They *willingly disregarded* Noah's message and continued with their usual activities until the day the Flood occurred.

In the end of the age, there will be a similar *disposition* of being willingly ignorant. The message has been going forth not that the Lord is coming but that *he is here*, already present. As conditions gradually get worse and worse in the true Church, a peculiar temptation will arise. If no spectacular restraining of some kind clamps on the lid and establishes righteousness, the temptation will be to become emboldened in disregarding certain principles of Scripture—just as the people in Noah's day became emboldened. When the Lord did not interfere, the people questioned that perhaps their concept had been overdrawn, and they began to act more aggressively and with fewer and fewer inhibitions.

It is significant that the Greek word is "*presence*" and not "coming." The Lord returned in 1874—more than 120 years ago—so the temptation is to reason, "Well, if the Lord has been here so long, why is this happening and why is that happening?" If one's faith is not established in *knowledge* so that he *knows* the Lord has been *doing* something during these 100-plus years and the period is not a vacuum of inactivity, he might begin to question the presence as time goes on and on.

"Promise" is the correct word in the Greek, strictly speaking, but the word "evidence" captures the thought well. "Where is the *evidence* of his presence?" In other words, "Where do you get the *authority* to say the Scriptures teach Christ is invisibly present?"

This questioning of the presence in the *true* Church is a condition that will develop in the future as things get worse and worse. The deterioration begins in the world, spreads to the nominal Church, and then progresses to the true Church. Moods or trends start in the world and then move to the professed Church. Finally the test or spirit begins to trickle down to the true Church. That which is worldly will infiltrate nearer and nearer to us. Notice that Peter is addressing the brethren in this epistle. He is reminding the consecrated of what happened in Noah's day: "Knowing this first..." Back there the materialization of the unholy angels and the corruption of man took place, forcing Noah and his family (representing the consecrated) to take a stand to the contrary. The corruption worked its way into the seed of Adam so that the Adamic stock became mixed and only Noah and his family were of pure generation. Verses 3 and 4 are incompletely explained if applied merely to the world.

Currently we see looseness and promiscuity in the world to such an extent that the media are even promoting these conditions. Formerly announcements were made to warn parents not to let their children see certain programs or segments of programs. Now the programs just come right across the airwaves. When obscene programming first occurred, there was some adverse reaction by the public and a request that "PG" announcements be made. Now the announcements are omitted, and the "R" rated movies on cable television are even worse. Such is the standard of the world.

At first, those in the nominal Church were incensed. In fact, they were the ones who requested an announcement regarding program content. Evangelicals wrote letters of protest, and to a certain extent, their efforts delayed the deterioration of morals for a little while. However, subsequently their voice was ignored because the general public liked the promiscuity and because money from off-color advertising was supporting television programs. Now many in the nominal Church are also becoming more indiscriminate—even right *in* their church social activities, for example. Furthermore, sometimes hugging is promoted in the Church itself,

considering it as part of the “holy kiss” of Scripture. In giving the holy kiss such an inordinate application, they say that those who object to the hugging are evil and have evil minds. In addition, they claim that those with pure minds can do many things without getting contaminated, but such thinking is a deception, for the flesh is *weak*. It is playing with dynamite to think that a consecrated person is stronger than one who is not consecrated. Immorality is creeping more and more into the nominal Church. Many religious bookstores carry books that are quite broad and liberal in their attitude toward daily living.

Thus we have already seen deterioration in both the world and the nominal Church. Based on Peter’s epistles, what remains is an infiltration into the *true* Church. These temptations will come closer and closer to the true Church, to the consecrated. The conditions that existed prior to the Flood will have a bearing on the true Church until the *majority of the consecrated* will be bringing pressure on the minority to change their thinking. This condition is yet future. Eventually a great number in the Truth movement will have this wrong thinking and be questioning the presence. To date, only *individuals* have deflected.

Today the doctrine of the presence is widely held in truth circles, but as the years go by and conditions get looser and looser and the Lord does not punish or restrain the promiscuity, there will come a time when standards and principles are lowered and certain teachings are questioned. Just as back in Noah’s day, the lack of intervention by God and the withholding of His influence for 120 years constituted the basis of the temptation, so it will be again at the end of the Gospel Age. The angels who fell did so because of not seeing God punish the disobedience of Satan. Thus the permission of evil can be carried to such an extent that improper lessons are drawn.

Some feel that the will of the ecclesia is always the Lord’s will. This is dangerous thinking, for if a promiscuous condition entered an ecclesia and the class did not root it out, it would be assumed as acceptable to God.

2 Pet. 3:5 For this they willingly are ignorant of, that by the word of God the heavens were of old, and the earth standing out of the water and in the water:

2 Pet. 3:6 Whereby the world that then was, being overflowed with water, perished:

2 Pet. 3:7 But the heavens and the earth, which are now, by the same word are kept in store, reserved unto fire against the day of judgment and perdition of ungodly men.

“The heavens were of old, and the earth standing out of the water and in the water.” This is a reference to the Vailian theory. Originally water (predominantly) and darkness covered the surface of the earth, and as the land masses were formed, they stood “in the water.” Also, rings of minerals and water cascaded down upon the earth in preparation for man’s eventual creation and habitation. The last of the water rings was held in reserve for Noah’s day. Then (and now) the land surface of the earth was only 25 percent of the globe, the other 75 percent being water. Thus the continents standing *in* the water were only 25 percent of the whole. In addition to the earth standing *in* water, it was standing *apart* from (“out of”) another body of water above. The land mass was in water down here, but according to the Vailian theory, it was also separated from another big ocean of water above. The outer ring of water that Noah referred to could not be seen by the people because of its transparency. Remember that back there the people had a limited knowledge of geography and thus thought their tiny civilized world was the extent of the earth. Moreover, they did not know the earth was round. Peter is saying that the Flood Noah predicted came from *two* sources: (1) from a collapsed veil, or ring, outside or above and (2) from a rushing in of the waters below. The fact that the land masses are only 25 percent of the surface of the globe suggests a tremendous body of water

surrounding the little islands of continents, and it would be no problem for the surrounding water to come in upon the land and for the invisible ring to collapse if God so decreed. *Both* took place. When the waters from these two sources inundated the civilized world that existed back there, “the world that then was ... perished” (verse 6). Not only did the water come in from the oceans surrounding the lands of the Bible, but also the ring of water above collapsed.

“For this they willingly are ignorant of” implies that for 120 years, Noah was explaining about the formation of the earth and also about the invisible ring of water above that would fall. God explained the six Creative Days in Genesis, and no doubt Noah had access to these records. (Moses later compiled the first five books of the Bible from records handed down to him on separate tables.) Noah would have been instrumental in passing down the records and lineage to his posterity—probably to Shem, his son. The knowledge was carried over after the Flood and eventually incorporated into the Pentateuch.

Peter is comparing the *invisible* presence of Christ to the *invisible* ring of water in Noah’s day. The Genesis account that was handed down had to be a matter of *faith* because God was informing society of how He had made the earth prior to man’s creation. Noah carried the knowledge of what had transpired one step forward and said that water above was ready to collapse on the earth. The people could not see this invisible ring and, lacking faith, said that all things “continue as they were from the beginning of the creation” (verse 4). They used *natural* reasoning and logic to combat the Word of God and refute spiritual truths.

Noah was very knowledgeable about the physical features of the earth, and there is a connection between this knowledge and the pyramids he built and also the Great Pyramid. Although an old man at the time, he was with Shem and Ham in Egypt when the Great Pyramid was constructed.

“They” of verse 5, the ones who were willingly ignorant, refers to the people in Noah’s day, but the inference is that there would be a counterpart in the end of the Gospel Age. We know Peter is especially pointing out conditions in our day because the “world,” or society, in Noah’s day did perish when the Flood came. Just as society got worse and worse back there until the Flood occurred, so conditions today are getting worse and worse and will continue to do so until the great Time of Trouble intervenes. Just as it took the Flood to change society in Noah’s day, so society today will not change of its own accord. The coming trouble will force society to change, bringing in a new order, a “new heavens and a new earth” (verse 13) in Christ’s Kingdom. Peter is talking about conditions *before* the Flood as well as the *act* of the Flood, which caused the world order to perish. He is saying that these former conditions, plus the Flood, are comparable to conditions at the end of the age both *prior* to the destruction as well as the *destruction* itself. The previous order was destroyed by *literal* water, whereas the current order will be destroyed by *symbolic* fire and judgment. Based on what is recorded in 2 Peter 3, we would not know that the coming “fire” is symbolic. Other Scriptures such as Zephaniah 3:8,9 furnish proof and give the rounded-out, true intent of the analogy.

The phrase “perdition of ungodly men” in verse 7 refers to those who will go into Second Death in the 1,000-year Day of Judgment. Those of Adamic stock who perished in the Flood in Noah’s day will come forth from the grave, but those of the hybrid race will not. Peter is drawing an analogy. In verses 5 and 6, he talks about the Flood, and all of a sudden in verse 7, he begins to talk about the “perdition of ungodly men” (their extinction in Second Death) and the present evil world, which is kept in store for destruction by “fire” in the Day of Judgment. Perdition is connected with the antitype, not the type, for those of Adamic stock who died in the Flood will have an opportunity for life. (Sodom and Gomorrah are similarly used to picture Second Death, but the actual inhabitants of those cities will be awakened from death.)

2 Pet. 3:8 But, beloved, be not ignorant of this one thing, that one day is with the Lord as a thousand years, and a thousand years as one day.

Why did Peter mention here that “one day is with the Lord as a thousand years, and a thousand years as one day”? This text is often quoted, and rightly so, to prove that the Day of Judgment is a 1,000-year period. However, this is merely a side lesson, for Peter is giving a more direct lesson. From many truths, we learn subsidiary truths that are significant, but we should also be sure we grasp the *primary* lesson of the context. When the 1,000 years of the Millennial Age expire, *all ungodly* men will have gone into perdition (Second Death). The purpose of the Millennial Age is to give every individual of the world a period of trial which, if passed successfully, will result in life. Therefore, the Day of Judgment is the day of “perdition of ungodly men,” and it is a 1,000-year day, not a 24-hour day, as claimed by the nominal Church. However, Peter is saying *two* things in this verse: (1) With regard to the perdition of ungodly men in the true Church at the end of the *Gospel Age*, the judgment period will be *short and peremptory*. (2) For the world of mankind, the judgment period will be a *long 1,000-year day*. And there is a second lesson for the consecrated living at the end of the age: *We should be thankful that the Lord is still dealing with us and giving us time to make our calling and election sure* (verse 9). The Apostle James (5:7) speaks along this line too, picturing the Day of Judgment as a mercy period of recapturing as many of the consecrated as possible. Just as a farmer who plants his crop will patiently wait for full development before harvesting the whole crop, so God grants sufficient time and patiently waits for the full development of the feet members before ending the Harvest.

If Peter were merely trying to say that the Day of Judgment is 1,000 years long, he would have omitted the last phrase “and a thousand years as one day.” The inclusion emphasizes that the judgment period is very short for one class and very long for another, relatively speaking.

2 Pet. 3:9 The Lord is not slack concerning his promise, as some men count slackness; but is longsuffering to us-ward, not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance.

“The Lord is not slack concerning his promise.” Earlier (verse 4) the word “promise” was mentioned: “Where is the promise of his presence?” It is this promise that is delayed or deferred. “Hope deferred maketh the heart sick” (Prov. 13:12). Thus the fact that the promise of the presence is not obviously activated will result in some thinking that the Lord is slack concerning this promise and that perhaps they have overdrawn certain lessons.

Peter is saying, “No, the Lord is not slack concerning his promise. The action is being delayed so that He will not lose any who can possibly be saved. God purposed the delay because He does not want to lose even one individual whom He has called—if it be possible to save that individual. What seems to be a delay is not really a delay, for God knew in advance how long His purposes would take. He knows the day and the hour for each event in the plan of the ages, just as He knew the exact time the Flood would occur.” It is encouraging to realize God is not slack but is long-suffering to us, “not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance.”

The principle of God’s not being willing that any should perish but wanting all to come to repentance applies to the consecrated *now* and to the world *later*. God desires to save *as many as possible* and is long-suffering and patient accordingly.

The thought of “slackness” reminds us of Habakkuk 2:3, “For the vision is yet for an appointed time, but at the end it shall speak, and not lie: though it [seem to] tarry, wait for it; because it will surely come, it will not tarry.”

2 Pet. 3:10 But the day of the Lord will come as a thief in the night; in the which the heavens shall pass away with a great noise, and the elements shall melt with fervent heat, the earth also and the works that are therein shall be burned up.

“The day of the Lord will come as a thief in the night; in the which the heavens shall pass away ... the earth also.” The Day of the Lord came as a thief in the night in 1874, but the day is *1,000 years* in length and during that long day the *present* social order, religious and civil, will be destroyed.

“The heavens shall pass away with a great noise.” In Young’s *Analytical Concordance*, the word “noise” means “hissing.” In several places in the Old Testament, as well as in 1611 when the King James Version was translated, the word “hiss” referred to a piercing noise or a shrill, loud whistle. In other words, the hissing would not be like steam hissing or refer to a quiet melting away or a silent dissolving. Rather, ecclesiasticism will pass away with great noise, with a startling and piercing sound, symbolically speaking. The Greek and Hebrew words for hissing mean the strong passing of air over a reed or finger, making a shrill whistle. The rushing or pressure of the wind or air causes the loud whistle. Thus the heavens will pass away with a great rushing of wind, with a very loud noise.

The following are examples of “hissing” in the Old Testament:

1. “And Babylon shall become heaps, a dwellingplace for dragons, an astonishment, and an hissing, without an inhabitant” (Jer. 51:37).
2. “I will hiss for them, and gather them; for I have redeemed them: and they shall increase as they have increased” (Zech. 10:8).

When a prophet was told to go out to the people and hiss, it meant that prior to delivering his message, he was to give a terrifically loud whistle to signal the people to come. Just as a shrill siren can startle us today, so when the present order passes away, there will be very alarming and *startling* occurrences and indications. “Startling” is implied by “hissing.”

The elements of ecclesiasticism will “melt with fervent heat.” The “heavens” are compared with “elements” and the “earth” with “works.” In the Living Bible, this verse reads, “The day of the Lord is surely coming as unexpectedly as a thief, and then the heavens will pass away with a terrible noise and the heavenly bodies will disappear in fire.” The “elements,” or “heavenly bodies,” are the clergy or ruling element, while the “heavens” are the ecclesiastical systems themselves. The leading offices and personalities in the systems, whether civil or religious, will be removed. The “elements” are the religious leaders, and the “works” are the civil leaders. “Works” refer to practices and procedures. Not only will the civil systems perish and the leading personalities and offices, but the practices of the people as well. It is significant that the religious element is mentioned first. This order harmonizes with Revelation 18:2–11, which shows that ecclesiasticism will be destroyed ahead of the civil governments.

“*Fervent heat*” implies murder, violence, bloodshed, etc. Repercussions from the great noise and fervent heat will eventually affect all strata of society. There will be a *tremendous* commotion.

Although Jesus came quietly and invisibly in 1874, unbeknownst to all but those who hear and answer his knock on the door, this verse is not talking about Jesus but about the “day of the Lord.” The expression “come as a thief” is used several ways in the Bible. For instance, Jesus comes quietly to steal his crown jewels while the world is asleep. In the following three Scriptures, Jesus comes as a thief: (1) “But know this, that if the goodman of the house had known in what watch the *thief* would come, he would have watched, and would not have suffered his house to be broken up” (Matt. 24:43). (2) “Remember therefore how thou hast

received and heard, and hold fast, and repent. If therefore thou shalt not watch, I will come on thee *as a thief*, and thou shalt not know what hour I will come upon thee” (Rev. 3:3). (3) “Behold, I come *as a thief*. Blessed is he that watcheth, and keepeth his garments, lest he walk naked, and they see his shame” (Rev. 16:15). In the following two Scriptures, the *Day of the Lord* comes as a thief: (1) “For yourselves know perfectly that the day of the Lord so cometh as a *thief* in the night. For when they shall say, Peace and safety; then sudden destruction cometh upon them, as travail upon a woman with child; and they shall not escape” (1 Thess. 5:2,3). (2) “But the day of the Lord will come *as a thief* in the night; in the which the heavens shall pass away with a great noise, and the elements shall melt with fervent heat, the earth also and the works that are therein shall be burned up” (2 Pet. 3:10).

The “heavens” will be destroyed first. When the people realize the corruption, they will tear down the ecclesiastical systems. The “Lord’s great army” will be involved in this tearing-down aspect. “And *the LORD* shall utter his voice before *his army*: for his camp is very great: for he is strong that executeth his word: for the *day of the LORD* is great and very terrible; and who can abide it?” (Joel 2:11).

In verses 8–10, who does “Lord” refer to, God or Jesus? In verse 9, it is God. God is not slack concerning His promise. The “day of the Lord” (verse 10) is the Day of *God* (see verse 12). We know the Day of God and Day of Christ are both 1,000 years long, but the context here and in verse 8 refers to the Day of *God*. Normally we think of Jehovah’s Day as the Day of *wrath*, the forepart or earlier portion of the Millennial Kingdom of Christ, the manifestation of God’s *indignation* upon His enemies and the establishment of the Kingdom. But if the Day of *God* is said to be 1,000 years long in verse 8, then it is also the Day of *God* that will “come as a thief in the night” (verse 10).

Other Scriptures reveal that the *initial* return of Christ is an invisible, secret presence, discerned only by the eye of faith in prophecy, in the Word of God. Thus the Day of Christ also comes like a thief in the night (1 Thess. 5:2).

Here Peter is saying that although the Day of God comes as a thief, it will be *during* that day that the “heavens shall pass away with a great noise, and the elements shall melt with fervent heat, [and] the earth also.” When the Day of God comes, there will be a manifestation to the world of His indignation, but if the consecrated are not prepared, if they have not been established with maturity and strength, they will be caught or surprised in the trouble and judgments. The Church should be praying and hasting that this day should come because they know that as a result of the Time of Trouble, the Kingdom, with its blessings of peace, will be inaugurated. When we pray for the Kingdom, we are indirectly praying for the trouble to come, which will immediately introduce the Kingdom.

The Day of God comes as a thief on the *world*, whereas our Lord’s invisible presence comes as a thief on those of the *consecrated* who are not alert to and aware of the word of prophecy (the Jubilee cycles, the time parallels, the fact that a servant would be selected when Jesus returned, etc.). Actually, Jesus came *prior* to the enlightenment of the Church, for he returned in 1874 and it was not until 1877 or 1878 that the “faithful and wise servant” was selected. Thus Jesus made the servant aware of his presence *after* he had previously come.

The Day of God is more forceful, referring to the Time of Trouble coming on the world. Those of the consecrated who are not ready and are thus caught in the trouble, will not be of the Little Flock. They will not have been diligently watching. Peter is saying that since we are praying for the Kingdom to come, it would be inconsistent if we are not watching for it. If we do not watch, we will be caught unawares regarding not just the Second Presence but the Time of Trouble. The net effect of the Time of Trouble will be to shake up and wake up the world of

mankind and alert them to the fact that a radical change has taken place in earth's society. "When thy judgments are [abroad] in the earth, the inhabitants of the world will learn righteousness" (Isa. 26:9). God's Kingdom, as well as His representative, Jesus, will be "revealed from heaven ... in flaming fire" (2 Thess. 1:7,8).

The day is one thing and the *personality* is another. We do not say that God came in 1874, but the Day of God and Jesus personally came then. We haste "unto the coming [presence] of the day of God," which comes like a thief in the night (verses 10 and 12), and during that day, the Time of Trouble will occur. Thus the "day of God" is referring to the arrival of a judgment work, which will come upon the world suddenly and catch them unawares.

"For yourselves know perfectly that the day of the Lord so cometh as a thief in the night. For when they shall say, Peace and safety; then sudden destruction cometh upon them, as travail upon a woman with child; and they shall not escape. But ye, brethren, are not in darkness, that that day should overtake you as a thief" (1 Thess. 5:2-4). The Day of *Christ* will not overtake the Church as a thief, but it will come "as a thief in the night" on the world, bringing *sudden* destruction in the Time of Trouble. The Thessalonians citation refers not to the 1874 date but to the sudden destruction yet future. Hence this can be equated to what Peter is saying about the Day of God in 2 Peter 3. The Day of God and the Day of Christ, being the divine judgments and wrath to come upon the world in the great Time of Trouble, are yet future and will come upon the world as a thief in the night.

There is harmony of interpretation here. From the judgment aspect, the Day of Christ and the Day of God are yet future, but from a broad or general standpoint, both began in 1874. The day came quietly in the sense that Jesus returned as an invisible messenger to his Church and he deals with them. But while a period of time is allocated where Christ sits down with his disciples to feed, instruct, and refine them, he will deal with the nominal Church and the world of mankind when that work is accomplished. The nominal Church and the world are a part of the Millennial 1,000-year day, but the judgment aspect will overtake those who are not prepared. Stated another way, not until the judgment is executed (yet future) will the nominal Church and the world realize the Day of God has come and surprised them. The 1874 date can be used regarding the Day of God coming as a thief, but Peter's specific application is to the judgment aspect yet future. Peter implies that the Church should be developed prior to the judgment feature of the Day of God.

We know that 1 Thessalonians 5:2-4 refers to the Day of *Christ* because of earlier verses and also the next epistle, where Paul explains that the Day of Christ had not already come back there in his day but that it was future and could not come until the "man of sin" was manifested. The thief-like *overtaking* of the nominal Christian class, as well as the Great Company, is what Paul and Peter are stressing (1 Thessalonians 5; 2 Peter 3).

In verse 10, notice that Peter mentions the dissolving of the heavens *first*, which harmonizes with 1 Thessalonians 5:3, "For when they [the nominal or professed Church element] shall say, Peace and safety; then sudden destruction cometh upon them, as travail upon a woman with child; and they shall not escape." The nominal Church will be dealt with first, before the world. A time sequence is shown in 1 Peter 3—first the heavens and then the earth.

The Day of God *overtaking* will occur when God manifests *His* wrath, and that will be no secret. When His fury rises up in His face, the world will *know* it (Ezek. 38:18). The people will be truly shaken up and forced to consider what is happening. God is not responsible for what the fallen angels are doing in the earth today or for the depraved world of mankind, but the time is coming when *He* will execute vengeance. In Noah's day, it was God (and not the fallen angels) who brought the *flood*. The work of fallen men and fallen angels is not the Time of Trouble.

That trouble will occur when *God* directly instigates the judgments of indignation (through human instrumentalities). The destruction of the nominal Church will be *startling* because the Catholic system has claimed that the very gates of hell could not prevail against it. The destruction of the nominal systems will be unique, causing people to ask, “What is happening?”

2 Peter 3 emphasizes *Jehovah*. “Where is *God’s* promise of Jesus’ presence?” (verse 4). *God* is not slack concerning this promise (verse 9). The “day of *God*” is mentioned in verses 10 and 12. “Be diligent that ye may be found of him [*God*] ... without spot, and blameless” (verse 14). The long-suffering of *God* grants an extension of time for us to try to make our calling and election sure (verses 9 and 15).

The Old Testament Hebrew *adonai* more frequently refers to the Logos than to *God*. In the New Testament, the term “Lord” can be either *God* or *Jesus*, but more often refers to *God*. In either case, the context determines the reference. The Book of Revelation equates *God’s* reign with *Jesus’* reign; they will occur *simultaneously* and are *still future*. However, *Jesus’* presence has already begun. Technically, the Millennial day has started, but the portion of the day that overtakes or manifests itself upon the world or the indifferent Church is future.

2 Pet. 3:11 Seeing then that all these things shall be dissolved, what manner of persons ought ye to be in all holy conversation and godliness,

2 Pet. 3:12 Looking for and hasting unto the coming of the day of *God*, wherein the heavens being on fire shall be dissolved, and the elements shall melt with fervent heat?

2 Pet. 3:13 Nevertheless we, according to his promise, look for new heavens and a new earth, wherein dwelleth righteousness.

Verse 12 is partially a repeat of verse 10. Verse 13 is related to verse 4: “Where is the *promise* of *Jesus’* presence?” According to this same promise, we look for a “new heavens and a new earth.”

When we “look for,” pray for, and “haste” the Day of Trouble, it is not that we desire the trouble but that we see the *necessity* of first humbling mankind to put them in the proper heart condition to accept the Kingdom. The trouble will prepare the people and hence must precede the new heavens and the new earth. Therefore, we are actually looking for the new heavens and the new earth *beyond the trouble*. The Time of Trouble is the threshold the human race must pass over in order for the reign of peace to be established. Thus we want the trouble not for the sake of trouble but to usher in the Kingdom.

Verses 11 and 12 can be punctuated as follows: “Seeing then that all these things shall be dissolved, what manner of persons ought ye to be? In all holy conversation [conduct] and godliness, look for and haste unto the coming of the day of *God*, wherein the heavens being on fire shall be dissolved, and the elements shall melt with fervent heat.” A question is asked, and the answer is given. Not everyone reading these verses is “in all holy conduct and godliness,” but that is the desired condition. In other words, “Consider soberly all these things that you have been told and then consider what manner of persons you ought to be.” Paraphrased, “Since you are looking forward to the day of *God*, you should realize that the object of this day is to burn up all works of unrighteousness. Therefore, reason would say that you had better be circumspect yourself lest *you* also have to experience the coming judgments.” Verses 11 and 12 are parenthetical.

“Holy conversation” is a daily walk in righteousness. “Conversation” means *all* manner of

behavior and conduct, particularly in our deeds. “Godliness” has a different thought. Even if one walks correctly and his deeds are according to God’s commandments, he still needs to develop *God-likeness*. All those of the Little Flock will have to be conformed to the likeness of Christ, which is the image of God. It is one thing to be obedient because of prudence (to watch morals and conduct and just be “good”), but that is not enough. Each of the Little Flock will also develop the proper character as well, as laid down in the Word. Having the right character is *more* than being kind, tender, gentle, etc. Godliness (God-likeness) is the last step in development. Peter is saying we need to have righteous conduct *plus* a crystallized character.

2 Pet. 3:14 Wherefore, beloved, seeing that ye look for such things, be diligent that ye may be found of him in peace, without spot, and blameless.

A colon should be inserted. “Seeing that ye look for such things, be diligent that ye may be found of him [God] in peace: [that is,] without spot, and blameless.” “Blameless” means without blemish or wrinkle. It is a more *inclusive* term regarding the robe of Christ’s righteousness. A “spot” comes from outside contact with sin. It is a stain or marking on the robe. Spots are to be washed off. (This kind of “spot” is different in the Greek from the “spot” mentioned in the Book of Jude pertaining to a sunken reef.) This spot is a stain on the robe that comes from without. Jude 23 tells what causes the spot: “the garment [is] spotted by the *flesh*.” In other words, a “spot” is a sin of the flesh. An act of the flesh can stain the robe. We are to ask for forgiveness each day to have our spots removed and our robes cleansed. The longer a spot or stain remains, the harder it is to get out. This is literally true too. The quicker we wash out a stain, the better our chances of getting the garment back to its original condition.

A “wrinkle” comes from sleeping in a garment. Hence a wrinkle is inactivity, slothfulness, and lack of diligence in Christian activity. It is *indifference*—and not necessarily a moral infraction. Wrinkles need to be ironed out.

A “blemish” is a weakness or an imperfection. In *literal* material, it can be a tear, an old stain not properly removed, etc. All are born and shapen in iniquity; all are imperfect (Psa. 51:5). However, when one comes into Christ, he is *reckoned* perfect, righteous, and justified. Yet there are still imperfections and weaknesses along fleshly and physical lines. *Inherited* weaknesses are covered by the robe, but some “blemishes” are not. For example, in the type, the high priest could not have extra fingers or toes—visual imperfections. Even a good man with a right heart condition could not have been a high priest if he had a crooked nose, etc., that would be an *apparent* wrong. The opposite condition would be one who had a wrong heart condition but appeared perfect externally and, therefore, could be high priest. Thus there are two kinds of imperfection. The high priest might look all right and thus be externally fit for office yet be wicked inwardly.

Consider Eli, who pictures a Second Death class. Although a seemingly righteous man, he was not qualified for the highest office, for he lacked the courage to correct his sons and thus permitted them to remain in the Tabernacle arrangement with their gross sins. By failing to administer correction, Eli incurred responsibility for their behavior. Externally, he fulfilled the requirements of the priesthood in that he did not have any *outward* blemish, but he had an *inward* weakness that made him unfit to picture the Little Flock (or even the Great Company). Another individual might have an external blemish that would bar him from the priesthood yet be a righteous individual.

In the antitype, some elders are not real elders in God’s sight. They are not acceptable to Him as part of the Little Flock, yet the brethren, who look on the outward appearance, do find them acceptable. Conversely, other brothers may have the proper heart condition (and thus be of the Little Flock), yet not qualify as elders because of certain deficiencies, such as aptness to

teach, impediment of speech, etc. Some blemishes are very noticeable externally and may hinder one's ministry in the present life, but the heart condition may be such that God will approve him. God looks at the heart; we look at the surface.

When presented in heaven, those with the right heart condition will be considered "blameless" regardless of the external imperfections in the present life. None of those who get the divine nature will any longer have blemishes. If faithful in heart, an individual's blemishes are covered by the robe of Christ's righteousness so that he can be presented "blameless" in heaven and be glorified. Those with the wrong heart condition are not fit for the highest office either in the present life or in heaven, for that type of blemish would not be covered by the robe. In an uncovered blemish, the Lord attributes some responsibility to the individual. If the blemish is covered, God considers that one perfect.

2 Pet. 3:15 And account that the longsuffering of our Lord is salvation; even as our beloved brother Paul also according to the wisdom given unto him hath written unto you;

Again we are reminded of James 5:7. The principle of God's long-suffering (long patience) is given, especially in regard to the "latter rain" (that is, at the end of the Gospel Age). "Be patient therefore, brethren, unto the coming of the Lord" refers to the time during the Second Presence that Jesus comes for the feet members. A few of the Little Flock will be developed right down to the end. Isaiah 17:6 tells of the remaining two or three berries on the tree that will have to be beaten down with a stick. The berries represent the last individual members of the Little Flock in the Harvest. The general Harvest was a time of great productivity, numerically speaking, but the last few berries at the uppermost branch are the last members of the Church, filling up the vacancies in the body.

2 Pet. 3:16 As also in all his epistles, speaking in them of these things; in which are some things hard to be understood, which they that are unlearned and unstable wrest, as they do also the other scriptures, unto their own destruction.

In verses 15 and 16, notice Peter's deference to Paul on this subject and other subjects. Peter is saying that whatever Paul wrote on, he did with a great depth of understanding. Peter manifests a wonderful spirit, calling Paul "our beloved brother" because of his depth of wisdom.

The epistles of Peter, John, Jude, and 2 Timothy were all written within one or two years of Paul's execution. Except for the Book of Revelation, they were the last books to be written. Evidently Peter and Paul died within a year of each other, related to the Nero persecution. Peter was executed in AD 66.

"They that are unlearned and unstable wrest ... [the] scriptures, unto their own destruction." This statement shows the responsibility and importance of Paul's teaching, for false prophets are doomed to destruction, spiritually speaking. "Be not many of you teachers" is the principle. A teacher has to be very careful in public utterances, especially in treating certain subjects. Those who are unlearned tend to forcefully confirm the error because they are convinced the error is truth. This tendency makes the position of teacher even more sobering. Then, too, there are different types of doctrine. The more forceful the Scripture, the more forceful the explanation or application should be. If wrongly stated, it is strongly stated wrong, and if rightly stated, it is strongly stated right. The stronger the Scripture, the greater the responsibility to teach it right.

Teachers (and all brethren) should recognize their limitations, and thus not speak above God's Word or overextend themselves, whatever the doctrine or subject is. Even a good doctor

would refer a patient to a more qualified physician if he could not handle a particular case. What makes him a *good* doctor, even though he could not treat the malady, is that he recognized his limitation. Peter is doing the same thing here in referring the Christian to Paul's counsel on this matter and other matters. In effect, Peter was saying, "Paul wrote on this subject in depth, but when you read it, be careful, for he is deeper and more qualified on this subject than I am."

Jude 10 reads, "But these speak evil of those things which they know not: but what they know naturally, as brute beasts, in those things they corrupt themselves." Jude is saying that some will teach dogmatically on subjects they do not understand. This is serious when character is affected.

Both Paul's *general* doctrines and Peter's admonition here (that is, about the end of the age when the present heavens and earth pass away and about the necessity for the Christian to have holy conduct and develop God-likeness) will be wrested by the unstable and the unlearned to their destruction. The doctrinal *theme* or line of reasoning Peter gives in this epistle is in danger of being wrested—so beware!!! All elders will make mistakes on isolated points, but when, as mouthpieces of the Lord, they teach *doctrines*, they should be careful.

Certain portions of Paul's epistles were written to correct faults or conditions in the Church. To take Paul's theme or doctrinal line of reasoning, given to correct a certain matter, and then pervert the teaching and use it to teach a completely different doctrine is wrong. That would be manipulating the Scriptures to teach one's *own* thinking. Neither the Bible nor Pastor Russell's writings should be used this way. However, we should remember that the Pastor was not an apostle and hence might state a matter one way one time and another way another time, but at least when he or any other author makes a statement, we should, in all fairness, try to understand and accurately present the thinking and position of the author at the time he did the writing. We must give *honest* quotations, for wresting is wrong and it blemishes the author—whether living or dead. To ascribe something to an author that he did not say or mean on a given occasion damages his character or name. Wresting the Word of God incurs even more responsibility and thus is more serious. "Wresting" means a *deliberate* change.

2 Pet. 3:17 Ye therefore, beloved, seeing ye know these things before, beware lest ye also, being led away with the error of the wicked, fall from your own stedfastness.

This verse is a strong admonition: "Beloved, seeing ye know these things ..., *beware lest ye also, being led away with the error of the wicked, fall from your own stedfastness.*" This verse indicates there will be serious doctrinal error at the end of the age. If someone asks for our thought and we are not absolutely sure, we should qualify our statement, rather than be dogmatic, by saying, "I *think* ..." When a subject matter is treated that touches on *many* Scriptures, what we say is more important and incurs more responsibility than a statement on one verse. Regarding a *line of reasoning*, wrong teaching is more serious.

Wresting the Scriptures results in a "fall from ... stedfastness." Character is damaged by such error—the character of both the blind teacher and the hearer who accepts the wrong teaching and is thus "led away with the error of the wicked." Earlier, in 2 Peter 2:1, the teachers themselves were condemned. The bulk of the criticism was directed against the false teachers, but then Peter ends up by also warning those who are led astray by these false teachers. We must beware lest we fall.

2 Pet. 3:18 But grow in grace, and in the knowledge of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ. To him be glory both now and for ever. Amen.

FIRST EPISTLE OF PETER

(Study led by Bro. Frank Shallieu in 1996)

1 Pet. 1:1 Peter, an apostle of Jesus Christ, to the strangers scattered throughout Pontus, Galatia, Cappadocia, Asia, and Bithynia,

The “strangers scattered,” called “exiles of the Dispersion” in the Revised Standard Version, were mostly Jewish Christians. Thus Peter’s responsibility was to address particularly the Jewish Christians of the first dispensation. As the apostle of the circumcision, Peter visited all of these places in Asia Minor (or Turkey) in a special sense. Galatia, Bithynia, and Pontus were fairly large provinces.

Peter spent much of his time in Israel. In fact, he presumably stayed there until the net of persecution was getting severe and the Roman army was taking steps to put Israel in its place. He would have visited these places from AD 40 to 50. His two epistles were written during the latter part of his life, and he died in AD 64 or 66 in Italy according to tradition—and by upside-down crucifixion.

Q: In Luke 22:31,32 Jesus said to Peter, “Simon, Simon, behold, Satan hath desired to have you, that he may sift you as wheat: But I have prayed for thee, that thy faith fail not: and when thou art converted, strengthen thy brethren.” Would Peter’s epistles, written at the end of his life, be especially on his heart for strengthening and encouraging his brethren as an answer to the Lord’s instruction?

A: Yes, he felt that responsibility because he was the apostle of the circumcision. When Paul entered a city, he went first to the Jews, but he ended up outside the synagogue and the greater number of his converts were Gentiles. In regard to Paul’s commission to preach to the Gentiles, he made a point of going to virgin territory. Therefore, although Peter and Paul both went to Galatia, they each went to different parts of that province, Peter to the east and Paul to the west. With their contemporaneous ministries, there was no duplication.

1 Pet. 1:2 Elect according to the foreknowledge of God the Father, through sanctification of the Spirit, unto obedience and sprinkling of the blood of Jesus Christ: Grace unto you, and peace, be multiplied.

Peter is addressing the consecrated, those who have had the “sprinkling of the blood of Jesus Christ” applied to them.

Comment: According to *Strong’s Concordance*, “foreknowledge” should be “forethought”: “elect according to the forethought of God.” The implication would be a *personal* aspect in the Father’s choosing each one of us, as opposed to *class* predestination.

Reply: If we were Christians living in one of these areas away from Jerusalem (that is, in the outer perimeter of Jewish Christian influence), it would have been very comforting to know that God had foresight for our needs and made sure that the call came to us.

1 Pet. 1:3 Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, which according to his abundant mercy hath begotten us again unto a lively hope by the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead,

This is a good Scripture for refuting the Trinity. “Blessed be the God ... of our Lord Jesus Christ.” Jesus is not God.

“Blessed be the God ... which ... hath begotten us again unto a lively [live] hope by the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead.” This portion of text tells us that the apostles’ hopes were dashed when Jesus was crucified. They were very despondent. The Crucifixion of the One they had considered to be King of the Jews, the Messiah, and then three subsequent days of silence were very sobering. The term “begotten *again*” shows the depth of the despondency. It was as if they themselves died when Jesus was crucified. When he manifested his resurrection to them, it was like receiving life from the dead.

If the apostles jumped for joy when Lazarus was resuscitated from death, imagine their emotion and delirious joy when Jesus appeared as the *Risen Lord*! No one could have stopped their witnessing! As a result of their zeal and enthusiasm, Christianity spread rapidly, and leaders of the nation became very alarmed. Jesus’ resurrection brought renewed life and joy to the disciples.

1 Pet. 1:4 To an inheritance incorruptible, and undefiled, and that fadeth not away, reserved in heaven for you,

The reward for faithfulness was put on the table: the hope of an incorruptible, undefiled, unfading inheritance reserved in heaven. Death of the flesh is intimated in the expression “reserved in heaven,” for the reward is not down here but in the life beyond.

1 Pet. 1:5 Who are kept by the power of God through faith unto salvation ready to be revealed in the last time.

The consecrated are kept unto the heavenly salvation beyond the veil by the power of God through faith. The Pastor likened faith to the arm of a trolley car, which reaches up to the cable that carries the electricity. The Christian’s arm of faith reaches up to the electric power of God. In other words, while verse 5 is a guarantee and a promise, we must become *progressively sanctified by continuing* to hold up the arm of faith. The justified *live* by faith; their course of life is based upon the power they receive through the arm of faith.

1 Pet. 1:6 Wherein ye greatly rejoice, though now for a season, if need be, ye are in heaviness through manifold temptations:

At first, this verse might seem to be contradictory: “You *greatly rejoice*, but you are *heavy*.” In the present life the Christian is a dual personality, a combination of the new creature being in the old creature’s body. The old man is carried to Haran until Terah’s death; it is like a monkey on the back. Abraham could not enter the Promised Land until Terah died. On the one hand, the will of the flesh continually protests against the will of the spirit, resenting the limitations on its activities. On the other hand, the new creature is given unlimited development.

Hebrews 12:11 is a good companion text: “Now no chastening *for the present* seemeth to be joyous, but grievous: nevertheless *afterward* it yieldeth the peaceable fruit of righteousness unto them which are exercised thereby.” The “afterward” can occur in the present life as well as in the next life. Sometimes considerable time is required for the “peaceable fruit of righteousness” to develop. Since “flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom,” everything must be sacrificed in the interest of the new creature; the old creature must be crucified (1 Cor. 15:50). There are many diversions and distractions to retard or prevent the growth of the new creature. Hence we are told not to forsake “the assembling of ourselves together, ... and *so much the more*, as ye see the day approaching” (Heb. 10:25); that is, *increasingly so* as the end of the age approaches and the days grow more evil, we should desire communication and fellowship with brethren and with the Word of God. It is foolish for any brother to think he can

survive alone.

Comment: The short clause “if need be” in verse 6 is significant. When we have hard trials and experience a heaviness of spirit, we can trust the Lord that these are needful for our highest welfare.

Reply: The phrasing seems to be an intimation of troubles becoming more severe. More hard times will follow as well as growth of the new creature.

Comment: Since the epistles of Peter are placed toward the end of the Bible—and with Peter’s epistles, John’s epistles, Jude, and Revelation being especially pertinent for the end times—it seems important that this first chapter emphasizes the word *apokalupsis* four times:

1. “Who are kept by the power of God through faith unto salvation ready to be *revealed* in the last time” (verse 5).
2. “That the trial of your faith, being much more precious than of gold that perisheth, though it be tried with fire, might be found unto praise and honour and glory at the *appearing* of Jesus Christ” (verse 7).
3. “Unto whom it was *revealed*, that not unto themselves, but unto us they did minister the things, which are now reported unto you by them that have preached the gospel unto you with the Holy Ghost sent down from heaven; which things the angels desire to look into” (verse 12).
4. “Wherefore gird up the loins of your mind, be sober, and hope to the end for the grace that is to be brought unto you at the *revelation* of Jesus Christ” (verse 13).

Reply: Yes, that would be the uncovering, the unveiling, the revealing, of that which is hidden, but not in the sense of *epiphania*. Perhaps it would have been better for the translators to just use *apokalupsis* in each instance.

1 Pet. 1:7 That the trial of your faith, being much more precious than of gold that perisheth, though it be tried with fire, might be found unto praise and honour and glory at the appearing of Jesus Christ:

“That the trial of your faith, being much more precious than of gold that perisheth.” The King James wording gives the thought of a developmental process of faith being tried, but in the more literal sense, faith is *being proved* by faithfulness in the trial. The literal thought in the Greek is, “That the *proof of your faith* is more precious than fine gold.”

The other thought, that *the trial itself* is more precious than gold, is also true, but that is not the particular point here. The trial is very, very precious, but if you are faithful to each trial and are thus making progress, then the proof of your reactions to the trial—how you make use of the trial—is what is so precious.

Comment: We do not normally think of gold as perishing. In fact, along natural lines, gold does not perish. Therefore, Peter is making a contrast. The experience of achieving the divine nature is counted in a new dimension that goes way beyond what we can grasp.

Reply: It is beyond comparison. Gold cannot be taken beyond the grave, whereas good character development can. The divine nature is an *exceedingly great and precious promise*.

Comment: All the gold in the world is nothing compared with the heavenly gifts.

Reply: There are two kinds of gold: earthly gold in the present life and the gold of the divine nature.

Comment: Since this epistle is primarily directed to Jewish Christians, an interesting comment was made in the old study: “Peter is also indirectly referring to the gold of the Tabernacle arrangement, as will be seen later. The Law Covenant arrangement fades for the Jew who accepts Christ.” Gold perishes. In other words, the brilliance of gold fades for the Jew who accepts Christ.

Reply: Spiritual gold, spiritual hopes, can grow dim in the sense that one’s desire can decrease. In the message to the Church of Laodicea, Jesus spoke of the spiritual gold: “I counsel thee to buy of me gold tried in the fire” (Rev. 3:18). Lamentations 4:1 reads, “How is the gold become dim! how is the most fine gold changed! the stones of the sanctuary are poured out in the top of every street.” If we so permit, spiritual hopes can be dimmed. Here in 1 Peter, the apostle is speaking of temporal or earthly gold.

“That the trial of your faith ... might be found unto praise and honour and glory at the *appearing* of Jesus Christ.” The use of the word *apokalupsis* indicates beyond the veil.

Q: Does *apokalupsis* indicate the time frame of revelation to the world?

A: Yes, but in that revelation, the Church will experience elation in being with Jesus, reigning with him, and being seated with him in his throne. Moreover, the Church will receive praise, honor, and glory from the world of mankind, particularly from those who previously knew them.

1 Pet. 1:8 **Whom having not seen, ye love; in whom, though now ye see him not, yet believing, ye rejoice with joy unspeakable and full of glory:**

Peter mentioned earlier that those who were strangers in Galatia, Pontus, etc., and thus had never heard Jesus preach or seen him *and yet believed on him and consecrated* are to be commended. This is a reminder of Jesus’ words to Thomas, “Blessed are they that have not seen, and yet have believed” (John 20:29). As an apostle who saw Jesus and walked with him, Peter is saying that he can appreciate a brother who *by faith in the Word* dedicates his life to serve the Master and rejoices “with joy unspeakable and full of glory.”

Peter continues to intimate that trouble and/or persecution is coming. “This is your present situation. Good! Keep pressing on and follow your consecration through! Keep your faith, for faith overcomes the world.”

1 Pet. 1:9 **Receiving the end of your faith, even the salvation of your souls.**

There are two kinds of salvation: present and future. The present salvation is essentially the knowledge of God, Jesus, and the truth. This is a blessing indeed, but more blessed will be those who receive the *end* of their faith, “even the salvation of ... souls.” The Revised Standard Version has “the outcome of your faith.”

Comment: The thought of the soul not being the union of the body plus the breath of life but being a separate spiritual entity makes sense in this verse. We hope for the salvation of our *souls*.

Like Jude 3, this verse refers to the salvation of the Church: “Beloved, when I gave all diligence to write unto you of the *common salvation*....” Neither Peter nor Jude was speaking about restitution, as is sometimes thought. Both apostles were warning the consecrated of the Gospel Age.

Two classes comprise the salvation of the “church of the firstborn”: the Little Flock and the Great Company (Heb. 12:23). Therefore, “receiving the end of your faith, even the salvation of your souls” applies to both classes, for with both the Little Flock and the Great Company, the end result is salvation, the divine plane and the spirit plane, respectively.

Comment: Supplied words in this verse are “even” and “your.”

Reply: Yes, but here and elsewhere, 90 percent or so of the italicized words are the correct thought, and they are designed to help the reader.

1 Pet. 1:10 Of which salvation the prophets have inquired and searched diligently, who prophesied of the grace that should come unto you:

What did the prophets of the Old Testament understand that caused them to earnestly desire further understanding? What were the clues about a coming “salvation”?

Comment: The Abrahamic promise stated that in Abraham and his seed, all the nations of earth would be blessed (Gen. 26:3,4).

Reply: The prophets would want to know more about the Abrahamic seed, which is to be like the stars of heaven and the sand of the sea.

Comment: Daniel was given the promise that the kingdom would be given to the saints of the most High God (Dan. 7:18,22,27).

Reply: Yes, the prophets would ask, “Who are these saints?” Their interest would be especially strong because the promise referred to *individuals*. Daniel’s interest was so great that he fasted and prayed, but the time for revealment was far future from his day.

The prophets “prophesied of the grace that should come unto you.” The “grace” is the Kingdom, which will be given to the mysterious class called “the saints of the most High.”

Apparently, Abraham had quite a lot of understanding, of which we get only hints. He “looked for a [heavenly] city ... whose builder and maker is God” (Heb. 11:10). Moreover, the promise in Genesis 17:6–10 was also given to his seed *after* him. “And I will establish my covenant between me and thee and thy seed *after thee* in their generations for an everlasting covenant, to be a God unto thee, and to thy seed *after thee*” (Gen. 17:7). In other words, Abraham will vacate earth and go somewhere else, leaving behind an earthly seed. The fact the Levites had no inheritance in the land suggests a *temporary* arrangement here on earth for four classes, the Ancient Worthies being one of them.

Comment: Enoch prophesied in Jude 14,15 that the Lord would come “with ten thousands of his saints, to execute judgment.” Enoch lived very early in the history of the human race.

Reply: Again the mysterious “saints” are mentioned.

1 Pet. 1:11 Searching what, or what manner of time the Spirit of Christ which was in them did signify, when it testified beforehand the sufferings of Christ, and the glory that should

follow.

“Searching what, or what manner of time” shows the prophets were interested in chronology. They wanted to know where they were on the stream of time in relationship to the mysterious future. When Daniel was given prophecies of the 1,260, the 1,290, and the 1,335 days, subsequent prophets knew the time periods were not literal days. Hence the “days,” as well as their number, were mysterious.

“The Spirit of Christ which was in them ... testified beforehand [of] the sufferings of [The] Christ, and the glory that should follow.” Particularly Isaiah, plus other Old Testament pictures, prophesied of the sufferings. When Jesus, after his resurrection, spoke to the two disciples on the way to Emmaus, he reasoned from Old Testament Scriptures on the necessity for the Messiah to die and suffer many things before “the glory that should follow” in the Kingdom.

Obadiah 21 says that “saviours [plural]” will come from Zion (the heavenly realm) to rescue the house of David. The prophets understood that somehow a reward involved saints in heaven who would have an attachment down here. They desired to know about this reward and what God was doing.

Moses gave up the throne of Egypt, as it were, to suffer the reproaches of Christ, the Messiah (Heb. 11:24–26). This statement indicates that Moses was given information of which we are unaware. And Noah lived for hundreds of years, so obviously he was apprised of information not recorded in Scripture. Genesis records only what is needful for us to know during the Gospel Age.

Comment: The term “the Spirit of Christ” is applied to Old Testament times, which preceded Jesus’ earthly ministry.

Reply: The prophets knew that a Messiah, the Anointed One, was coming, but they did not know about Jesus. The Greek word for “Christ” is “Messiah” in Hebrew.

If the prophets of old had such hunger to understand prophecy, we should also have great interest because we are so much closer to its fulfillment. Peter is saying, “Look at how the prophets of old hungered and thirsted after knowledge about God’s plan. Do you, who are living down here at a much later date, have a similar hunger? Are you willing to suffer as they did?”

In several ways, the prophets knew that “the Spirit of Christ” was in them. (1) Their bodies were taken over in a mechanical manner so that their mouths uttered detailed prophecies. They realized a supernatural power from on high was operating through them. (2) Words were spoken in their inner ear, as it were. They were told to speak what they heard. (3) They had prophetic dreams. (4) Some of the prophets were given the ability to perform miracles.

1 Pet. 1:12 **Unto whom it was revealed, that not unto themselves, but unto us they did minister the things, which are now reported unto you by them that have preached the gospel unto you with the Holy Ghost sent down from heaven; which things the angels desire to look into.**

“It was revealed ... not unto ... [the prophets], but unto us.” Daniel comes immediately to mind. He was given prophecies but was told to “shut up the words, and seal the book,” for understanding was not yet due (Dan. 12:4). Thus the prophets were informed that wonderful things were coming, and although they understood the fulfillment would be far future from their day, their interest was intense.

Comment: In connection with the thought that our interest should be even more intense because we are living at the end of the age, Daniel was told to “seal [up] the book, even to the time of the end” (Dan. 12:4), but Revelation 22:10 says to “*seal not the sayings of the prophecy of this book: for the time is at hand.*” The Revelation directive harmonizes with Peter’s admonition to get stirred up: “The Old Testament prophets and *even the angels* want to look into these things, and now here you are. What are *you* going to do about prophecy?”

Reply: Yes, there are promised blessings to come, and even the angels of heaven, who *greatly desired* to know, were not given the understanding that is now due. When Jesus came at his First Advent, he revealed in part some of the things the angels were interested in, such as the identity of Messiah. That part of the mystery became clear. But Peter is pointing out that the angels hungered and thirsted for many centuries before Jesus brought to light (1) *mortal life* separate from sin on both the human and the spirit plane and (2) the special high calling to *immortality* (2 Tim. 1:10).

1 Pet. 1:13 Wherefore gird up the loins of your mind, be sober, and hope to the end for the grace that is to be brought unto you at the revelation of Jesus Christ;

Notice, we are to “gird up the loins” of our *minds*, not our bodies. This admonition should excite an interest in God’s people, in those who know who the Savior is and that he is the only means for coming to the Father. We have consecrated, but we must maintain our *focus of attention* on the mind of God and of Christ; we must bring together our mental energy, our conscience, and our moral thinking on the principles in God’s Word. Being “sober” means to be serious and earnest.

Comment: We are told to *feed* on the Word, not just to read it but to absorb the lessons.

Reply: Yes, Peter is leading to that thought in the very next chapter: “As newborn babes, desire the sincere milk of the word, that ye may grow thereby” (1 Pet. 2:2). Chapter 1 is like a prelude in which Peter calls to our attention attitudes and events of the past and asks in effect, “Now what are you going to do about prophecy?” The next chapter is an artificial break. In fact, Chapter 1 should end with verse 10 of Chapter 2.

Comment: Where Peter says, “Hope to the end for the grace that is to be brought unto you at the revelation of Jesus Christ,” he is encouraging us to be faithful, but then he is saying that no matter how hard we try to be faithful, it is only by grace that any will attain to the high, exalted station of the Little Flock and the divine nature.

Reply: And grace is the reason we have come into this *miraculous* understanding of truth, which angels desired to know for a long period of time and the prophets could not know because they died before the due time. Christians of the Gospel Age (and especially at the end of the age) have come into this grace. Therefore, the very fact that we have supernatural knowledge not only proves God is dealing with us but should also be an encouragement. It is not a guarantee that we will receive “the end” of our faith, but God’s calling us into this inner circle of fellowship with a small segment of humanity is a reason for hope. When we are discouraged, we should review how God led us step by step and experience by experience into the truth. Prayer and fasting are helpful too in low periods.

We are to “hope to the end.” Hopefulness combined with earnestness, seriousness, and sincerity will help in achieving the “end” of our faith.

What “revelation of Jesus Christ” is Peter referring to? The *apokalupsis*. Peter is telling us to

hope to the end that we receive the grace to be found in the Little Flock when the knowledge of Christ is made available to the world. We are to hope to appear with Jesus when he comes to reveal himself figuratively to humanity. If grace is to be brought to the Church class at the revelation of Jesus Christ, the chief hope is that we will be with him in glory at that time and thus appear with him. Enoch prophesied that the Lord would come “with ten thousands [that is, multiples of ten thousand, or myriads] of his saints” (Jude 14).

Q: What is the difference between the *apokalupsis* and the *epiphania*?

A: The *apokalupsis* is the *sudden* uncovering or revealing. The *epiphania* is also an uncovering but from a different perspective; it is a *process* of revealing, and hence a slower revealing. The *apokalupsis* can be likened to pulling a cloth off a statue; the cloth is removed and *suddenly* the statue is revealed. Thus both phases are a revealing but in two different ways. At the time of the *apokalupsis*, it will be fully determined who the saints with Jesus are, and they will rescue the Holy Remnant of Israel. From spiritual Zion will come forth saviors (plural) to deliver natural Israel out of Jacob’s Trouble (Obadiah 21).

1 Pet. 1:14 As obedient children, not fashioning yourselves according to the former lusts in your ignorance:

1 Pet. 1:15 But as he which hath called you is holy, so be ye holy in all manner of conversation;

1 Pet. 1:16 Because it is written, Be ye holy; for I am holy.

Having the foregoing information, we should continue as “obedient children.” How easily we could be fashioned “according to the former lusts” if we just relax! Diligence and effort are required to fashion ourselves according to God’s precepts. The former lusts may continue to exist because we are born of the earth, earthy, as far as our bodily frames are concerned and we have inherited Adamic weaknesses. Therefore, we must diligently try to curb, expunge, and crucify our former lusts with the objective and hope that we may inherit the promises of God, who says, “Be ye holy; for I am holy.”

We have often thought and hoped that with the change of nature, not only will the faithful Christian experience a perfect spiritual body, but also he will no longer be troubled by lusts. It will not be a fight anymore between the flesh and the spirit. One who is victorious and faithful unto death will have only pure and elevated thoughts.

When Adam was created as a man, he was both male and female. However, when he was separated at the time of Eve’s creation, he was missing the female part. That is the significance behind the thought that the twain together were one flesh (Gen. 2:24). As a result of the separation into male and female, coupled with man’s fallen condition, the human race is subject to legitimate and illegitimate desires. But when one is made whole in the resurrection, when both component parts are put together, the human race will consist of males who are complete with the female part.

On this side of the veil, there is no rest, but beyond the veil, there is rest in more ways than one—not just from labor and fatigue but also from sinful tendencies. There will be no more “Canaanites” in the land.

1 Pet. 1:17 And if ye call on the Father, who without respect of persons judgeth according to every man’s work, pass the time of your sojourning here in fear:

The opposite condition would be overconfidence or false confidence by the one possessing multiple talents that he is special and sure to make his calling and election sure. It can also lead to a feeling that one is a pal of God. That type of familiarity—thinking of God in a frivolous, intimate sense—is dangerous. The instruction of God’s Word inculcates *reverential fear* of displeasing God. Verse 14 has the key word “obedient” (“as *obedient* children”).

To understand present truth is indisputably miraculous, for the world is groping around blindly, staggering in their drunkenness. Principles are upside down in all avenues of life (in the courts, in government, in individual behavior). We have peace, but more is needed and can be acquired through *obedience*. We should not take for granted that when we die, we will get the divine nature. The *thick* Bible is our instruction book, and we should not be satisfied with a minimum of understanding. In Hebrews 6:1,2, Paul tells us to leave behind the doctrines of baptisms, resurrection, repentance, etc., and to go on to deeper doctrines. He said he would like to tell about the Melchisedec priesthood but could not because the brethren were not advanced enough (Hebrews 5). In fact, not only were the brethren not advanced, but they needed to be refreshed on the fundamental doctrines. The status quo attitude is bad, for one who is comfortable and satisfied feels no need for further understanding. To say “we have the truth” is improper, for the truth is much bigger than any group. We are *in the way of* and are *marching toward* truth, but “the truth” is in the Most Holy, our objective. We are not to be like the soldier who feels he no longer needs any armor.

Comment: In regard to calling on the Father in our time of sojourning here in fear, Paul stresses *obedience* and fear: “Wherefore, my beloved, as ye have always *obeyed*, not as in my presence only, but now much more in my absence, *work out your own salvation with fear and trembling*” (Phil. 2:12).

Reply: That text is a good parallel passage. Peter and Paul are saying the same thing.

The “Father ... without respect of persons judgeth according to every man’s work.” The Father is no respecter of persons. Therefore, we cannot rest comfortably, for past accomplishments are meaningless unless we are faithful *unto death*.

1 Pet. 1:18 Forasmuch as ye know that ye were not redeemed with corruptible things, as silver and gold, from your vain conversation received by tradition from your fathers;

As the apostle of the circumcision, Peter wrote this epistle to Jewish Christians. Therefore, the “vain conversation received by tradition from your fathers” would be the Law, which did not bring life to anyone except our Lord.

Q: Would a spiritual counterpart of being “redeemed with corruptible things, as silver and gold” be the Mass?

A: Yes. Baptism, burial, the sacraments—a price was attached to all of these. One cannot buy salvation or an entrance into the Kingdom with any amount of money in the collection plate.

1 Pet. 1:19 But with the precious blood of Christ, as of a lamb without blemish and without spot:

Peter was speaking to a consecrated class comprised mostly of converted Jews, who were redeemed “with the precious blood of Christ.” He was making a comparison between redemption with money or material goods and redemption with the precious blood of Christ.

In studying Peter’s epistle, we realize he had a fond appreciation of the Tabernacle and the

Passover ritual, for he refers to it many times in many ways. The mention of a “lamb” in verse 19 is one example. Peter is pointing out Jesus as the fulfillment of the Passover lamb.

1 Pet. 1:20 Who verily was foreordained before the foundation of the world, but was manifest in these last times for you,

In the mind of God, there was a plan. He was preparing for that plan and schooling everything around Christ, His Son. The ages were created for Christ, but the depth of the Ransom was a mystery in Old Testament times. This truth and related truths only began to come to light with the preaching of the gospel. Christ started the gospel, and after the Holy Spirit came, the Apostle Paul was allowed to explain the gospel in more detail.

Comment: The plan was hidden in types and shadows for many years. Now Peter is letting the brethren know that they are privileged to understand what their predecessors could not.

Reply: Yes, the last two words “for you” are in effect saying, “You who have accepted Christ, look at the favor God has bestowed upon you in giving you this insight into precious information that was previously hidden.” Angels and holy men of old desired to know what is now being revealed. When they uttered prophecies, they did not fully understand them.

1 Pet. 1:21 Who by him do believe in God, that raised him up from the dead, and gave him glory; that your faith and hope might be in God.

God is given the priority: “that your faith and hope might be in God.” Only through Christ can we have this insight and relationship to the Father.

1 Pet. 1:22 Seeing ye have purified your souls in obeying the truth through the Spirit unto unfeigned love of the brethren, see that ye love one another with a pure heart fervently:

A distinction is being made here between *phileo* love and *agape* love. Peter is saying that the Jewish Christians already had *phileo* love for each other, but they were to go on to a more principled *agape* love. In the trouble and persecution back there, it was hard for brethren to meet and fellowship, and for Jews in a foreign land, it was doubly hard with the animosity of the public against them. And fellow unconverted Jews also opposed them. Thus the Jewish Christians were assailed not only by the pagan world but also by the majority of Jews. Under such lonely conditions, communication among brethren was very important. They were not to let differences drive them into complete isolation. Back there, as well as now, it is necessary to fellowship with others of like precious faith. We are not to forsake “the assembling of ourselves together, ... and so much the more, as ... [we] see the day approaching” (Heb. 10:25). We must consider our new-creature interests and carefully budget our time accordingly.

Our problems are usually with individuals and not with the brotherhood as a whole. If we think of the brethren as a brotherhood, we can appreciate them. In other words, we love other Christians in proportion as we see they love the Lord. Our appreciation for them grows more and more. We need to communicate and fellowship with others of like precious faith. It is like coals of fire that warm one another when they are put together. If the coals are scattered, they will cool down and go out in minutes, but put together, they produce heat for several hours longer.

Q: Why are two different kinds of love used in this verse? Please explain in more detail.

A: We can *phileo* love the brotherhood as the world has *phileo* love, but principled *agape* love is higher. *Agape* love loves righteousness and hates iniquity. *Phileo* love, a more social love, is

easier to attain.

“Seeing ye have purified your souls in obeying the truth through the Spirit.” We are to obey the truth (the Word of God) through the Holy Spirit.

1 Pet. 1:23 Being born again, not of corruptible seed, but of incorruptible, by the word of God, which liveth and abideth for ever.

Peter is saying that the seed we sow is the Word of God. When normal, literal seed germinates and comes to a fruitage, that fruitage is liable to decay. However, the seed, if in good, dry conditions, can last for thousands of years. Here Peter is emphasizing the long-term life of the seed, the “word of God, which ... abideth for ever.”

The Word of God is imperishable and it will prosper. On the other hand, the Holy Spirit, which is the understanding or influence of that Word, can be lost. Losing that Spirit leads to corruption, Second Death. Taking a step for Christ and consecrating is meaningful, but the consecration has to be maintained. Peter is saying, in effect, that we must constantly study and meditate on the incorruptible Word of God if we would make our calling and election sure. David’s meditations were always on the Word of God.

We get the Holy Spirit from the Word of God, which is the “seed” in this context. The world has the Bible *without* understanding, and those possessing the Holy Spirit have the Bible *with* understanding. To the world, the Bible is sterile. Verse 23 is saying how important the Word of God is. For the Christian, it is absolutely necessary to have a thorough appreciation of God, His character, and His Word. If there is a “trinity,” a oneness of relationship, it is God, His Word, and His Spirit—all of which come before Jesus in importance. Jesus himself felt that the Father’s Word was superior to him—the Father’s statements, instructions, and words.

We are begotten again as a result of the Word of God, the seed. Stated another way, the seed is the Word of God implanted in the Christian’s heart. As that seed develops and progresses, it changes. The seed sprouts, becomes wheat, and hopefully becomes *mature* wheat, but it starts with the Word of God. That is why a “thus saith the LORD” is the foundation of our faith. The Word of God points out Jesus as the Savior, saying that no man can come unto the Father except through Jesus.

James 1:18 reads, “Of his own will begat he us with the word of truth, that we should be a kind of firstfruits of his creatures.” We are begotten with the word of truth.

Peter is saying that the Word of God abides forever, but *whether or not we will abide forever* depends on the continual imbibing of the Word of God. Through the Holy Spirit, God gives us a new mind and a new understanding. He translates us from darkness into marvelous light (1 Pet. 2:9). Thus the Word of God becomes very meaningful in developing the new creature, which is the product of the seed. However, without the miraculous opening of our minds by the Holy Spirit, we could not prosper as new creatures. Some people read the Bible every year yet know little about the divine plan because, evidently, they have not received a sufficiency of the Holy Spirit.

Comment: The mechanism by which we are begotten is indisputably the Word of God. “Faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the word of God” (Rom. 10:17). That is the mechanism for Spirit begetting, but what is begotten in us is a new creature. It is the new creature that matures and reaches fruition in terms of being given a spirit body later on. To a certain extent, this may be a matter of semantics. We have a literal new creature inside us that eventually will be given a new body in heaven if we are faithful—just as the soul is an “it” that will be given a body.

Nevertheless, the Word of God endures forever and is the mechanism for Spirit begetting.

Reply: The first three words of verse 23 refer to the new creature: “Being born again.” The rest of the verse refers to the Word of God.

The Greek word translated “born” can also be “begotten” depending on context.

1 Pet. 1:24 For all flesh is as grass, and all the glory of man as the flower of grass. The grass withereth, and the flower thereof falleth away:

1 Pet. 1:25 But the word of the Lord endureth for ever. And this is the word which by the gospel is preached unto you.

We judge one another as to whether the speaking is *according to and in harmony with God's Word*, and not according to emotions, feelings, and expressions of how much one loves the Lord.

Comment: Even though he saw a vision of Jesus on the Mount of Transfiguration, this same apostle said in his second epistle, “We have also a more sure word of prophecy” (2 Pet. 1:19). He clearly emphasizes the importance of the Word of God.

Reply: Yes, he is talking about the importance of the Word of God and whether or not we prosper accordingly.

Comment: The context of emphasizing the importance of the Word of God continues on into the first two verses of the next chapter. The brethren had achieved a certain level of growth with *phileo* love, but Peter is saying to go on to a principled *agape* love. Then he speaks of the necessity of desiring the sincere milk of the Word so that they will grow.

Comment: A person is begotten by a seed from the Father. Thus the new creature is begotten by a seed from the Word of God, which comes from the Father.

1 Pet. 2:1 Wherefore laying aside all malice, and all guile, and hypocrisies, and envies, and all evil speakings,

1 Pet. 2:2 As newborn babes, desire the sincere milk of the word, that ye may grow thereby:

It is helpful to remember that Peter is writing primarily to Christian Jews who are scattered in Asia Minor. In other words, since he is not writing to an established class, he is not implying that all of these conditions existed in a particular group. In Asia Minor, many ideas were blowing around among scattered brethren, whereas in Israel, classes were stable and apostles were on the scene. These newcomers, these babes in Christ in Asia Minor, did not have the benefit of stable counsel for any length of time.

Peter was saying that the stabilizing influence was the Scriptures themselves. The basis of our knowledge about God, Jesus, etc., is the Word of God, so, first, we need a stable footing in the Scriptures. Then as we mature and grow, we are in a little better position to make judgments—something we are not able to do as babes. Peter is saying to lay aside all malice, guile, hypocrisies, envyings, and evil speakings and instead to desire the sincere milk of the Word. Some of the evil speakings may be right, but do not consider them now, for it is more important for newborn babes to obtain the sincere milk of Scripture. Some translations say “pure milk” or “unadulterated milk.”

In other words, God is not confused. This is His Word, and it is orderly. Babes in Christ first

need to get a little growth and maturity under their belts, and then they will be in a position to see the pros and cons of different situations.

Comment: The Revised Standard Version has “that by it you may grow up to *salvation*.” Peter emphasized this same thought in the first chapter. Verse 5 reads, “Who are kept by the power of God through faith unto *salvation*.” Verse 9 says, “Receiving the end of your faith, even the *salvation* of your souls.” Peter keeps pointing out the necessity for development to the end of our course.

Reply: “Salvation” fits in with the theme, and the Greek supports that word for verse 2.

These verses tie in with Chapter 1 about the Word of God enduring forever. In the phrase “being born again,” the Greek word translated “born” should be rendered “begotten” (1 Pet. 1:23). Therefore, Chapter 1 talks about the begetting, and Chapter 2 speaks about what is begotten: a babe, an infant. The infant is to grow to salvation.

1 Pet. 2:3 If so be ye have tasted that the Lord is gracious.

Comment: The NIV has, “Now that you have tasted that the Lord is good.”

Reply: Yes, that is a better rendering.

Comment: There is a real responsibility for those who receive the Holy Spirit and thus taste that the Lord is good.

1 Pet. 2:4 To whom coming, as unto a living stone, disallowed indeed of men, but chosen of God, and precious,

“To whom coming, as unto a living stone” gives the thought of a magnet. Peter is saying, “Since you have tasted that the Lord is good, you should be attracted to the Lord as an object is attracted to a magnet. You have already seen these precious, valuable truths from the infallible Word of God, the source, so come a little closer now.” “Draw nigh to God, and he will draw nigh to you” is the principle (James 4:8).

This “living stone” was “disallowed indeed of men.” Peter is acknowledging that from the public or majority standpoint, Jesus was not considered precious. The Jewish nation rejected and crucified him as a criminal, traitor, and blasphemer. But he is “chosen of God, and precious.” In other words, “You know and you have tasted, so to grow strong and resist the public consensus, the majority opinion, continue to be drawn in what you have proven and do not pay attention to the hearsay of the general public.”

Democracy is a grand ideal with the thought of a government being “of the people, by the people, and for the people,” but the opinion of the majority is not necessarily the best, so caution should be exercised. Abraham Lincoln also said, “One with God is a majority.”

1 Pet. 2:5 Ye also, as lively stones, are built up a spiritual house, an holy priesthood, to offer up spiritual sacrifices, acceptable to God by Jesus Christ.

The “spiritual house” is a pyramid.

Comment: The Pastor chose a pyramid for the “Chart of the Ages,” and probably this is one of the texts that influenced him to do so.

Reply: Evidently too, he read and appreciated the excellent book *Miracle in Stone*, but the author's reasoning was more along sound natural lines. The Pastor subsequently applied Scriptural, spiritual reasoning.

The Pastor makes a point of saying that "spiritual" in the expression "spiritual sacrifices" should be omitted, the reason being that if anything, we sacrifice natural and temporal things. The word "spiritual" can be retained if the Jewish dispensation is contrasted with the Christian dispensation, but the omission is better lest there be a misunderstanding.

Comment: If "spiritual" is retained, we can say that sacrifices are made with the ultimate hope of advancing spiritually.

Reply: Yes, material goods, time, effort, prestige, etc., are sacrificed for God.

1 Pet. 2:6 Wherefore also it is contained in the scripture, Behold, I lay in Zion a chief corner stone, elect, precious: and he that believeth on him shall not be confounded.

"Him" refers to Jesus, the "chief corner stone." "Zion" here is natural Israel. "He that believeth on him shall not be confounded." That is why it is necessary to lay aside all malice, guile, envy, hypocrisy, and evil speaking, for these are confusion. Those who apply themselves diligently to know God through His Word, with Jesus as the channel, will not be confounded or bewildered as to what is truth.

Many who look for truth are not benefited because in their search, they use their own human judgment. They gather a little truth from this one, a little from that one, etc. They reason that by using their judgment, they can add up all the truths of all the individuals, and then they will have the truth. That conclusion would be logical if our judgment were perfect, but we could spend an eternity doing this and never get truth. We would be "ever learning, and never able to come to the knowledge of the truth" (2 Tim. 3:7). It is marvelous how the Holy Spirit changed Peter from a brawny fisherman of blunt expression to a statesman. And those who have a thorough knowledge of classical Greek marvel at the Epistle of James as being one of the most unusual books. These two apostles are examples of how God has taken individuals without formal learning and wonderfully transformed them. Paul was an exception, for he sat at the feet of Gamaliel. And the soundness of Gamaliel's judgment was manifested at the trial of Peter and other apostles when he counseled, "Refrain from these men, and let them alone: for if this counsel or this work be of men, it will come to nought: But if it be of God, ye cannot overthrow it; lest haply ye be found even to fight against God" (Acts 5:38,39). He was saying, "If what these men have is the truth, we do not want to hamper it. If it is not the truth, their efforts will fizzle." As a result, the apostles were freed.

The point is that the minds of James and Peter were marvelously and miraculously elevated and used. In 1 Peter 2:2, the formerly blunt Peter talked tenderly to the brethren: "As newborn babes, desire the sincere milk of the word, that ye may grow thereby."

Comment: In Isaiah 28:16, the stone is further described: "Therefore thus saith the Lord GOD, Behold, I lay in Zion for a foundation a stone, a tried stone, a precious corner stone, a sure foundation: he that believeth shall not make haste."

Comment: In regard to newborn babes, Peter is talking about a progression. They are to have the milk of the Word, which enables them to realize the grace of God and how God is good. They see Jesus as the living stone and that he is chosen of God and precious. Next they see that they are also living stones and that they are part of this building. In Ephesians, Paul speaks of the mystery that The Christ has body members.

Comment: The stones for Solomon's Temple are first quarried. Later they will be put together without hammer or noise.

Reply: Yes, and just as the babe needs the milk in order to grow, so the stones need to be chiseled and shaped in order to conform to the top stone of the Pyramid.

1 Pet. 2:7 Unto you therefore which believe he is precious: but unto them which be disobedient, the stone which the builders disallowed, the same is made the head of the corner,

When Christ came at his First Advent and purported to be the Messiah sent of God but was rejected and crucified by the majority, normal human wisdom would say, "If he was of God, why was he rejected?" His crucifixion calls into question the viability of his being the Messiah. Peter acknowledges that there was opposition and a difference of opinion, but he exhorts, "When you accepted Jesus, didn't certain things about him appeal to your heart? Continue on in this course." Then he uses the illustration of the Pyramid and shows that just as the perfect top stone was rejected by the actual builders, so in the antitype, Jesus was rejected by the religious and civil leaders ("builders") of the nation of Israel. If we had lived back there, we would probably know quite a lot about the Pyramid. And the fact Peter mentions it shows that even in Asia Minor, the Pyramid was known. After all, it was one of the Seven Wonders of the Ancient World. The Holy Spirit caused Peter to choose that very topic. In other words, the hearers of Peter's epistle had to know something about the literal top stone in order for his analogy with Jesus to make sense. Thus Peter was explaining something the brethren knew about but did not have the answer for. He was saying, "The unusual top stone that was rejected represents Christ."

Comment: The unfolding of the significance of the Great Pyramid as a testimony was one of the indications of the Lord's Second Presence. Information was providentially made known by various authors.

Comment: In verse 7, Peter is quoting Jesus' words in Matthew 21:42, and Jesus was quoting from Psalm 118:22,23.

Reply: Yes, the top stone is mentioned in several places, but in discussing the topic in Matthew 21:42, Jesus was using a form of sarcasm. In addressing the scribes and the Pharisees, an educated class, he asked, "Did ye never read in the scriptures...?"

Jesus quoted from Psalm 118:23, which says, "This is the LORD'S doing; it is marvellous in our eyes." The word "marvellous" is important, and just before the Pastor died, he reaffirmed in a footnote that what he had written on the Pyramid is a very valuable study. In other words, at the end of his life, he put a stamp of approval on the spiritual significance of the Pyramid. One reason the Pyramid so impressed him was the providential way he arrived at the information.

1 Pet. 2:8 And a stone of stumbling, and a rock of offence, even to them which stumble at the word, being disobedient: whereunto also they were appointed.

The cornerstone (or top stone) of the Pyramid is a "stone of stumbling, and a rock of offence" to those who stumble at the Word and are disobedient.

"Whereunto also they [the disobedient] were appointed." The epistle was addressed primarily to Jewish Christians dispersed throughout Asia Minor. The "disobedient" were problem makers who were not truly consecrated Jews.

Comment: Luke 2:34 reads, “And Simeon blessed them, and said unto Mary his mother, Behold, this child is set for the fall and rising again of many in Israel; and for a sign which shall be spoken against.”

Reply: That verse is pertinent because it is addressed to the nation of Israel, to the Jews who were disobedient because they did not accept Jesus and were the Christians’ chief enemies at this early stage.

Jesus was a stone of stumbling to both houses of Israel. Of course the nominal *spiritual* house of Israel covers the entire Gospel Age. And in the broad sense, Peter’s epistle covers the whole Gospel Age. His advice is just as good for the Gentile today as it was back there for the disobedient of fleshly Israel.

Comment: Romans 9:31–33 reads, “But Israel, which followed after the law of righteousness, hath not attained to the law of righteousness. Wherefore? Because they sought it not by faith, but as it were by the works of the law. For they stumbled at that stumblingstone; As it is written, Behold, I lay in Zion a stumblingstone and rock of offence: and whosoever believeth on him shall not be ashamed.”

Reply: That text is also pertinent, for it is addressed to those Jews who did not accept Jesus back there.

1 Pet. 2:9 But ye are a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, an holy nation, a peculiar people; that ye should show forth the praises of him who hath called you out of darkness into his marvellous light:

We are a “royal priesthood” in the present life in only a tentative or a prospective sense. Those who would be of the priesthood must be “holy” in order to help and cleanse others of their infirmities in the next age.

Comment: Verse 9 is a reminder of Galatians 3:29, “And if ye be Christ’s, then are ye Abraham’s seed, and heirs according to the promise.” These descriptions of the Church—“a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, an holy nation, a peculiar people”—were promises originally made to Israel. Israel was God’s chosen and peculiar people, and part of the nation was God’s priesthood. However, since we belong to Christ, we are Abraham’s seed, and as heirs of these promises, we have these special titles.

Reply: In regard to the term “peculiar people,” that which is peculiar is rare, valuable, and of quality in God’s sight.

The nation of Israel was promised that they would be a “kingdom of *priests*” if they obeyed. “Now therefore, if ye will obey my voice indeed, and keep my covenant, then ye shall be a peculiar treasure unto me above all people: for all the earth is mine: And ye shall be unto me a kingdom of priests, and an holy nation. These are the words which thou shalt speak unto the children of Israel” (Exod. 19:5,6).

1 Pet. 2:10 Which in time past were not a people, but are now the people of God: which had not obtained mercy, but now have obtained mercy.

From Israel’s standpoint, they were not a “people of God” until Jacob’s name was changed to Israel. From our standpoint today, the Gentiles were not a “people of God” until AD 36.

Hosea 2:23 reads, “And I will sow her unto me in the earth; and I will have mercy upon her that had not obtained mercy; and I will say to them which were not my people, Thou art my people; and they shall say, Thou art my God.” The blessing was originally given to Jacob’s progeny, but after many centuries of sinning, Israel was alienated from God and pictured as an adulteress. But the promise was given in Hosea that Israel’s sin-sick condition could be remedied at any time by those individuals of the Jewish people whose hearts were right, for they could be brought into harmony with God. Only a minority responded all the way up to the First Advent.

1 Pet. 2:11 Dearly beloved, I beseech you as strangers and pilgrims, abstain from fleshly lusts, which war against the soul;

1 Pet. 2:12 Having your conversation honest among the Gentiles: that, whereas they speak against you as evildoers, they may by your good works, which they shall behold, glorify God in the day of visitation.

These two verses verify that this epistle was addressed primarily to Jewish Christians, but we read the epistle today with a whole Gospel Age concept, for we, too, are “among the Gentiles.” “Conversation” is “conduct.”

Why did Peter beseech Jewish Christians in foreign lands to “abstain from fleshly lusts, which war against the soul”? This advice was necessary because they lived in a pagan world, and the pagan religions and immoral practices were dangerous for the Christian. In the brothel in Ephesus, for example, daughters of the nobility considered it an honor to be able to dedicate their bodies for religious purposes, and the revenues from these immoral practices went into the temple treasury. Similarly, Rome had vestal “virgins” to bring money into the pagan temple. Although the pagan religions taught certain principles such as doing good to your neighbor, they did not teach the necessity for moral conduct. Therefore, converted Jews living in these provinces were exposed to the same kinds of temptations that assail Christians today. Since we are “strangers and pilgrims” from the world, we must be on guard and heed Peter’s counsel.

1 Pet. 2:13 Submit yourselves to every ordinance of man for the Lord’s sake: whether it be to the king, as supreme;

1 Pet. 2:14 Or unto governors, as unto them that are sent by him for the punishment of evildoers, and for the praise of them that do well.

1 Pet. 2:15 For so is the will of God, that with well doing ye may put to silence the ignorance of foolish men:

Daniel exemplified the attitude expressed in these verses, for of him it was said, “We shall not find any occasion [fault] against this Daniel, except we find it against him concerning the law [worship] of his God” (Dan. 6:5).

Comment: Joseph also exemplified the proper attitude of submission toward authorities. For good doing, he suffered as a wrongdoer.

Comment: Peter, the very apostle who wrote this epistle, said in Acts 5:29, “We ought to obey God rather than men [where conscience is involved].” In other words, conscience and principle were the exceptions.

Reply: Yes, when we read a Scripture, we must counterbalance it with other Scriptures on the

same topic. Peter is giving general advice. However, exceptional circumstances change situations. Under certain circumstances, we would not obey the authorities.

Comment: Daniel disobeyed the commandment that for 30 days, no one could ask a petition of any God or man except the king. The penalty for his disobedience was being cast into the den of lions.

Reply: Yes, the very one who was an example of the right attitude properly disobeyed. The three Hebrew children are another exception, for they refused to obey the king's command to bow down to the golden image on the Plain of Dura.

Comment: Jesus urged obedience to the tax laws by saying, "Render therefore unto Caesar the things which are Caesar's; and unto God the things that are God's" (Matt. 22:21).

Reply: In other words, if a Christian suffers, the suffering should be for right doing and not for wrongdoing. "For so is the will of God, that with *well doing* ye may put to silence the ignorance of foolish men."

The last half of verse 15 is significant: "that with *well doing* ye may put to silence the ignorance of foolish men." Neighbors may not understand the behavior of a Christian and think he is too religious, but they will notice anything done amiss. When individuals first consecrate, the experience of many is that coworkers, neighbors, etc., are only too happy to remind them of something done wrong. "You say you are a Christian, yet you do such and such."

Comment: The Apostle Paul said, "Let no man despise thy youth; but be thou an example of the believers, in word, in conversation, in charity, in spirit, in faith, in purity" (1 Tim. 4:12).

1 Pet. 2:16 As free, and not using your liberty for a cloak of maliciousness, but as the servants of God.

Militia groups feel that the government interferes too much in their personal lives, and they do not want to pay taxes. However, they go so overboard in their exercise of liberty that they are actually harmful to society. Christians certainly should not use their "liberty for a cloak of maliciousness" in this manner, yet they could *seemingly* justify themselves in such a course by saying, for example, "Our citizenship is in heaven, and therefore, the laws of society have minimal effect on us." That would be a wrong conclusion, for Peter says to obey the powers that be except where doing so would interfere with true or educated conscience.

1 Pet. 2:17 Honour all men. Love the brotherhood. Fear God. Honour the king.

One way of honoring all men is to be impartial in matters of judgment and hence not to be a respecter of persons. We are to honor the poor as well as the rich, people of all races, judges in a courtroom, professors and doctors with a title, etc. Whether or not one is worthy of such a title is another matter.

Comment: Since this epistle is addressed particularly to Jewish Christians, the instruction to "honour all men" would include their attitude toward Gentiles.

Children of Christians should not address adults by their first name. A title of "aunt" or "uncle" can be used to retain the proper formality.

In the ecclesia arrangement, we are to "love the brotherhood." Obedient sisters are handicapped in how they discuss a topic with a brother. One method is to ask questions, to use

the question form. Sometimes children are too familiar with adults. Respect should be shown. The old-fashioned way was to use “Sir” as a form of address. People are generally too familiar today and lack proper reverence for God and proper respect for brethren and those of the world.

Jesus told us to love the brethren. It is easier to love the brethren if we think of them as a *brotherhood*. We fervently love the brethren as we see in them their efforts to serve God. Of course their efforts may be faulty, but if they prove their love and sincerity by their little acts, we respect them accordingly. Jesus especially loved the three disciples Peter, James, and John because they were more interested in his teaching. And among the sisterhood were Mary, Mary Magdalene, and the two sisters Mary and Martha. They were above the others in the manifestation of their desire to serve God. People can get caught up in work for an institution and sacrifice to that end instead of to God. We may not see many brethren, but we know they exist and pray for them in a special sense.

“Fear God.” This kind of fear would be reverential fear. God loves those who tremble at His Word (Isa. 66:5). Such reverence is exceptional because it means they do not want to disobey when they understand what a Scripture says.

Comment: The injunction to “honour all men” and to “love the brotherhood” is a reminder of Galatians 6:10, “As we have therefore opportunity, let us do good unto all men, especially unto them who are of the household of faith.”

“Honour the king.” We are to honor the *office* of President, but the *individual* in that office is another matter.

1 Pet. 2:18 Servants, be subject to your masters with all fear; not only to the good and gentle, but also to the froward.

Slaves and servants are to be subject to their masters but with the qualification *as long as conscience and principle permit*.

1 Pet. 2:19 For this is thankworthy, if a man for conscience toward God endure grief, suffering wrongfully.

We should not try to judge where an individual stands with the Lord. It hurts if we are accused by one in the brotherhood of not even being a brother (or sister). “Suffering wrongfully” in that sense is very acceptable to God. That type of hurt goes in deeper on us than if, say, we have an argument with a brother, for the argument can just blow away. And an earnest discussion can be misunderstood by onlookers as an argument.

1 Pet. 2:20 For what glory is it, if, when ye be buffeted for your faults, ye shall take it patiently? but if, when ye do well, and suffer for it, ye take it patiently, this is acceptable with God.

1 Pet. 2:21 For even hereunto were ye called: because Christ also suffered for us, leaving us an example, that ye should follow his steps:

“For even hereunto were ye called.” It is important to remember that *we were called to suffer*. “Be thou faithful unto death, and I will give thee a crown of life” (Rev. 2:10). “Ye have not yet resisted unto blood” (Heb. 12:4). We should not complain when we suffer wrongfully, but instead should rejoice inwardly. If obeying conscience results in suffering, so be it, for such suffering is honorable. When some Christians get opposition and persecution, they say, “I

must be doing something *right!*” But if we are buffeted for our faults, we should take the buffeting patiently. There is no special honor when we suffer for our faults.

1 Pet. 2:22 Who did no sin, neither was guile found in his mouth:

1 Pet. 2:23 Who, when he was reviled, reviled not again; when he suffered, he threatened not; but committed himself to him that judgeth righteously:

On the Cross, Jesus “committed himself to him [God] that judgeth righteously” when he said, “Father, into thy hands I commend my spirit” (Luke 23:46). Jesus was saying in effect, “My judgment and destiny are in God’s hands.” Jesus spoke strongly to the scribes and Pharisees during his ministry, but he submitted when he was brought before Annas, Caiaphas, and Pilate because he knew he had to die at 3 p.m. that day.

1 Pet. 2:24 Who his own self bare our sins in his own body on the tree, that we, being dead to sins, should live unto righteousness: by whose stripes ye were healed.

Because of certain statements in Peter’s two epistles, he must have witnessed the Crucifixion. One statement is 1 Peter 1:19, “But with the precious blood of Christ, as of a lamb without blemish and without spot.” We know Peter accompanied John into the palace of Caiaphas, but the Gospels are silent as to his whereabouts when the Crucifixion took place. Seeing the agony of Jesus on the Cross and knowing what it cost him left an indelible imprint on Peter’s mind. He realized that Jesus’ death on the Cross is the cost of redemption.

1 Pet. 2:25 For ye were as sheep going astray; but are now returned unto the Shepherd and Bishop of your souls.

“Ye were as sheep going astray.” If God had not called and helped us, where would we have been? If Christ had not entered our lives, where would we have ended up? We would have been like lost sheep.

“But are now returned unto the Shepherd and Bishop of your souls.” The word “returned” expresses how Peter felt after he denied Jesus and was reinstated. After our consecration, we sometimes see things we wish we had done differently.

1 Pet. 3:1 Likewise, ye wives, be in subjection to your own husbands; that, if any obey not the word, they also may without the word be won by the conversation of the wives;

1 Pet. 3:2 While they behold your chaste conversation coupled with fear.

Here Peter gave advice for the consecrated wife who is unequally yoked. If a consecrated wife has an unconsecrated husband, she should be submissive according to Scripture but not compromise principle or her stand for the Lord. The hope is that by manifesting a good disposition, she will win the husband over to the Lord and consecration. In some instances, the wife has influenced the husband to consecration and vice versa. At any rate, one should not be overly contentious in the marriage relationship. “Conversation” should be “conduct” (actions and deeds), which embraces conversation.

1 Pet. 3:3 Whose adorning let it not be that outward adorning of plaiting the hair, and of wearing of gold, or of putting on of apparel;

1 Pet. 3:4 But let it be the hidden man of the heart, in that which is not corruptible, even the ornament of a meek and quiet spirit, which is in the sight of God of great price.

Sisters should not *overly adorn* themselves. A gold or diamond wedding ring is not in this category. Another acceptable example would be older sisters who are very plain but have large, simple gold earrings according to the custom of a particular nationality. The objection is to special adornment of the hair, such as long hair that is elaborately ornamented. Our emphasis should be to attract the attention of the Lord with the graces of the Holy Spirit, and not to impress fellow human beings. We do not want an outward show to the public but want an inward show to the Lord.

Comment: 1 Timothy 2:9,10 is pertinent: “In like manner also, that women adorn themselves in modest apparel, with shamefacedness and sobriety; not with braided hair, or gold, or pearls, or costly array; But (which becometh women professing godliness) with good works.” Attire should be reasonable.

Jesus had an unusual outer garment made of one piece, which would be very expensive, but that was all, that is, no frills. Some wealthy people are modest in their dress, even though they have the best-quality garments. The general rule is that we should not attract attention to ourselves with outward show in dress and appearance.

Comment: The opposite of a woman having an ornamented or elaborate long hair style is a woman with a mannish haircut.

Reply: The unisex trend has the woman more masculine and the man more feminine.

“Whose adorning let it ... be the hidden man of the heart, ... even the ornament of a meek and quiet spirit, which is in the sight of God of great price.” Character in conformity with the Word is highly esteemed of God.

1 Pet. 3:5 For after this manner in the old time the holy women also, who trusted in God, adorned themselves, being in subjection unto their own husbands:

Verse 5 must be read in conjunction with verse 4 lest a wrong thought be conveyed. The women who pleased God adorned themselves with the “meek and quiet spirit” of verse 4.

1 Pet. 3:6 Even as Sarah obeyed Abraham, calling him lord: whose daughters ye are, as long as ye do well, and are not afraid with any amazement.

In this illustration, the Church class is typified by Sarah. She called Abraham “lord,” but this obedience did not erase her individuality. That her appearance was exceptional is shown by an incident that occurred when she and Abraham were old. On a journey to the southern Negev toward Egypt, they encountered Abimelech. Seeing that Sarah was beautiful and desirable from the standpoint of noble bearing, Abimelech took Sarah with the intention of making her a queen until he was informed in a dream that she was Abraham’s wife. Such natural nobility is quite different from an artificial and/or seductive attempt to attract the attention and admiration of the public.

“Ye are [Sarah’s daughters], as long as ye do well, and are not afraid with any amazement.” The *Diaglott* reads: “[You are become Sarah’s children] ... doing good, not fearing any terror.”

Comment: Sarah was properly submissive to Abraham, but she was not afraid to express her opinion and disagree according to the situation.

Reply: In a talk Bro. Alex Muir gave many years ago in Staten Island, he spoke about

meekness and submission, and his point was that the Christian should not be a doormat for people to wipe their feet on. Christians are not to be so submissive that people walk all over them. That is not humility and meekness. True meekness is being flexible, reasonable, teachable. Humility is the soil in which meekness prospers. What grows out of that soil is not a doormat.

Many erroneously think the ideal is that the wife should be submissive to the husband like a doormat. Therefore, the “fear” here was not fear of Abraham, the *husband*. Sarah did not allow her personality to be expunged. A common thought is that the ideal Christian is faceless and without personality. The Scriptures picture Christians as jewels with different personalities but with certain common traits such as firmness for God, hardness as jewels. Their minds and hearts are determined to follow God and Jesus, come what may, with submissiveness, humility, and meekness.

Comment: One of the Pastor’s comments is, “Do not let your meekness become weakness.”

Reply: A jewel pictures hardness. Soft carbon can be changed into a diamond.

Comment: Queen Esther knew she would die if the king did not accept her, yet she was determined to speak to him about her people.

Reply: In other words, she did something like what Vashti did, but with a different attitude and motive. With her proud refusal, Vashti tried to show her independence and her equality with the king. Esther exercised decorum in seeking an audience with the king, and it was overruled that the king heard and answered her petition.

Wives who are physically abused by their husbands are overly submissive and should leave their husbands. That type of submission is improper, but women fear, “Where will I go?” “What will I do?” If we did not have the Lord, who knows what we would do? Having the Lord and exercising faith give us a much greater advantage in certain matters than the people in the world. With the Christian, the premise is, “If God be for us, who can be against us?” (Rom. 8:31).

Comment: Jewels are formed from normal substances which, under tremendous amounts of pressure, become diamonds, emeralds, etc.

Reply: The diamond is a separate picture, for all of the Lord’s people are diamonds. But all are not emeralds, sard stones, fire opals, etc. Diamonds come from carbon, the softest material, whereas the stones in the high priest’s breastplate are of the commonest material, silicon dioxide (sand), formed under very unusual conditions of pressure and temperature. In other words, there is no diamond in the breastplate, but Christians can be pictured as diamonds from another standpoint.

1 Pet. 3:7 Likewise, ye husbands, dwell with them according to knowledge, giving honour unto the wife, as unto the weaker vessel, and as being heirs together of the grace of life; that your prayers be not hindered.

This verse presupposes that both the husband and the wife are consecrated. “That your prayers be not hindered.” If the husband does not treat the wife as he should, his prayer life is adversely affected.

Comment: The wife is to submit to her husband and call him “lord,” but the subject does not end here. If the husband does not treat her equally as well, giving honor unto her as unto the

weaker vessel, then his prayers are hindered. There is to be mutual respect for each other.

Comment: The husband is responsible to God for the wife's welfare.

Reply: Yes. Just as the elder has a responsibility toward the ecclesia, so the husband has a responsibility toward his wife.

There is a dual responsibility between husband and wife. The husband is the head of the household from a Scriptural standpoint when both are consecrated. However, if only the wife is consecrated, then she is recognized by the Lord as the head of the household for the children's sake.

Comment: To show the dual role of husbands and wives, verse 1 begins with "Likewise, ye wives," and verse 7 begins with "Likewise, ye husbands."

1 Pet. 3:8 Finally, be ye all of one mind, having compassion one of another, love as brethren, be pitiful, be courteous:

Recognizing each other's faults, the consecrated husband and wife are to be forgiving, merciful, and courteous to one another. Of course a marriage in the Lord is a double tie. Many marriages do not break up because of respect for the Lord. Patience and endurance prevail. Responsibilities help to knit a marriage together, especially if the marriage is in the Lord.

1 Pet. 3:9 Not rendering evil for evil, or railing for railing: but contrariwise blessing; knowing that ye are thereunto called, that ye should inherit a blessing.

The natural or worldly response is to give "railing for railing." If one gets a strong reprimand, the temptation is to respond in like fashion. Fire invites fire, but in order to be stable and please the Lord, we must exercise tremendous patience.

1 Pet. 3:10 For he that will love life, and see good days, let him refrain his tongue from evil, and his lips that they speak no guile:

"For he that will love life, and see good days, let him refrain his tongue from evil." In other words, refrain from rendering evil for evil, railing for railing, etc.

Comment: Psalm 34:12-15 says, "What man is he that desireth life, and loveth many days, that he may see good? Keep thy tongue from evil, and thy lips from speaking guile. Depart from evil, and do good; seek peace, and pursue it. The eyes of the LORD are upon the righteous, and his ears are open unto their cry."

Reply: The Lord knows the situation, and as one behaves in the proper way, He makes note of it and it will end up good for the suffering individual. Psalm 34:12-15 has so many parallel points to Peter's advice that perhaps the apostle had this Psalm in mind.

1 Pet. 3:11 Let him eschew evil, and do good; let him seek peace, and ensue it.

"Let him eschew [turn away from] evil."

1 Pet. 3:12 For the eyes of the Lord are over the righteous, and his ears are open unto their prayers: but the face of the Lord is against them that do evil.

The bottom line of the advice in the last four verses is that the Lord is listening. "The eyes of

the Lord are over the righteous, and his ears are open unto their prayers.” In other words, He is there, and one should behave accordingly as best he can under a given situation or circumstance. When contention arises, the Lord would not seem to be there, but if one reacts properly, the Lord takes cognizance.

Comment: Again the lesson comes forth that disobedience hinders prayer. Verse 7 said that prayers are hindered if the husband does not properly honor the wife, and now we are told that the ears of the Lord are open to prayers of the righteous or, stated the other way, that they are closed to those who disobey.

Comment: Matthew 5:23,24 teaches the same principle: “Therefore if thou bring thy gift to the altar, and there rememberest that thy brother hath aught against thee; Leave there thy gift before the altar, and go thy way; first be reconciled to thy brother, and then come and offer thy gift.”

Reply: Yes, communication is important between husband and wife and between brethren. A matter should be brought out into the open but with constraint and control.

1 Pet. 3:13 And who is he that will harm you, if ye be followers of that which is good?

1 Pet. 3:14 But and if ye suffer for righteousness' sake, happy are ye: and be not afraid of their terror, neither be troubled;

Peter is now talking more about going out in public: “Be not afraid of *their* terror.” Normally speaking, *sudden* terror is a fearsome experience. One must rely on and have confidence in the Lord no matter what is threatening. When one has tried to live a Christian life and then a difficult trial occurs, the reasoning should be, “If the Lord suffers this to happen, He knows best.” However, if one’s Christian life has been careless, he will be disarmed when sudden terror strikes. The Adversary’s tactic is to disarm us and make us lose our heads. Here the Lord is giving us advance advice through Peter to enable us to withstand the terror that will occur to the Christian at the end of the age.

“If ye suffer for righteousness' sake,” be happy, not downcast. We should not allow terror to influence our conduct or cause us to recant or compromise principle.

1 Pet. 3:15 But sanctify the Lord God in your hearts: and be ready always to give an answer to every man that asketh you a reason of the hope that is in you with meekness and fear:

We must live the Christian life and study and meditate daily on Scripture so that the Holy Spirit can take out of our memory banks the good things we put in them.

1 Pet. 3:16 Having a good conscience; that, whereas they speak evil of you, as of evildoers, they may be ashamed that falsely accuse your good conversation in Christ.

1 Pet. 3:17 For it is better, if the will of God be so, that ye suffer for well doing, than for evil doing.

Peter frequently makes the distinction between two kinds of suffering, or persecution, and the outcomes of each. When one does wrong and suffers for it, patiently taking the suffering, the individual will not be specially rewarded, but to suffer wrongfully is meritorious in the Lord’s sight.

When will shame come to those who “falsely accuse your good conversation [conduct] in

Christ"? They will experience shame in the Kingdom.

1 Pet. 3:18 For Christ also hath once suffered for sins, the just for the unjust, that he might bring us to God, being put to death in the flesh, but quickened by the Spirit:

Truly Christ suffered greatly for our sins. The *Diaglott* has, "... so that he might lead to God, being put to death indeed in flesh, being made alive but in Spirit." The word should be "in," not "by," for Jesus was raised a spirit being, not a divine being. He was put to death in the flesh but made alive in the spirit the third day. Although he appeared in flesh during the subsequent 40 days to prove his resurrection, he was a spirit being.

When Jesus died, his humanity expired on the Cross. Many think that when he was awakened from death, he was awakened to the divine nature. Semantics are important in this case. Verse 18 says he was "put to death in the flesh, but quickened by the Spirit," but the preposition "by" is incongruous with the context, for the comparison is that Christ was "put to death flesh" and "made alive spirit." While the nouns "flesh" and "spirit" are in the dative case, which usually means "to" or "by," the thinking is more in harmony with the Latin ablative case because neither "to" nor "by" fits the context. The comparison is "put to death *in* flesh" and "made alive *in* spirit," as interpreted by Griesbach in the interlinear portion of the *Diaglott*.

1 Pet. 3:19 By which also he went and preached unto the spirits in prison;

The "spirits in prison" are the fallen angels. The usual interpretation of Jesus' preaching to the spirits in prison is that his life during the 3 1/2 years of his earthly ministry—and especially his death on the Cross, his resurrection, and his supreme love for God and man—was an example to the fallen angels. But the wording of this verse is too strong for such an interpretation. The word "went" is significant. Jesus "*went* and preached unto the spirits in prison." He did not necessarily go into the very midst of Satan's stronghold but remained on the outside of the prison, shouting advice to those within.

If we add up the number of hours in which Jesus appeared to his disciples during the 40 days after his resurrection, the total would be small. He appeared separately to James, Peter, the 500, the disciples as a group (once without Thomas and once with Thomas), etc., but at most only 50 percent of the time. What did Jesus do the rest of the time? He did not ascend to God's heaven, for he said, "I am not yet ascended to my Father" (John 20:17). Therefore, he went to the spirit realm in earth's atmosphere, that is, to *tartaroo*, where he gave sermons to the fallen angels. How interesting it would be to hear what he said to them under that circumstance! His words would have given hope to those of the fallen angels who are repentant.

The time frame with spirit beings is different from that with human beings. Their days are longer than our 24-hour days. Jesus was down here for 40 days after his resurrection and then ascended to God's heaven for a ten-day celebration. At Pentecost (the 50th day), the Holy Spirit was given.

1 Pet. 3:20 Which sometime were disobedient, when once the longsuffering of God waited in the days of Noah, while the ark was a-preparing, wherein few, that is, eight souls were saved by water.

The introduction to this verse seems to suggest that the Apostle Peter had a little inside information. "Which sometime were disobedient" is more literally rendered "Which *at one time* were disobedient." The wording seems to infer a possibility of reconciliation. One who was *once* disobedient might be forgiven at a future date.

1 Pet. 3:21 The like figure whereunto even baptism doth also now save us (not the putting away of the filth of the flesh, but the answer of a good conscience toward God,) by the resurrection of Jesus Christ:

What about the parenthetical thought “(not the putting away of the filth of the flesh, but the answer of a good conscience toward God.)”? Baptism into Christ, prefigured by Noah and his family being “saved by water” in the Ark, is “not [merely] the putting away of the filth of the flesh, but [also] the answer of a good conscience toward God.” With Peter, a tender conscience is so important. In the life of a Christian, the grieving of the Holy Spirit should be at a minimum so as to help the growth and health of the conscience (Eph. 4:30).

Q: Is the “like figure” a comparison of the Flood and baptism or of the Ark and baptism?

A: It is a comparison with both. The Flood eliminated the other people, but Noah and his family entered into a new life, a new world. Peter likens that new life to the resurrection. In other words, by being saved in the Ark, Noah escaped from death into a new life and thus became like a second Adam in a certain sense. The salvation of Noah and his sons in the Ark is a picture of the resurrection of Jesus and the Little Flock. Peter likens the resurrection of Christ to unusual power—like a current or great influence of spirit. Back in 1 Peter 1:3, we read, “Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, which according to his abundant mercy hath begotten us again unto a lively hope by the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead.”

1 Pet. 3:22 Who is gone into heaven, and is on the right hand of God; angels and authorities and powers being made subject unto him.

Since his ascension, Jesus has been seated on the throne on the right hand of God, and while Psalm 2:8 tells us that he must wait there until he is given the go-ahead sign as regards the Kingdom, this delay does not in any way negate his superiority over all other spirit beings. As a result of his faithful life and approval by God, Jesus has special honor and respect in heaven, but he will not reign until the due time in the Kingdom. In Matthew 22:44, God said to Jesus, “Sit thou on my right hand, till I make thine enemies thy footstool.” Meanwhile Jesus has occasionally exerted power down here, such as when he stopped the French Revolution by putting one foot on the sea and the other foot on the earth (Rev. 10:2). From Pentecost until the beginning of the Harvest, Jesus has come down here only when given permission to perform certain acts. Another example is his appearance to the Apostle Paul as the glorified Christ. In other words, Jesus has not been chained to the throne, but that is his abiding relationship until later. When he comes to judge, he will be in earth’s atmosphere for a while. In other words, earth’s atmosphere will be his temporary residence in the Kingdom Age.

1 Pet. 4:1 Forasmuch then as Christ hath suffered for us in the flesh, arm yourselves likewise with the same mind: for he that hath suffered in the flesh hath ceased from sin;

“He that hath suffered in the flesh hath ceased from sin.” This axiom is a principle. In verses 2 and 3, Peter amplifies this thought.

Comment: For part of verses 1 and 2, the New International Version reads, “He who has suffered in his body is done with sin. As a result, he does not live the rest of his earthly life for evil human desires, but rather for the will of God.”

Q: Hebrews 2:10 states, “For it became him, for whom are all things, and by whom are all things, in bringing many sons unto glory, to make the captain of their salvation perfect through sufferings.” Does this text have any bearing on 1 Peter 4:1?

A: The perfection through sufferings that Christ needed was to qualify him as the High Priest, to make him more compassionate, tender, and sympathetic to fallen humankind. In other words, when Jesus came down here and lived on this sinful earth, his firsthand experience during his ministry was very valuable—so valuable, in fact, that God deemed the experience necessary to further qualify him as a sympathetic High Priest in dealing with mankind.

Q: Does 1 John 3:9 tie in with 1 Peter 4:1? “Whosoever is born of God doth not commit sin; for his seed remaineth in him: and he cannot sin, because he is born of God.” The thought is not that a Christian never sins but that he does not practice willful sin.

A: John is dealing with the same principle but from another standpoint. A proof or the degree of one’s being spiritual is directly proportional to the time he devotes to spiritual matters and the minimizing of attention to the flesh.

Comment: In Romans 6:6,7, Paul said, “Knowing this, that our old man is crucified with him, that the body of sin might be destroyed, that henceforth we should not serve sin. For he that is dead is freed from sin.”

Reply: Paul, John, and Peter are all speaking on the same subject, but each approaches the subject from a different perspective. We will treat Peter’s perspective in more detail as we proceed.

1 Pet. 4:2 That he no longer should live the rest of his time in the flesh to the lusts of men, but to the will of God.

1 Pet. 4:3 For the time past of our life may suffice us to have wrought the will of the Gentiles, when we walked in lasciviousness, lusts, excess of wine, revellings, banquetings, and abominable idolatries:

Verse 3 is still part of the reasoning of verse 1: “he that hath suffered in the flesh hath ceased from sin.” Notice the *time element*. Verse 2 reads, “That he no longer should live the *rest of his time* in the flesh to the lusts of men, but to the will of God.” Verse 3 adds, “For the *time past* of our life.” In other words, we spent sufficient time in the past with earthly pleasures. Before we gave our heart to the Lord, our time was employed in areas that satisfied self with pleasure. But now, after consecration, if we suffer in the flesh for Christ, we are spending time in spiritual pursuits. In proportion as we are trying to please the Lord and walk in his paths, there is less time for the flesh. The thought is not that our Christian walk cancels sin, but certainly the more time we spend on spiritual matters, the less time we spend on earthly pleasures.

The point is that time spent on spiritual pursuits means sacrifice. For example, when we work eight hours a day, we must redeem time for the Lord. To the extent we do redeem time, we cease from sinful pursuits or even from pursuits that are not sinful but are time-consuming and not helpful to the new creature. Suffering is a theme of this epistle—not only the suffering of the faithful Christian but especially the suffering of Jesus on the Cross, which left a very deep impression on Peter. Seeing Jesus on the Cross penetrated to the core of his being.

Comment: 1 Corinthians 6:9–11 lists some past sins and then says, “Such were some of you.” “Know ye not that the unrighteous shall not inherit the kingdom of God? Be not deceived: neither fornicators, nor idolaters, nor adulterers, nor effeminate, nor abusers of themselves with mankind, Nor thieves, nor covetous, nor drunkards, nor revilers, nor extortioners, shall inherit the kingdom of God. And such were some of you: but ye are washed, but ye are sanctified, but ye are justified in the name of the Lord Jesus, and by the Spirit of our God.”

Reply: Paul said, “There is none righteous, no, not one” (Rom. 3:10). Whether we realize it or not, we indulged in some of these categories in the past, such as the desire for money or fame or influence.

Peter was preparing the brethren back there for further persecution. The epistle was primarily addressed to Jewish Christians in Asia Minor and secondarily to the Church as a whole. Since we are living at the end of the age, the secondary application is more important to us now.

1 Pet. 4:4 Wherein they think it strange that ye run not with them to the same excess of riot, speaking evil of you:

Most of us have had this experience in one way or another.

1 Pet. 4:5 Who shall give account to him that is ready to judge the quick and the dead.

Comment: The same Apostle Peter states the same thought in Acts 10:42, “And he commanded us to preach unto the people, and to testify that it is he which was ordained of God to be the Judge of quick and dead.”

What about the expression “the quick and the dead” here in 1 Peter 4:5? Now the world speaks evil of those who do not run to their same excesses, but the time will come when they see matters in the proper perspective. The intimation is that in some instances where worldly people have given specific insults to the Lord’s little ones, they will be reminded of their words in the future.

Verse 6 sheds light on who “the quick and the dead” are in this context. The “dead” would be those who are not in Christ; they are “dead” in trespasses and sins in the world. The “quick” are those who have been made alive, or quickened, in Christ.

1 Pet. 4:6 For for this cause was the gospel preached also to them that are dead, that they might be judged according to men in the flesh, but live according to God in the spirit.

“For for this cause was the gospel preached also to them that are dead.” The preaching of the gospel to those who do not know God is one thing, but what about the preaching of the gospel to the consecrated? All, both the quick and the dead, shall have to give an account, “for we shall all stand before the judgment seat of Christ” (Rom. 14:10). The consecrated as well as the unconsecrated will all, at one time or another, have to pass before the judgment seat of Christ. The consecrated go before the judgment seat in the present life, for they are on trial for life now. Those who commit the sin unto Second Death receive their judgment now, for they will not be awakened from the grave in the future to hear their judgment of permanent extinction. For those who are not Christ’s in the Gospel Age, their judgment is held in reserve for the Kingdom Age. Their time for going before the judgment seat is future; our time is now.

In other words, Jesus, like a refiner of silver and gold, is looking into the crucible of our hearts to see our motives and intentions. He assesses whether or not we really love the Lord our God. Our problem is to make sure we are not self-deceived in the examination process. Once we expire in the present life, the judgment is set as to whether our destiny is the Little Flock, the Great Company, or Second Death. As for the world, although their judgment is future, certain of their words and deeds are being recorded, especially the more heinous acts.

1 Pet. 4:7 But the end of all things is at hand: be ye therefore sober, and watch unto prayer.

Of course we are nearer to “the end of all things” today than when this epistle was written. In

the *Keys of Revelation*, attention is called to the fact that the Second Epistle of Peter and the Epistle of Jude both speak of the end time, which is now “at hand.”

Q: What did Peter have in mind back in his day when he said, “The end of all things is at hand”? Were his words related to the destruction of Jerusalem?

A: For Christian Jews in Israel that was a problem, for a holocaust occurred there in AD 69–70, but Peter is addressing this epistle to Christian Jews in Asia Minor. Evidently, when the destruction occurred in Judah, there were repercussions that affected Jews elsewhere in the Roman Empire, such as in Cappadocia (1 Pet. 1:1). Also Orthodox Jewry, being very opposed to the gospel of Christ, persecuted Christian Jews.

In Matthew 24, which is called “Our Lord’s Great Prophecy,” the emphasis is on spiritual Israel at the end of the age and the coming of the great Time of Trouble. But Luke 17 and 21 have a double fulfillment upon both natural and spiritual Israel.

Peter’s message was primarily to the Christian Jews of his time, but once their experiences became history, the apostle’s message was for Gentile Christians, for those who are Israelites indeed according to the spirit.

1 Pet. 4:8 And above all things have fervent charity among yourselves: for charity shall cover the multitude of sins.

This verse reminds us of James 5:20, “Let him know, that he which converteth the sinner from the error of his way shall save a soul from death, and shall hide a multitude of sins.” The difference is that James is primarily discussing those who are spiritually sick.

Here Peter uses similar words. What relationship does “charity” have to covering a “multitude of sins”? Peter is discussing a *proper attitude*, for the sins are not necessarily forgiven. Suppose the government passed an edict today that Bible Students are marked for imprisonment and/or persecution. What effect would that edict have on us as brethren? We would be bonded together with sympathy for one another. Of necessity, we would feel the need for being of a kindred mind, or spirit. We would be very interested in the welfare of our brethren and automatically be very tender. Differences would melt away because of the *common danger about to engulf us*. Under that circumstance, love would blanket differences of judgment and sin, and these matters would be left in God’s hands and in Jesus’ hands. In other words, under this situation, when the danger is *imminent* and the pressure is on, we would not moralize but would think of each other from the standpoint of our initial consecrations. Our common danger would knit us together as a whole. We would need this fervency, warmth, love, and sympathy one for another to bolster up our spirits to not quail or lose faith in the face of whatever is coming. We would be bonded for Christ’s cause.

Comment: We have the Scriptural admonition of Hebrews 10:25 to forsake not “the assembling of ourselves together ... but ... [to exhort] one another: and so much the more, as ye see the day approaching.”

Q: It is easy to see how an allowance should be made for a multitude of shortcomings, but how can willful sin be covered?

A: Serious, grievous sin should not be countenanced, but Peter is referring to differences and shortcomings. It is important not to forsake the assembling of ourselves.

1 Corinthians 13 gives a definition of love. However, the Apostle Paul describes only the

positive side of love. Many Scriptures discuss “love” from another standpoint, such as hating iniquity. Some think 1 Corinthians 13 presents the whole subject of love in a nutshell, but this chapter treats only the positive or happy sense of love. Jesus was anointed above his fellows because he not only loved righteousness but also hated iniquity (Heb. 1:9). “Thou hast loved righteousness, and hated iniquity; therefore God, even thy God, hath anointed thee with the oil of gladness above thy fellows.” Thus hating iniquity is part of love. A perfect hatred is proper; perfect hatred is the negative aspect of love. Psalm 139:22 says, “I hate them with *perfect hatred*: I count them mine enemies.” Ecclesiastes 3:8 says there is a time to love and a time to hate.

Q: Please explain again what it means to cover a “multitude of sins” with love.

A: These sins would be shortcomings, not willful, grievous sin. Verse 7 reads, “The end of all things is at hand: be ye therefore sober, and watch unto prayer.” Then verse 8 enjoins, “Above all things have fervent charity among yourselves.” We could not have fervent charity for those who are openly disobeying the Lord, as for example, for those who are committing adultery. Shortcomings are another matter, for we all have them and many of them are obvious to others. It has been said, “God give us the gift to see us as others see us.” Usually we are not aware of our own shortcomings to the extent that others see them. And we may have secret faults or shortcomings that others cannot see. In times of peril when life and death are in the balance, when the fire is coming, shortcomings and differences must be set aside. The doctrine of importance at that time will be to have fervent love for the Lord and to have the feeling of being knit together with our brethren in a common cause.

Certain types of music, such as military marches by John Philip Sousa, are so inspirational that those listening feel they could do almost anything, even to march off to death in a battle. Just as music has an effect on one’s courage, so sympathy for one another that is seen and felt under pressure-cooker conditions will have beneficial and helpful results on an individual basis as well as for the brotherhood.

Comment: “Charity” here is *agape* love.

1 Pet. 4:9 Use hospitality one to another without grudging.

Comment: This is another way of saying, “As we have therefore opportunity, let us do good unto all men, especially unto them who are of the household of faith” (Gal. 6:10).

1 Pet. 4:10 As every man hath received the gift, even so minister the same one to another, as good stewards of the manifold grace of God.

1 Pet. 4:11 If any man speak, let him speak as the oracles of God; if any man minister, let him do it as of the ability which God giveth: that God in all things may be glorified through Jesus Christ, to whom be praise and dominion for ever and ever. Amen.

“To whom be praise and dominion for ever and ever.” Praise and dominion go *to God* forever and ever through Jesus.

When verses 10 and 11 are read together, the lesson is one of humility. “As every man hath received the gift” means that we were not called initially because we are innately better than others but through God’s *mercy*. *Grace* has called and redeemed us. While God is certainly happy that we appreciate the truth and what He has done not only for us but also for the world, we should feel this gift is so wonderful that we want to share it with others. But in sharing the gift, we must emphasize that it is *God’s gift* and *God’s Word*, and not something we have done ourselves.

Man should not be honored above what honor is due him—even if the individual is one of the seven messengers. For instance, sometimes praise is given to the Pastor more than to God and Jesus. In some respects, sincere Christians in the nominal Church have a better appreciation of the need to emphasize the Lord, and they would be shocked to hear some of our expressions. In the Book of Revelation, when John fell at the feet of the messenger to worship him, the messenger said, “See thou do it not: I am thy fellowservant, and of thy brethren that have the testimony of Jesus: worship God: for the testimony of Jesus is the spirit of prophecy” (Rev. 19:10). The Pastor had such a wonderful understanding of the divine plan that people just sat and listened in awe. The awe is all right as long as it is centered in *God’s wisdom* spoken through a human being. The source (God) must always be kept in mind.

In Revelation 22:9, a similar statement is again made to John: “Then saith he unto me, See thou do it not: for I am thy fellowservant, and of thy brethren the prophets, and of them which keep the sayings of this book: worship God.” The first time the “fellowservant” was a dispensational servant, but this time the “fellowservant” is the risen Jesus. Even he said to John in vision, “See thou do it not! Worship God.”

“If any man speak, let him speak as the oracles of God; if any man minister, let him do it as of the ability *which God giveth*.” Any ability comes from God and not from ourselves.

Q: Does the statement “If any man speak, let him speak as the oracles of God” apply to all conversation?

A: No, an oracle speaks more along the line of interpretation. There was an oracle in Delphi and another one in Egypt in the desert, to whom people went to have their questions answered. People felt that the oracles gave them a touch with the Creator.

In other words, it is dangerous for a novice to speak as an oracle of God unless he speaks on things that he knows. Speculative matters should be treated as such. Prophetic interpretation should be backed up with two or three witnesses in the Word.

Q: Does this verse also warn against levity in regard to the Word?

A: That is not the main thrust here, but it is a good observation. “The end of all things is at hand,” so we are to be sober (1 Pet. 4:7). However, we are not all to go around with a downcast look, for some are more cheerful by temperament. But even one who is bubbly by nature must learn to control the quality so that it does not get out of hand. However, the clause “That God in all things may be glorified through Jesus Christ” would affect even idle conversation. At all times, we should have a certain consciousness of decorum and reverence for the Lord and of our being ambassadors for Christ.

1 Pet. 4:12 Beloved, think it not strange concerning the fiery trial which is to try you, as though some strange thing happened unto you:

1 Pet. 4:13 But rejoice, inasmuch as ye are partakers of Christ’s sufferings; that, when his glory shall be revealed, ye may be glad also with exceeding joy.

Comment: Again there seems to be a hint of problems coming in among the consecrated at the end of the age.

Reply: As mentioned previously, this epistle was written to, and thus is primarily directed to, the Jewish believers in Asia Minor just prior to the holocaust of AD 69–70. Once the epistle

served its purpose for that early application, it became a general epistle to the Gentile Church. When we consider the second epistle, which zeros in on the end of the age, we can see that there are hints along the same line in the first epistle.

Comment: Verse 12 fits in with 1 Peter 1:7, “That the trial of your faith, being much more precious than of gold that perisheth, though it be tried with fire, might be found unto praise and honour and glory at the appearing of Jesus Christ.”

Reply: Yes, the verses are related, and they both mention the fiery trial and the appearance of Jesus or his glory being revealed. The fact Peter repeats the theme shows that at the time he wrote the epistle, that particular thought was very prominent in his mind. It puts the whole theme of the first epistle in a nutshell, namely, to be prepared for the very hard experience that would come. Peter directed the epistle to those churches in Asia Minor that he ministered to. The Apostle Paul had a much larger field of operation in Asia Minor. Paul’s statement in 2 Timothy 1:15 near the conclusion of his ministry that all in Asia had forsaken him was profound, for it shows that a severe trial did come in among the churches in Asia Minor. The trial was so severe that from a group standpoint, the great majority turned away from Paul. “This thou knowest, that all they which are in Asia be turned away from me; of whom are Phygellus and Hermogenes.” The Church at Galatia had a hard trial with the Jewish Christian element insisting that Christians must obey the ceremonial aspects of the Law of Moses as well as the teachings of Christ. Paul was very emphatic: “O foolish Galatians, who hath bewitched you, that ye should not obey the truth” (Gal. 3:1). Other churches had similar experiences at that time. Hence Peter speaks of the coming “fiery trial.”

“Rejoice, inasmuch as ye are partakers of Christ’s sufferings; that, when his glory shall be revealed, ye may be glad also with exceeding joy.” The “exceeding joy” to come when Christ’s “glory shall be revealed” will more than compensate for any trials and sufferings in the present life.

1 Pet. 4:14 If ye be reproached for the name of Christ, happy are ye; for the spirit of glory and of God resteth upon you: on their part he is evil spoken of, but on your part he is glorified.

When we are “reproached for the name of Christ, ... the spirit of glory and of God resteth upon you.” In 1 Peter 1:7, the apostle spoke about how valuable a trial is, saying the proof of our faith is more precious than gold. If we carry that thought to this chapter, it means that when one is reproached, the spirit of glory and of reward is there. We are laying up treasure in heaven *if we properly receive the trial*. The treasures accumulate and are laid up in reservation. However, we must always be careful lest we are too confident of where we stand with the Lord, for anything can happen at any time and strange things do occur. Although it is a developmental process when one falls away, the deflection often appears to be sudden.

Comment: 1 Peter 2:19,20 is encouragement for one going through a persecuting experience. “For this is thankworthy, if a man for conscience toward God endure grief, suffering wrongfully. For what glory is it, if, when ye be buffeted for your faults, ye shall take it patiently? but if, when ye do well, and suffer for it, ye take it patiently, this is acceptable with God.”

1 Pet. 4:15 But let none of you suffer as a murderer, or as a thief, or as an evildoer, or as a busybody in other men’s matters.

Peter is warning the Christian not to “suffer” in any of these categories. The odd thing is that people who “busybody” in other people’s affairs often have problems themselves which they

do not see. It is easy to give advice, but we will be held accountable for wrong advice. Those in a teaching capacity are even more responsible than those in ordinary fellowship, but all are accountable for advice given to others. Some people seem to delight in giving instructions and admonitions, not realizing that they themselves will be inspected accordingly.

Comment: Someone said, “Free advice is the most expensive advice you will ever get.”

Reply: That could be amended to read, “Free advice is the most expensive advice you will ever give.” There is a cost attached to the giver of wrong advice. “By thy words thou shalt be justified, and by thy words thou shalt be condemned” (Matt. 12:37).

Q: If a brother was guilty of serious misconduct and we brought it to the attention of others, we could be called busybodies. How would we respond to such a charge?

A: We should analyze the particular incident involved. The warning against being a busybody in other men’s matters is a general statement, and it is true that we do not want to be a buttinsky, which could take the form of either faultfinding or sincerely believing we are helping the individual but giving the wrong advice. For example, giving advice in marital affairs can be a dangerous form of busybodying. We would be responsible for pushing the person in the wrong direction and causing more problems.

Comment: To be a busybody is different from evil speaking, for a busybody talks to the person face to face and evil speaking is talking behind the person’s back.

Comment: An example of a busybody is a sister who could not understand why we had to disfellowship a certain party. She kept butting into the situation by sending letter after letter.

Comment: Being a busybody is habitual; it is a pattern of behavior.

1 Pet. 4:16 Yet if any man suffer as a Christian, let him not be ashamed; but let him glorify God on this behalf.

Suffering as a Christian requires self-analysis. In experiences where we are ostracized, we must judge what produced this “unfavorable” response. Have we brought the experience on ourselves by not doing what is Scriptural? If we have tried to obey God and conscience, then we should glorify God for the privilege of suffering as a Christian.

We need quiet time to reflect and grow and to analyze our thoughts, words, and doings. Even though during his earthly ministry Jesus predominated in the conversations and situations, he felt the need to draw aside and go to a mountain alone to pray to the Father. He sought solitude. Hence quietness is helpful for self-appraisal of our ministry, conduct, and influence. Generally speaking, our experiences are partially due to a lack of tact. Those who have natural tact are fortunate *as long as principles are not compromised*.

1 Pet. 4:17 For the time is come that judgment must begin at the house of God: and if it first begin at us, what shall the end be of them that obey not the gospel of God?

“The time is come that judgment must begin at the house of God.” Which “judgment” is Peter referring to? He is not talking about the judgment and inspection of our conduct throughout our Christian walk but about a *future* judgment and inspection.

Comment: The word “begin” indicates a *progression* in judgment starting with the true Church, then the nominal Church, the Great Company, Israel, and the world of mankind.

Reply: Dispensational judgment is broken up into sequential segments, as discussed at the Future Events Conference. This epistle applies to the Christian Church, which is composed of both Jews and Gentiles. At the end of the age, the judgment begins with the Little Flock. When Babylon falls, the Great Company will be released. Then Jacob's Trouble will occur.

In regard to Jewish Christians in Asia Minor at the beginning of the Gospel Age, Peter was hinting that they would go into the pressure cooker. He wanted them to be prepared and not think it strange as these experiences came on them with more and more severity, for God deemed the trials necessary for proving and developing them. Jewish Christians, among whom were Aquila and Priscilla, left Rome when Nero issued a certain decree.

To us, living dispensationally at this end of the age, the proof of our faith will be in proportion to the severity of the trial. If harsh decrees are made, we will be affected as a group as well as individually. How we react to the hour of power will have a bearing on our destiny.

Comment: The individual aspect of judgment is treated in Revelation 22:11, "He that is unjust, let him be unjust still: and he which is filthy, let him be filthy still: and he that is righteous, let him be righteous still: and he that is holy, let him be holy still."

1 Pet. 4:18 And if the righteous scarcely be saved, where shall the ungodly and the sinner appear?

This verse is very sobering, but how many think along this line? Brethren are generally so enthralled with the *love* of God that they do not consider this aspect. We criticize those in the nominal Church who feel so confident they are "saved," but the same attitude can exist among us. Instead of comparing ourselves with one another, we must compare ourselves with Christ.

The two righteous classes are the Little Flock and the Great Company. However, since the same Apostle Peter says that the Little Flock will be given an *abundant* entrance into the Kingdom, he is not speaking of them in verse 18 (2 Pet. 1:11). It is the Great Company who will "scarcely be saved." Likened to righteous Lot, the Great Company are a virgin class but a foolish class. For the righteous Great Company to be scarcely saved, it means they will have a hard experience in the great tribulation (Rev. 7:14). They must wash their robes and be finished as a class before the Ransom merit can be released and the Kingdom can start.

Then who would "the ungodly and the sinner" be? The ungodly of the consecrated are the Second Death class. Of course the world of mankind are ungodly and are in their trespasses and sins, but that is not the emphasis here, for their trial is in the Kingdom Age. They are not specially on trial now.

1 Pet. 4:19 Wherefore let them that suffer according to the will of God commit the keeping of their souls to him in well doing, as unto a faithful Creator.

The key phrase is "according to the will of God." Many suffer many things in the present life, but meritorious suffering is *according to the will of God*. Those who suffer thus are to "commit the keeping of their souls to him in well doing." Jesus did this on the Cross when he said, "Father, into thy hands I commend my spirit" (Luke 23:46). At the time of death, Christians sometimes question their relationship with God as Jesus did when he cried out, "My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?" (Matt. 27:46). To have this doubt is no proof of unfaithfulness, for Christians often have checkered experiences, that is, ups and downs. One minute they feel providentially blessed because of something favorable that has happened, and a short while later they feel low.

Comment: The end of verse 13 tells us that if we are faithful partakers of Christ's sufferings, we will make our calling and election sure and thus "be glad ... with *exceeding joy*." The Little Flock will have exceeding joy, whereas the Great Company will just have joy. And Peter is talking of the Little Flock in 2 Peter 1:4 when he says, "Whereby are given unto us *exceeding great and precious promises*: that by these ye might be partakers of the divine nature." In contrast, the Great Company will just get promises. Over and over Peter dispensationally urges the consecrated to more and more faithfulness, stressing the excelling joy and glory of those who can make the grade versus those who just squeak in as Great Company.

1 Pet. 5:1 The elders which are among you I exhort, who am also an elder, and a witness of the sufferings of Christ, and also a partaker of the glory that shall be revealed:

Notice, "the elders which are among you [that is, in the churches in Asia Minor] I exhort, who am also an elder [Peter does not even say he is an apostle], and a witness of the sufferings of Christ [on the Cross], and also a partaker of the [hope of] glory that shall be revealed." Again in this epistle, we get a clue that the Apostle Peter (as well as the Apostle John in his writings) actually saw Jesus on the Cross and witnessed his sufferings in those hours of extremity. When Jesus was apprehended in Gethsemane and taken to Annas and Caiaphas, Peter and John followed. When John was inside the home of Caiaphas, he had the maid open the door to allow Peter to enter.

1 Pet. 5:2 Feed the flock of God which is among you, taking the oversight thereof, not by constraint, but willingly; not for filthy lucre, but of a ready mind;

The elders are to "feed the flock of God ... taking the oversight thereof ... willingly."

Comment: The New International Version has, "Be *shepherds* of God's flock," which gives a broader meaning than just feeding, or giving, spiritual food. Elders are to take care of all aspects of the flock. "Be shepherds of God's flock that is under your care, serving as overseers—not because you must, but because you are willing, as God wants you to be; not greedy for money, but eager to serve."

Q: Does the phrase "not for filthy lucre" mean elders should never receive money?

A: No, it means Christians should not have a paid ministry, but donations are another matter. The Apostle Paul accepted donations and was partially supported, but in regard to certain problems that arose, he made it clear that he was paying not only his own way but also the way of Luke and others who were with him. When Paul worked, he was a skillful tent maker, and even though he went to a number of cities and addressed his epistles to cities, he also served in little villages in the countryside.

Many enter the ministry as a salaried profession. For some, the profession is very lucrative and enjoyable, and they do not have to enter the business world. Peter is cautioning against entering a paid ministry as a career. In fact, if elections are held every year, how does one know he will be an elder the next year? But in the world, a minister is always a minister, and the title is retained. Peter is saying that the purpose of the ministry is to serve God and to oversee the flock as a shepherd. The sheep do the eating, but the shepherd steers the sheep to the feeding ground and warns and protects them in time of danger. However, each individual sheep is responsible for the food he partakes of, and thus we are told to work out our own salvation with fear and trembling (Phil. 2:12). Nevertheless, there are prophets, evangelists, teachers, exhorters, etc., in the Lord's ministry. In other words, the ministry or eldership is to be entered willingly and enthusiastically, being deemed a privilege. One should not be forced

or embarrassed into accepting eldership.

Comment: When Jesus asked Peter, “Lovest thou me?” three times, he told Peter to feed the lambs and the sheep. Peter did so in leaving this message for the flock and for the elders (John 21:15–17).

Reply: Yes, and the sheep are the more mature Christians.

1 Pet. 5:3 Neither as being lords over God’s heritage, but being ensamples to the flock.

The Nicolaitan spirit is the spirit of lordship. There is a vast difference between an “overseer” and an “overruler,” the latter being the Nicolaitan spirit. An “overseer” is suggestive leadership, whereas an “overruler” is dictatorial leadership. Thus “overseer” is the proper thought.

Elders should be “ensamples [examples] to the flock.”

Comment: Mark 10:42–44 reads, “But Jesus called them to him, and saith unto them, Ye know that they which are accounted to rule over the Gentiles exercise lordship over them; and their great ones exercise authority upon them. But so shall it not be among you: but whosoever will be great among you, shall be your minister: And whosoever of you will be the chiefest, shall be servant of all.”

Reply: Yes, Jesus was emphasizing humility of service and even a relative menial capacity, if necessary, rather than a dictatorial, or Nicolaitan, type of service. A shepherd who is willing to lay down his life for the sheep is a true shepherd. In the Old Testament, when there was a loss of sheep—even by a wild animal—the shepherd had to prove he tried his best to save the sheep by taking back to his master a piece of that sheep.

Comment: Ezekiel 34:1,2 states the principle. “And the word of the LORD came unto me, saying, Son of man, prophesy against the shepherds of Israel, prophesy, and say unto them, ... Woe be to the shepherds of Israel that do feed *themselves!* should not the shepherds feed the *flocks?*”

1 Pet. 5:4 And when the chief Shepherd shall appear, ye shall receive a crown of glory that fadeth not away.

Now the King James introduces the word “Shepherd,” which is the proper thought. Elders are to feed the flock as a shepherd. Elders are supposed to be shepherds, and Jesus is the “chief Shepherd.”

1 Pet. 5:5 Likewise, ye younger, submit yourselves unto the elder. Yea, all of you be subject one to another, and be clothed with humility: for God resisteth the proud, and giveth grace to the humble.

Peter emphasizes the need for humility between younger and older brethren. The connotation is different from that in verse 1, even though the same Greek word *presbuteros* is used for “elder” in both verses.

Generally speaking, an “elder” is an older person, and respect should be shown for older brethren, especially for those who have been a long time in the truth. When faithfulness accompanies longevity, we should regard such brethren as “veterans.” Because of years of experience in the narrow way, veterans can usually give some helpful advice. From the

standpoint of a certain aspect of experience, the same is true of married brethren versus single brethren.

We are to “be subject one to another,” but where principle is involved, that is an exception to the general rule. Sometimes the group thinking or voting is not the Lord’s decision on a serious matter, but generally speaking, one should be pliable and agreeable and go along with the majority *as long as no principle is sacrificed*. Since in most cases, principles are not sacrificed, we should agree with the democratic process, which is a good way to avoid dictatorship. We should vote according to conscience.

Q: Could we say that even though the vote of an ecclesia may not always be the express will of the Father, it is His permissive will in that He overrules the results nonetheless?

A: That would be true when only preferences are involved, not principles.

Q: Could one aspect of verse 5 be that we are accountable one to another? Therefore, our words and our actions have a direct effect on the others, and we are accountable if we cause the downfall of another.

A: Yes, that is a different slant but a good one because not only our own welfare may be in abeyance but the welfare of others. That is the principle of the Old Testament Scripture where the master requires evidence that the shepherd did his best to rescue an endangered sheep.

Comment: There is a poem that goes:

I’d rather see a sermon than hear one any day.
I’d rather one should walk with me than merely show the way.
The eye is a better pupil and more willing than the ear;
Fine counsel is confusing, but example always clear.

1 Pet. 5:6 **Humble yourselves therefore under the mighty hand of God, that he may exalt you in due time:**

It is interesting that in selecting the Very Elect, God has seen fit that suffering is a necessary expedient for their development. Consider Jesus. Even though he *always* obeyed the Father and, as the Logos, *delighted* to do His will, the Father saw that in order for Jesus to be qualified for office as the age-lasting Father, the mighty Counselor, etc., he had to be tried, or proven, by suffering. Many Christians do not realize the necessity for suffering, and they think that a Christian is one who behaves nicely and is simply a likable person. But being a Christian requires (1) self-denial (good living) and (2) cross bearing (suffering for Christ) in order to get the crown. The “mighty hand of God” is the cross that we are each to bear if we would be exalted in due time.

Comment: 1 Peter 3:17 supports the thought of suffering: “For it is better, if the will of God be so, that ye suffer for well doing, than for evil doing.”

1 Pet. 5:7 **Casting all your care upon him; for he careth for you.**

Comment: The New International Version and the New American Standard use the word “anxiety” instead of “care,” which is a reminder of Matthew 6:34, “Be therefore not anxious for tomorrow, for tomorrow will be anxious for the things of itself. Sufficient unto the day is its own evil.”

Comment: Psalm 55:22 reads, “Cast thy burden upon the LORD, and he shall sustain thee: he

shall never suffer the righteous to be moved.”

Another related text is John 16:27, “The Father himself loveth you.” We know Jesus loves us, for he died on the Cross, but we should keep in mind that the Father actually cares for each of us as *individuals* and wants us to make our calling and election sure. The more we realize His care and *heed* His instruction, the greater will be the reward.

1 Pet. 5:8 Be sober, be vigilant; because your adversary the devil, as a roaring lion, walketh about, seeking whom he may devour:

Being sober is the opposite of levity. Very often if we speak in haste, we speak according to our human emotions and say the wrong thing. In other words, be careful, be sober, be vigilant, for the Adversary walks about as a roaring lion, seeking whom he may devour. Lions, leopards, jaguars, etc., usually approach a herd because their chances of success are greater with a group than with an individual animal. They crouch and hide in covert places, often looking for the young and inexperienced animal, for mature animals have learned that inattention and carelessness expose them to great dangers from the enemy.

Comment: Elders must be vigilant in watching over the flock, for the Adversary is “seeking [those] whom he may devour.”

Reply: The slant of these verses is given in verse 1, where Peter says that he is exhorting the elders “which are among you.”

Comment: Lions also target weak, sick, and/or elderly animals—any who have lost their strength. Not only do elders have a responsibility to watch over the flock, but it is our personal responsibility to always be strong in the Lord.

Reply: Those who are older and too confident can be in just as much danger as the young.

Comment: “We wrestle not against flesh and blood [merely], but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this world, against *spiritual wickedness in high places*” (Eph. 6:12).

Comment: This is the third time Peter has cautioned us to “be sober.” “Wherefore gird up the loins of your mind, *be sober*, and hope to the end for the grace that is to be brought unto you at the revelation of Jesus Christ” (1 Pet. 1:13). “But the end of all things is at hand: *be ye therefore sober*, and watch unto prayer” (1 Pet. 4:7).

Of verse 8, the *Berean Manual* says, The Adversary “backs all the tricks and lies and obsessions of Spiritualism.” Evidently, when the Pastor wrote this particular *Reprint* article (2188:5), spiritualism was rampant. It is also rampant today but in a great variety of forms not recognized or called Spiritualism.

Another comment in the *Berean Manual* is that the very existence of the devil is denied by many. At the present time, cynicism is so pervasive that people generally do not even bother to express whether or not there is a devil. The attitude is, Who cares? We are living in a strange era.

The next comment is in regard to Satan’s walking about “as a roaring lion.” Possibly the comment is not taken accurately from *Reprints* 2770:1 and 5183:6, but it is puzzling. “Although Satan is vigilant like a roaring lion, he never attacks us with a roar, but subtly.” The statement is not correct, for the Adversary uses many tactics including a “roar.” To attack subtly is to use

the tactics of a snake or a serpent (for example, the snake in the Garden of Eden). The snake is a symbol not only of proper wisdom, as Jesus said in Matthew 10:16, but also of perverse wisdom when used for evil purposes. A lion is a rather heavy animal that is not known for its speed and endurance like the cheetah. Being able to run only a 100-yard dash before it gets exhausted, the lion has a problem. Therefore, the lion depends on its roar to paralyze its prey. The sudden and unexpected roar momentarily paralyzes the prey with fear and surprise so that the lion can attack. The *Reprint* articles may be saying, "We live in a different time of persecution of the Church." In the Dark Ages, the roaring-lion tactic was used frequently, as when Christians were suddenly apprehended in the middle of the night. In sudden fear, one might deny he is a Christian. Such a temporary recanting can be very damaging to the spiritual welfare of the Christian. The surprise and the suddenness disarm one's defense unless a character was built up previously to always be subconsciously on the alert.

Comment: The head of the lion appears so large with its mane and roaring mouth that it accentuates fear in the victim.

Another tactic of the Adversary is false reasoning. With subtlety, the serpent interjects false doctrine or heresy to lead some astray. He also tempts people according to the weaknesses of their flesh. From their superior vantage point, even ordinary angels, let alone Satan, can see our weaknesses. Thus Satan is not limited to one or two tactics but has a whole quiver full of arrows for what he feels is the most successful tool to use on a particular occasion.

Comment: The word "devour" in the *Diaglott* is "gulp down," implying a sudden devouring, not a piecemeal consumption.

1 Pet. 5:9 Whom resist stedfast in the faith, knowing that the same afflictions are accomplished in your brethren that are in the world.

"Your brethren that are in the world" would be the consecrated throughout the world, that is, true believers in other places. Why is this thought included? One reason is to inform the brethren that others are having the same trials and afflictions. At the time of the Coliseum, Christians were put in the arena with wild animals. A picture in the *Photodrama of Creation* shows a group of unarmed, defenseless Christians down on their knees huddled together in a prayer circle with a just-released lion in the distance. The prayer circle tells us these Christians were aware of what was going to happen to them. Another picture of the arena in the Metropolitan Museum of Art several years ago was very meaningful. Spectators could be seen up in the stands, and some were so sadistic that they were leaning down over the edge into the arena itself. A lion was ready to devour a Christian gladiator. In great fear of the fearsome teeth, the gladiator had run with such speed that he was part way up the wall. A sympathetic young woman could be seen holding a rose down to the gladiator to try to distract him from the catastrophe about to take place. The picture was very touching.

Today we do not see that type of persecution here in the United States with its climate of freedom, liberty, and tolerance. Generally speaking, in this Laodicean period, our persecutions have been along more subtle lines rather than along the lines of sudden fear and surprise. Brethren are more apt to be tempted out of the truth through flesh attractions or through false doctrine than by the threat of death for not recanting. However, the persecutions will be very severe at the end of the age.

"Knowing that the same afflictions are accomplished in your brethren." The brethren who prayed in the circle in that picture were strengthened and comforted by knowing others would share a similar fate. When we are alone in a trial, we may start to doubt and question, "Has God forsaken me?"

1 Pet. 5:10 But the God of all grace, who hath called us unto his eternal glory by Christ Jesus, after that ye have suffered a while, make you perfect, stablish, strengthen, settle you.

May “God ... after that ye have suffered a while, make you perfect, stablish, strengthen, settle you.” In Egyptian hieroglyphs, the symbol for strength and solidness looks like a tower with rings around it at different levels. The rings show that there are different perspectives of solidity, or steadfastness. And thus there are different ways of expressing being firm and steadfast in the truth. Peter uses four words to describe that after we have suffered awhile, we become crystallized in the truth: we are made “perfect, stablish[ed], strengthen[ed], settle[d].” The principle of being crystallized in the truth is illustrated with Abraham when God said, “Shall I hide from Abraham that thing which I do, seeing that he will be faithful?” (Gen. 18:17,18 paraphrase).

In several places in his epistle, Peter warns of a particular type of persecution that is coming. In view of this persecution, he encourages the brethren and tries to help them see the importance of developing their characters to withstand the pressures of that time. Some Bibles say that the topic uppermost in Peter’s mind in his first epistle is *suffering*, as shown by his frequent use of the word “suffer.” In other words, *suffering* seems to be the theme of the first epistle.

Comment: A note in the Scofield Bible says, “The distinctive note ... is preparation for victory over *suffering*.” The word “suffer” is the key word of the first epistle.

Reply: According to tradition, when Peter was sentenced to die by crucifixion, he asked to be crucified upside down because he did not want to have the honor of dying exactly like the Master. He would rather let Jesus be at the head of the list, which is a good attitude to have.

Comment: Scofield also has a comment on “make you perfect, stablish, strengthen, settle you.” Under the word “perfect,” he says, “The word implies full development, growth, and the maturity of godliness, not sinless perfection.”

Seeing the Crucifixion and Jesus’ suffering was such a trauma to Peter that he just could not get it out of his system. Likewise, the Apostle John was so absorbed with the night of the Memorial in the Upper Room and Jesus’ teachings that he devoted many chapters to the last 36 hours of the Master’s life.

Comment: Underlying Peter’s appreciation of Jesus’ suffering on the Cross was the memory that he had denied the Master with cursing. What a burden to carry! How careful we must be not to do the same!

1 Pet. 5:11 To him be glory and dominion for ever and ever. Amen.

“To him [God] be glory and dominion for ever and ever.”

1 Pet. 5:12 By Silvanus, a faithful brother unto you, as I suppose, I have written briefly, exhorting, and testifying that this is the true grace of God wherein ye stand.

Silvanus was probably Silas. We know that Barnabas accompanied Paul on the first missionary journey, and so did Mark for a while. Later Silas replaced Barnabas. Sometimes Luke, sometimes Titus, and sometimes Timothy went with Paul on his journeys.

1 Pet. 5:13 The church that is at Babylon, elected together with you, saluteth you; and so doth Marcus my son.

The King James is accurate, for here “Babylon” refers to an ecclesia. In one sense, the ecclesia is the female and Jesus is the male.

In addition to the Babylon in Syria that was a precinct of the old Babylon, another Babylon developed outside of Cairo, Egypt. The Babylon in Egypt is tiny, and it predates Cairo, which is a relatively new city. The old Babylon is located in what is modern-day Iraq, and Iraq was once a part of Persia. Persia was split up into Iraq and Iran, but at one time it was part of Assyria.

In regard to the Babylon near Cairo, it is possible that Mark went there. Tradition tells us where the different apostles went, and Mark is known as the apostle who ended his life and ministry in Egypt. Therefore, he could have been in Babylon, Egypt, earlier. At any rate, the “Babylon” of verse 13 has to be either the Babylon in Syria or the one in Egypt.

Not only are some of the Great Company still in mystic Babylon, but some of the Very Elect are there too. The Great Company will be *forced* out when Babylon collapses, but some feet members will *voluntarily* come out at the very end when they see the corruption of the nominal system.

“Marcus” is the same Mark who wrote the Gospel. Peter called him “my son,” just as Paul called Timothy his son. Although Mark wrote the Gospel bearing his name, it is really Peter’s Gospel. Mark merely recorded what Peter told him. Later, on his first missionary tour, Paul criticized Mark for leaving and returning home. When Barnabas subsequently stood up for his nephew Mark, Paul did not take Barnabas with him on the second missionary journey. Paul was so upset with the attitude of Barnabas that he took Silas instead. However, just before his death, Paul endorsed Mark, showing his reinstatement to favor. Mark was with him at the time. What probably happened is that Peter had been executed, leaving Mark alone. This seems to be an evidence that Peter died shortly before Paul. There is good probability that Mark made his calling and election sure, for he is a rare instance of one who goes out of the way for a while and then comes back with a bang. The fact that Mark went back to Paul seems to indicate repentance. Apparently, Mark felt that Paul was right and did not hold a grudge. Having the support of Barnabas, Mark could have felt justified in his course and concluded that Paul overstepped his bounds. Many brethren feel that Paul overextended himself in his treatment of Mark when the division took place and sharp words were uttered. However, Paul did the right thing, for he woke Mark up to the principle of the situation.

1 Pet. 5:14 Greet ye one another with a kiss of charity. Peace be with you all that are in Christ Jesus. Amen.

The “kiss of charity” is the European cheek-to-cheek kiss, which is brother to brother and sister to sister. Sometimes where there is quite an age difference, it is not out of order for a brother to kiss a sister and vice versa. The danger is that bodily contact as a habit, or practice, can lead to other things. It is playing with fire, and if just one of the two gets inflamed, a problem can result. What Peter meant by saying, “Greet ye one another with a kiss of charity,” is that to show cordiality and warmth toward an individual, we do not kiss with the lips as a general rule but cheek to cheek. This kiss of love is a kiss of purity based on mutual love and respect for God, His Word, and His Son. The fact that we do not find such fellowship in the world accentuates our happiness, joy, and pleasure with the brethren. Such bonds of fellowship are needed, for Hebrews 10:25 tells us not to forsake “the assembling of ourselves together, ... and so much the more, as ye see the day approaching.” How does a fire keep going? The warm coals preserve the longevity of the fire. Thus fellowship is very meaningful, even though we each individually have to stand on our own and work out our own salvation. Others may be helpful in the development of our salvation, but the bottom line is that each of us will be tested

to see whether we get everlasting life on the highest plane or as Great Company.

“Peace be with you all that are in Christ Jesus.” The entire epistle, from beginning to end, is addressed to the consecrated, to those who believe *into* Christ Jesus. It is not enough to just believe *in* Jesus, for even the devils believe and tremble (James 2:19).

SECOND EPISTLE OF PETER

(Study led by Bro. Frank Shallieu in 1996)

2 Pet. 1:1 Simon Peter, a servant and an apostle of Jesus Christ, to them that have obtained like precious faith with us through the righteousness of God and our Saviour Jesus Christ:

Of all the New Testament books, the second epistle of Peter was probably the most controversial among the early Church. Some thought the epistle was a fraud, and many thought it was written either by an individual named Simeon or by an unknown person. Today it is hard to understand the objections to this book being part of the canon of Scripture. The very fact the epistle has come down to us as part of the sacred canon indicates that God's providence preserved and properly included it. In the Old Testament, the most disputed book is the Song of Solomon.

Some have tried to make a false Gospel that originated in Egypt part of the sacred canon, namely, the Gospel According to Thomas. This writing dates back to the dawning centuries of the Gospel Age. In this case, internal evidences prove it is fraudulent. The same is true of the Apocryphal books, which include the history of the Maccabees. Particularly on the subjects of death and future life, these books lack the rhythm, sound, and feeling that are part of the other books of the Bible.

"Simon Peter, a servant and an apostle of Jesus Christ." Right away we see that the first epistle began the same way, except it omitted the thought of "servant." One reason we feel the Gospel of Mark is the Gospel of Peter is that it digs into Peter's denial of Christ with greater strength, as though Peter wanted to set the record straight and not gloss over his transgression. In other words, all the books in the New Testament have apostolic authority, for how could the foundation of the Church be based on the 12 apostles unless it was based on *their* teachings?

"To them that have obtained like precious faith with us through the righteousness of God and our Saviour Jesus Christ." The first epistle was addressed to converted Jews, and so was this second epistle. However, since the general call to the Jews ceased in AD 36 and only individual Jews have come into the Church subsequently, the advice given in 1 and 2 Peter is equally appropriate, important, and fruitful to us as Gentile Christians. Peter's two epistles were written close together, probably just one or two years apart at the most.

Chapter 3 of this same epistle starts with, "This second epistle, beloved, I now write unto you." Unto whom? Unto the Jewish Christians of the first epistle. Therefore, in the clause "To them that have obtained like precious faith with us," the word "us" also refers to the converted Jews of the first epistle. If this epistle is interpreted as being particularly slanted to the Gentiles in a broad sense, then certain nuances of instruction, or argument, in the epistle have a completely different meaning. If we think of the epistle as being addressed primarily to Jewish Christians, then later on we will see that the differences are between Jews who were steadfast for the Law and those who saw the grace of the gospel of Jesus Christ, which Peter emphasizes. Peter assures the converted Jews that they are now under another arrangement, which is not like the strict bondage of the Law. The new arrangement, the gospel of Jesus Christ, is a gospel of favor and mercy. Therefore, Peter is telling *Jewish* Christians that they are not to be under the bondage of the Law.

Incidentally, when Paul addresses the Galatians and asks, "O foolish Galatians, who hath bewitched you, that ye should not obey the truth, before whose eyes Jesus Christ hath been evidently set forth, crucified among you?" he is talking to *Gentile* Christians (Gal. 3:1). In Galatia, Jewish Christians were trying to get Gentile Christians to believe in and obey *both*

Christ and the Law, especially the ceremonial aspects like circumcision. Paul is saying to Gentile Christians, “Do not be influenced by these Jews, even if they heard Jesus personally.” (Remember, Jesus addressed thousands of people, and not just fellow disciples.)

Thus, on the one hand, Paul is primarily addressing *Gentile* Christians in his epistle to the Galatians and saying, “Do not gather from my instruction to you that you should heed the instruction of these Jews who come into your meeting.” On the other hand, Peter is addressing *Jewish* Christians. Also, Peter was the apostle to the circumcision. Paul says in Galatians 2:8, “For he that wrought effectually in Peter to the *apostleship of the circumcision*, the same was mighty in me toward the *Gentiles*.” In other words, Peter did not encroach on Paul’s bounds, and Paul expressly states that he did not want to trespass on what the other apostles were doing, so he purposely went to virgin territory to establish ecclesias.

Comment: 2 Peter 3:2 is another internal evidence that this epistle was written to Jewish Christians: “That ye 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 Saviour.” The Jews were familiar with the words of the “holy prophets.”

“Through the righteousness of God and our Saviour Jesus Christ.” A footnote in the Revised Standard has “of our God and *the* Savior Jesus Christ,” which shows God and Jesus are two separate beings.

2 Pet. 1:2 Grace and peace be multiplied unto you through the knowledge of God, and of Jesus our Lord,

Here God and Jesus are separated even more clearly: (1) “of God,” and (2) “of Jesus our Lord.” And knowledge is stressed: “Grace and peace be multiplied ... through the *knowledge* of God, and of Jesus.”

2 Pet. 1:3 According as his divine power hath given unto us all things that pertain unto life and godliness, through the knowledge of him that hath called us to glory and virtue:

“According as his divine power hath given unto us all things that pertain unto life and godliness.” *God’s* power has “given unto us all things.” In regard to the phrase “According as his divine power,” the principle is, “If God be for us, who can be against us?” (Rom. 8:31). We must not fear what man may do.

“Through the knowledge of him [God] that hath called us to glory and virtue.” The Father does the calling. He calls us to (1) glory and (2) virtue. This thought is coupled with “divine power.” Peter is speaking of those whom God is calling. While Jesus invites those who are weak, weary, and heavily laden with sin to come unto him so that he can comfort them, that is only one aspect. By mentioning divine power, Peter is saying that God wants Christians to change from their former condition—from their condition prior to conversion—by developing *character*. And the development of character does not mean to be putty-like. There must be some hardness and stability. Thus “virtue” is different from faith. Virtue is a step higher than faith into Christ; it is a further development of being a little stronger. God’s purpose is to instill in us confidence in Him so that we become stronger.

2 Pet. 1:4 Whereby are given unto us exceeding great and precious promises: that by these ye might be partakers of the divine nature, having escaped the corruption that is in the world through lust.

“Exceeding great and precious promises” are given to us by divine power. God is trying to

strengthen us weaklings to be soldiers of Christ, warriors of faith. This attainment is a further step than just believing into Christ. Regardless of how intellectual we are, we started as babes needing the milk of the Word. But we should not stay on milk. We take the milk until we grow into spiritual adolescence, and from there, we grow into young manhood and finally into a full, mature adult. The calling is to this strengthened position. Therefore, God has furnished these exceeding great and precious promises, which can also be considered the food on the table of shewbread (Exod. 25:30). This food strengthens the inner man. Of course head knowledge is also needed: light, food, and encouragement (the grace and peace that come from knowing God is on our side).

The word “divine” appears in both verse 3 and verse 4, yet that word is used only one other time in the New Testament. “That by these [exceeding great and precious promises] ye might be[come] partakers of the divine nature.” Such a hope is so GREAT that it EXCEEDS “EXCEEDING GREAT”! As far as we know, the hope of partaking of the divine nature will never again be proffered. The East Gate of the Third Temple will be closed forever, and the Parable of the Wise and Foolish Virgins mentions the closing of the door to the high calling. However, what God will do in the everlasting future, billions of years ahead, we do not know.

“Having escaped the corruption that is in the world through lust.” To attain the divine promise, the reality, we must fulfill the conditions. In the present life, we must escape “the corruption that is in the world through lust.” However, anyone who makes his calling and election sure and is faithful unto death will truly escape the “corruption,” and the promises are given with that end in view. We long for the time when we can be free from our fallen, depraved human nature.

2 Pet. 1:5 And beside this, giving all diligence, add to your faith virtue; and to virtue knowledge;

“Add to your faith virtue.” The next step in Peter’s evaluation is virtue. Paul breaks down the various fruits leading up to love, but Peter is talking from the standpoint of making one’s calling and election sure. Peter’s listing gives a *sequential* development. The Apostle Peter, the fisherman, is now a mature Christian feeding the lambs as well as the sheep. Having been qualified with a wealth of experience, he knows that death is imminent. Likewise, Paul realized the end of his life was approaching when he said, “Henceforth there is laid up for me a crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous judge, shall give me at that day” (2 Tim. 4:8).

Again we are jumping ahead in the epistle, but doing so gives the book more meaning. We are not reading a textbook but a very valuable, sobering account by one who speaks from experience, as well as under the guidance of the Holy Spirit.

Comment: Instead of the King James wording “And beside this,” the New International Version has, “For this very reason.” The NIV makes clearer the tie-in with the “exceeding great and precious promises” of the preceding verse. In other words, “Because of the great and precious promises—for this very reason—you need to add to your faith virtue, etc.”

“Giving all diligence” is an important phrase, and it applies to *all* of the steps. “Give all diligence to add to your faith virtue. Give all diligence to add to your virtue knowledge. Give all diligence to add to your knowledge temperance, etc.” The great majority of Christians are immature seed. In the parable, seed that falls in good ground and develops to maturity brings forth “some an hundredfold, some sixty, some thirty” (Matt. 13:23). In other words, full capacity is reached according to the content of the individual vessel. Some have a 30 percent vessel, some have a 60 percent vessel, and the ten-talented person has a 100 percent vessel—and hence more responsibility. All three categories picture the Little Flock, children of the

Kingdom in the real sense of the word.

“Virtue” means fortitude, strength of character.

Q: Doesn't “virtue” also convey a morality aspect?

A: Yes, the breastplate of righteousness is part of virtue. From the simple rudiments of faith and the milk of the Word, one now starts to get food that is a little stronger, and the body grows proportionately stronger as well. The child grows, spiritually speaking, with moral development and strength of character based on an outgrowth of faith. Following initial faith, virtue is the first development of one who believes into Christ and starts to grow.

Many, thinking that knowledge follows faith, try to bypass virtue and want to teach and write books when they are still babes. In the enthusiasm of their early days, they tend to be overconfident. However, those who talk that way are not mature Christians, and they betray themselves by their immaturity of conduct, reasoning, and assumed familiarity with Scripture. Thus the flesh tends to jump over virtue and go straight to knowledge. However, Peter shows our need to go step by step.

Faith is the substratum of an entire Christian's life. The just shall *live* by faith (Rom. 1:17). Faith in Jesus is the bottom line—faith that he is the Redeemer. We are to *add to that faith*, in successive order, the seven steps that Peter enumerates.

“Add ... to virtue knowledge.” “Knowledge” is a broad term, for there are all kinds of knowledge.

2 Pet. 1:6 And to knowledge temperance; and to temperance patience; and to patience godliness;

Peter continues to enumerate the various steps in the progression to maturity. At the Last Supper, Jesus remarked to Peter, “I have prayed for thee, that thy faith fail not: and when thou art converted, strengthen thy brethren” (Luke 22:32). After Jesus' resurrection, he gently rebuked Peter three times for the three denials. The first time he said to Peter, “Feed my lambs.” The second time the Master said, “Feed my sheep.” And the third time was, “Feed my sheep,” after which Peter said, “Thou *knowest* that I *love* thee” (John 21:15–17). Notice the progression: (1) “feed my *lambs*,” (2) “feed my *sheep*,” and (3) “feed my *sheep*.” In other words, Peter was not in the position to feed mature adults at the time of our Lord's ascension or even after Pentecost. At Pentecost, Peter possessed the first two qualities: faith and virtue. Peter had faith: “Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God” (Matt. 16:16). Also, he and John spoke very boldly on the Day of Pentecost, showing “virtue” (strength, courage, and fortitude).

When we study Peter's epistles, we see a very different Peter from the impulsive one in the Gospels. Peter tells us to add to, or supplement, our faith with virtue, knowledge, temperance, patience, godliness, brotherly kindness, and charity. In other words, Peter adds seven different qualities to the basic substratum of faith.

Let us consider “knowledge.” Remember, Peter is speaking about *character development*. Regardless of the subsequent lack or fullness of development, we all start our Christian walk as babes with faith in Jesus. In his first epistle, Peter said that “as newborn babes, [we should] desire the sincere milk of the word, ... [so that we] may grow thereby” (1 Pet. 2:2). As the babe feeds on milk, his bones grow, and he gets a little stronger so that, spiritually speaking, he can withstand opposition and persecution. This would be adding virtue to our faith. To add knowledge, the babe needs milk for growth. “Milk” includes the knowledge of God's Word,

for how can we instruct others if we have not been instructed ourselves?

To knowledge, we are to add temperance, or self-control. The growth of Peter in the area of self-control is amazing! He underwent a remarkable change from his earlier impulsiveness. Jesus said to Peter, “Verily, verily, I say unto thee, When thou wast young, thou girdedst thyself, and walkedst whither thou wouldest: but when thou shalt be old, thou shalt stretch forth thy hands, and another shall gird thee, and carry thee whither thou wouldest not [to death in crucifixion]” (John 21:18). Jesus was referring to the manner in which Peter would die. When Jesus asked, “Who do men say that I am?” impulsive Peter responded, “Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God” (Matt. 16:13–16). Peter was a natural leader, but he needed to be instructed himself. The very fact Peter was naked in the boat after Jesus’ resurrection gives us an insight into his character. He did not want any restraints. He impulsively girt himself with his coat and jumped into the water to swim to Jesus, who was frying fish on the shore. This same man, but a mature and developed Peter at the end of his life, said, “Add to your knowledge *self-control and self-restraint*.” This self-restraint must come after knowledge. Both of Peter’s epistles were written in the last years of his life, just before his death. How valuable is the instruction of Peter in his maturity!

When Paul discusses the various graces of the Holy Spirit, he does not necessarily enumerate them in succession. For instance, in describing love, he does not follow any particular sequence, but Peter says, “Add to your faith virtue. Add to your virtue knowledge. Add to your knowledge temperance.” Thus Peter gives a sequence, and Paul does not. The point is that the instruction of the two apostles does not conflict. Paul gives more detail but lists the graces of the Holy Spirit in random fashion. (An exception would be Paul’s discussion of faith, hope, and love, which are in succession.)

Comment: It was Peter who lopped off the ear of Malchus in the Garden of Gethsemane at the arrest of Jesus. This act is another example of his impetuosity and impulsiveness.

Comment: In a practical sense, temperance could be along both material and spiritual lines. We need to have self-control over our lifestyle and how we expend our resources. Along spiritual lines, temperance would affect how we witness and preach the gospel. For example, as a general rule, we would not deliberately make a spectacle of ourselves.

Comment: A comment in the *Berean Manual* says, “Moderation, self-restraint in all things—we are not to be hasty and hot-tempered, or rash and thoughtless, but evenly balanced, thoughtful and considerate.” We get this moderation through the knowledge of God’s Word.

Reply: Yes, “he that ruleth his spirit [is better] than he that taketh a city” (Prov. 16:32). “Let your moderation be known unto all men” (Phil. 4:5). We should be temperate in language, in earning money, in saving money, in eating, in drinking, in joy, in sorrow, at work, in the store, at home, in church, and in the schoolroom—everywhere.

Comment: On the other side of the coin, there is a danger in becoming too temperate and thus not having enough zeal for the truth, the Lord, and His service.

Reply: If we have too much self-control, we will be mute when we should speak. The other extreme is being so out of hand and rambunctious that we destroy whatever good we might do. The proper amount of self-control makes us much more effective.

Add to temperance “patience.” What is this “patience”? The Greek word is *hupomone*, which means “endurance.” *Hupomone* conveys the thought of bearing under a burden, of enduring it and not chafing, of remaining under the burden and not giving up. The same word is used in

Hebrews 12:1, “Wherefore seeing we also are compassed about with so great a cloud of witnesses, let us lay aside every weight, and the sin which doth so easily beset us, and let us run *with patience* the race that is set before us.” Of course a lot depends on the makeup of the individual, for we are all different. Some brethren under trial may react without a lot of apparent cheerful endurance and yet be faithful. The circumstances must be considered. Those who run a marathon race are not very cheerful when they near the end of the race, for they are pressing on to the utmost. Those who win have an extremely strong desire to excel and be a champion.

Comment: James 5:11, in referring to Job, uses this same Greek word for “patience.” “Behold, we count them happy which endure. Ye have heard of the *patience* of Job, and have seen the end of the Lord; that the Lord is very pitiful, and of tender mercy.” We are all familiar with Job and the conditions under which he endured.

Comment: “Patience” is meekly submitting to discipline in every case.

Add to patience “godliness.” “Godliness” is the wrong word, for that quality should be the end, the highest step. Godliness and love are synonymous. The thought here should be love and reverence for God, God-likeness. Thus the word “piety” is a better translation, for piety is a form of reverence. Piety can also be considered decorum, as in 1 Timothy 3:15, “Behave thyself in the house of God.”

Comment: *Strong’s Concordance* and the *Diaglott* use the word “piety.”

Reply: The Greek word is *eusebeia*, and a famous historian was Eusebius, a name meaning piety, reverent one.

Comment: *Reprint* No. 2155 states that God-likeness, piety, is “that devout controlling reverence for God which yields a hearty, cheerful, loving conformity to his will—fervency of spirit in serving the Lord.”

Reply: Piety is especially fervency in spirit in *obeying* the Lord. He is looking for obedience in us—that is the bottom line. Works by themselves are meaningless. “To obey is better than sacrifice, and to hearken than the fat of rams [which is offered in sacrifice and may cost a little money]” (1 Sam. 15:22). Obedience supersedes works.

2 Pet. 1:7 And to godliness brotherly kindness; and to brotherly kindness charity.

Add to piety “brotherly kindness.” There are occasions where it is difficult to love all brethren completely and indiscriminately. In other words, there are cases where we cannot manifest love to others because of their disobedience. For instance, 1 Corinthians 5:11 says, “I have written unto you not to keep company, if any man that is called a brother be a fornicator, or covetous, or an idolater, or a railer, or a drunkard, or an extortioner; with such an one no not to eat.” The individual may not have even consecrated, but if he thinks he is a brother in truth and is a drunkard, a brawler, a fornicator, etc., we are to refrain from fellowship with him. Treating him in this manner is doing him a favor, for if he truly loves God, the truth, and the Lord’s people, he will feel he has done something wrong and will repent.

The Greek word for “brotherly kindness” is *philadelphia*. Some translations use “love of the brotherhood,” and that is a better term. We love those who fervently love God. We are drawn to such because they are of the brotherhood. Jesus particularly favored Peter, James, and John because they manifested a greater zeal for God. The incident in which Jesus raised the daughter of Jairus illustrates this favoritism (Mark 5:35–43). Another example is Jesus’ transfiguration

(Matt. 17:1–9). That is the type of love we should have for the brotherhood. We love those who love God, and the more they love Him, the more we love them. Moreover, we are helped by their example. In the hymn “Onward, Christian Soldiers,” when we sing the words “All one body we,” we are thinking not of individuals but of the brotherhood, of those who love Christ and are trying to serve God.

Add to brotherly kindness “charity [love].” If the previous step was love for the brotherhood, what is this highest type of love? It is *agape* love.

Comment: We love those who love God and have a special affinity for them because of our common bond, but our love must go beyond that point to where we love mankind.

Comment: This would be a *principled* love versus *phileo* love with an emotional basis.

Comment: We love the Lord, the brethren, humanity, our enemies, and also the brute creation.

Reply: That is true, for principled *agape* love is broad. The Law shows how we should treat the animals; for example, they should not be unequally yoked in plowing. *Agape* love includes love for our enemies and doing good to them that despitefully use us (Matt. 5:44). With this principled love, “God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son” (John 3:16). Those who obey in the future will be saved, for God has made provision for the restitution of mankind. In other words, He will open the opportunity for salvation to others besides the brotherhood. His love goes from the brotherhood to mankind and even to those who are enemies now but may not be once their eyes are opened in the Kingdom. Only those who are incorrigible in iniquity will go into Second Death.

Remember that before Peter started the enumeration of the seven graces of the Holy Spirit, he said, “And beside this, *giving all diligence*,” add to your faith, etc. (2 Pet. 1:5). Because we live in the world with its responsibilities and experiences, our time becomes important—the little time we have left after doing that which is right for family, employer, and others. We must give *all diligence* to add these seven qualities. Isn’t it remarkable that the impulsive Peter is like a statesman or a father in these epistles? True, he was a leader in the beginning of his Christian walk, but now he is more than that. In his first epistle, which was written only a couple of years before the second epistle, he called Marcus “my son” (1 Pet. 5:13). Paul used the same terminology with Timothy, and that epistle was written near the end of Paul’s life. As the apostles aged in the truth, they matured. Peter underwent a *radical, miraculous, almost unbelievable* change from his days as a fisherman. True, he speaks according to the Holy Spirit, but his own life is in harmony with that Holy Spirit. He experienced these steps himself, and he is passing on the information to us. Later he says, “I am going to remind you of these things until the day I die, and the Lord Jesus has informed me that my death will occur soon.”

Comment: The verses being alluded to are quite touching: “Yea, I think it meet, as long as I am in this tabernacle, to stir you up by putting you in remembrance; Knowing that shortly I must put off this my tabernacle, even as our Lord Jesus Christ hath shown me” (2 Pet. 1:13,14).

2 Pet. 1:8 For if these things be in you, and abound, they make you that ye shall neither be barren nor unfruitful in the knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ.

Comment: If “these things” (the seven steps above faith in verses 5–7) are in us and *abound*, we will make our calling and election sure. The fact that Peter uses the term “these things” five times in this chapter (verses 8–10, 12, and 15) shows how important they are.

Reply: Yes, Peter is inclined to repeat words and references. For instance, the use of the word

“divine” twice in this chapter is unusual, for that word appears only three times in the whole New Testament. The reason is that Peter recognized his own faults and weaknesses and how the Lord changed his life. He is admitting, as it were, that what God did for him, He can do for us. Accordingly, Peter mentions the importance of developing character and the various steps of grace that are required if we are to win a crown. *We must have diligently tried to add the seven graces to our faith.*

Comment: If the words “and abound” had been omitted, the meaning of the verse would have been a little different. All who get life on the spirit plane, including the Great Company, must have these qualities, but to attain the Little Flock, to get an “abundant entrance,” these qualities must *abound* in us and must increase more and more.

Reply: For example, when people do acts of kindness, are patient, etc., there is often a lack of consistency. With knowledge, some are satisfied with a certain level and stop there. These qualities must be *diligently practiced* if we would be more than overcomers.

Q: Is the “knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ” in verse 8 the same “knowledge” that is in verse 5?

A: The Greek *gnosis* is used in verses 5 and 6, and *epignosis* (full knowledge) is used in verses 2, 3, and 8. The words are the same except that *epignosis* is expressed more powerfully, that is, with more fullness. By faith, we know (*gnosis*) that Jesus is the Savior, that he died for our sins, and through this knowledge we are forgiven for our sins. In addition, we should know in more fullness (*epignosis*) his sermons and parables, his life and character, and how he lived to please the Father. The “knowledge” (*gnosis*) of verses 5 and 6 is the second step in the various graces of the Holy Spirit, but *epignosis* embraces all seven steps, which would include a comparison and study of Jesus’ statements and teachings. However, *epignosis* has nothing to do with the *depth* of our understanding, which is not always the same. If we have not searched the Scriptures daily, if we have not habitually familiarized ourselves with the Word of God, with the life of Jesus, with the Old Testament, etc., we will be lacking.

Comment: In the footnote for the text “If these things be in you, and abound ... ye shall neither be barren nor unfruitful,” “barren” means “idle.”

2 Pet. 1:9 But he that lacketh these things is blind, and cannot see afar off, and hath forgotten that he was purged from his old sins.

To be “blind” in this sense is to be nearsighted, meaning the individual “cannot see afar off.”

Q: What is the relationship between the first part of verse 9 and the second part? What does lacking the graces of the Holy Spirit have to do with forgetting that we were purged from our old sins?

A: The object of our being purged from old sins is to grow in character. We are nearsighted if we do not always keep this goal in mind. Peter is saying, “It is not enough to just believe Jesus is the Savior and to be willing to suffer for him. We must have more understanding in order to please God.” Since we are imperfect and fallen by nature—since our humanity is depraved—we must frequently occupy our minds with pure thoughts. Paul says, “*Think on these things.*” “Finally, brethren, whatsoever things are true, whatsoever things are honest, whatsoever things are just, whatsoever things are pure, whatsoever things are lovely, whatsoever things are of good report; if there be any virtue, and if there be any praise, think on these things” (Phil. 4:8). If we do not feed on pure thoughts, our minds will naturally gravitate to unspiritual things. Those who neglect or do not see the necessity of developing the fruits of the Holy

Spirit, are “blind,” nearsighted. Far-sighted vision would be making our calling and election sure. We are not at the goal yet, so we must keep running. We cannot let ourselves drift in our thinking or in our actions; we must school ourselves with God’s Word.

Comment: If we stagnate and do not grow in character, we stay in the sins from which we were supposed to be purged.

Reply: We must try to distance ourselves as far as possible from the old man. Of course we cannot do this completely, for he is saddled on our backs, but we must separate as far as possible from our own reasoning and our own will.

2 Pet. 1:10 Wherefore the rather, brethren, give diligence to make your calling and election sure: for if ye do these things, ye shall never fall:

The objective is to make our calling and election sure. If we take our eyes off the goal, we will gravitate to our *natural* tendencies instead of to the *supernatural* tendencies of the Holy Spirit.

“If ye do these things, ye shall never fall.” The thought is that if we develop these fruits of the Holy Spirit and they abound in us, *we will never fail* but will succeed in attaining the Bride class.

Comment: The Great Company will fall, or fail, to a certain extent.

2 Pet. 1:11 For so an entrance shall be ministered unto you abundantly into the everlasting kingdom of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ.

If we give all diligence to developing the fruits of the Holy Spirit, if we have the right heart attitude and diligently *practice* Christianity throughout our Christian walk, we will get an *abundant* entrance into the Kingdom, for we will be obeying the promptings of God’s Holy Spirit. We are given “exceeding great and precious promises” so that we might inherit the divine nature.

The “everlasting kingdom” would be the *age-lasting* Kingdom (Greek *aionian*). The 144,000 will be on the throne and reign throughout the Kingdom Age.

2 Pet. 1:12 Wherefore I will not be negligent to put you always in remembrance of these things, though ye know them, and be established in the present truth.

We were called to be conformed to Christ’s likeness. Our objective is to grow up into the stature of a full man in Christ Jesus—not a youth, a teenager, or a young man but a mature man. All Christians realize they are not to remain as babes, but the actual nitty-gritty of carrying out the development means that we must put our nose to the grindstone and constantly try to better ourselves as Christians in pleasing God.

The *Manna* for October 13 is along this line but has completely different words. “I will show thee my faith by my works” (James 2:18). “While the Lord’s people of the present age are not to be judged by their works but by their faith, nevertheless, works will be required. By our works we demonstrate our faith, and, thank God, imperfect works can demonstrate to Him the loyalty of our intentions, our wills.... If our works demonstrate to the Lord the sincerity of our faith, that faith will be acceptable to Him and we will be counted perfect and be granted a share in the Kingdom, and all the great and precious things which the Lord has in reservation for those who love Him—not merely in word but also in deed—for those who strive by the deeds of life to show forth, to demonstrate, their love.” The principle underlying this comment is the same as what Peter is saying.

Comment: We use the term “present truth” to apply to dispensational truth, but in the context of verse 12, the meaning is different. The Revised Standard Version says, “Therefore I intend always to remind you of these things, though you know them and are established in the truth that you have.” Peter is talking not about dispensational truth but about *basic truth*.

In verse 12, Peter is exhorting us to continue making progress as much as possible.

2 Pet. 1:13 Yea, I think it meet, as long as I am in this tabernacle, to stir you up by putting you in remembrance;

2 Pet. 1:14 Knowing that shortly I must put off this my tabernacle, even as our Lord Jesus Christ hath shown me.

“As long as I am in this tabernacle.” Peter calls his body a “tabernacle” because it is *temporary*. In other words, he realizes, especially at this time, that he will soon die, as the Lord has shown him. “Knowing that shortly I must put off this my tabernacle.”

2 Pet. 1:15 Moreover I will endeavour that ye may be able after my decease to have these things always in remembrance.

Again Peter mentions the necessity of remembering “these things.” Because our minds are like sieves, we need this repetition.

When the Apostle Peter died, the brethren felt a great loss. He influenced many, as indicated by Paul’s comment in 1 Corinthians 1:12, “Now this I say, that every one of you saith, I am of Paul; and I of Apollos; and I of *Cephas*; and I of Christ.” This was a sectarian spirit, for the consecrated are all *of God* through Jesus, and man worship is wrong. Those who followed Peter were no doubt blessed by his example and counsel and also as they saw this natural leader grow in the graces of the Holy Spirit.

2 Pet. 1:16 For we have not followed cunningly devised fables, when we made known unto you the power and coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, but were eyewitnesses of his majesty.

Verse 16 is a powerful testimony, and Peter is really unburdening his heart in trying to transmit to others the conviction that he had. This principle reminds us of the Gospel according to Luke (who wrote for the Apostle Paul) and the beginning of the Book of Acts. “Forasmuch as many have taken in hand to set forth in order a declaration of those things which are most surely believed among us, Even as they delivered them unto us, which from the beginning were *eyewitnesses*, and ministers of the word” (Luke 1:1,2). “To whom [the apostles] also *he showed himself alive* after his passion by many infallible proofs, *being seen* of them forty days, and speaking of the things pertaining to the kingdom of God” (Acts 1:3). These are all eyewitness testimonies, which boil down to the honesty of the person making the statements. If a person has manifested sincerity by a life of constancy, his words of eyewitness testimony about seeing and hearing Jesus are an encouragement to others. We would like to glean information from such a person.

Comment: The Apostle John did the same thing in the beginning of his first epistle. “That which was from the beginning, which *we have heard*, which *we have seen* with our eyes, which *we have looked upon*, and our hands have handled, of the Word of life; (For the life was manifested, and *we have seen it*, and *bear witness*, and show unto you that eternal life, which was with the Father, and was manifested unto us;) That which *we have seen and heard* declare we unto you, that ye also may have fellowship with us: and truly our fellowship is with the Father, and with

his Son Jesus Christ” (1 John 1:1–3).

Reply: This type of testimony was especially meaningful to the second generation at the beginning of the Gospel Age, for Peter was at the end of his earthly ministry and about to pass off the scene. And the Apostle John’s Gospel and epistles were written in his later years. Their words gave an impetus or spark of enthusiasm to the hearers back there just as they do with us today if we put ourselves in their place. How much this message meant! Peter and John are saying, “This message is not a fabrication; it is real. We did not imagine these things.”

“We [the apostles Peter, James, and John] made known unto you the power and coming [Greek *parousia*, or presence] of our Lord Jesus Christ.” On the Mount of Transfiguration, Jesus’ garments glistened, being whiter than garments washed with fuller’s soap, and his face shone. Peter is saying, “When we were up in the mount with Jesus, we had a glimpse in vision of his *future glory*, the glory that he is inheriting. We saw him not just as the man Christ Jesus but as he will be in the Kingdom. Seeing his glory gives us hope that we will experience the same transformation if we are faithful.”

Even though Jesus was with Elijah and Moses in the vision, he was the centerpiece. It was Jesus who was transformed with such brilliant whiteness. That scene left a lasting impression, even more so than his ascension after his resurrection. And the three apostles heard the Father’s *awesome* voice from heaven: “This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased” (2 Pet. 1:17). While it is impossible for man to see God and live, it is possible for a human being to hear God. Accordingly, we put great emphasis on Moses’ and the Israelites’ experience in hearing God speak in a *thundering* fashion in connection with the inauguration of the Law Covenant at Mount Sinai. The people were terrified.

Comment: It was not the Logos speaking for the Father but the Father Himself at the Mount of Transfiguration. Peter, James, and John heard His voice. The Father also spoke direct at the time of Jesus’ baptism, but of those with Jesus, only John the Baptist heard the voice.

Reply: It is interesting that a human being can hear only a certain range of decibels of sound vibration.

Comment: The sounds that whales emit go out for hundreds of miles and at such high decibels that people cannot hear them. Actually the sounds are so loud that humans would die if they could hear them.

2 Pet. 1:17 For he received from God the Father honour and glory, when there came such a voice to him from the excellent glory, This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased.

What about the “excellent glory”? Peter does not give details, but if Jesus’ garments were extraordinarily white and there was exceeding glory from heaven when the Father audibly commended His Son, the heavens probably opened. Whatever it was, the “excellent glory” must have been awesome.

2 Pet. 1:18 And this voice which came from heaven we heard, when we were with him in the holy mount.

“We heard [the Father’s voice] ... in the holy mount [Tabor],” says Peter. Some think the “holy mount” was Mount Hermon, but it would seem to be Mount Tabor. It is true that Jesus was up in the region of Caesarea, which is near Mount Hermon, but not at that time. Luke 9:28 says the experience came “after eight days,” and Matthew 17:1 says “after six days.” The Gospel of Luke clarifies the situation because Mark simply copied Matthew. Daniel 11:45 also helps to

identify the holy mountain: “And he [Napoleon] shall plant the tabernacles of his palace between the seas in the glorious holy mountain [Mount Tabor]; yet he shall come to his end, and none shall help him.” In 1799, Napoleon invaded Egypt. Afterwards he crossed the Red Sea and went into the Promised Land to Acre. There he received the news that conditions back in France were deteriorating. While in the Promised Land, he was stationed on Mount Tabor and lost a battle there. The defeat was like a premonition, or ominous portent, of things to come. Another proof the “holy mountain” is Mount Tabor is that it is “between the [two] seas.” Situated near Nazareth, Tabor is between the Mediterranean Sea and the Sea of Galilee. Mount Hermon is not between two seas; however, Mount Sinai is.

Sometimes an entire testimony meeting is devoted to the question “What is your Ebenezer?” The intent is to have the brethren tell of a personal token, or sign, that helped to confirm God was calling them. And so the “glorious mountain” became a centerpiece in history.

2 Pet. 1:19 We have also a more sure word of prophecy; whereunto ye do well that ye take heed, as unto a light that shineth in a dark place, until the day dawn, and the day star arise in your hearts:

This comment was made after Peter testified that he had both *seen* Jesus transformed into an extraordinary white countenance and garment and *heard* a voice from heaven declaring him to be God’s beloved Son.

Comment: Verse 19 shows that the Word of God is more important than any vision or audible voice.

Reply: Yes, because many claim to have had visions of God and Jesus and to have spoken with them.

Comment: Galatians 1:8 says, “But though we, or an angel from heaven, preach any other gospel unto you than that which we have preached unto you, let him be accursed.” The Word of God is our strongest proof.

Comment: The emphasis on prophecy is interesting. Peter did not just say, “We have a more sure word of God,” but “We have also a more sure word of *prophecy*.”

Comment: Along practical lines, even eyewitnesses are often unreliable. Ten different eyewitnesses may give ten different versions. Therefore, what we see is not as “sure” as God’s prophecies.

Reply: Yes, the Bible is more sure than the testimony of others. However, the *Apostle* Peter is speaking here; it is not the testimony of a brother or a sister.

What Peter saw and heard on the Mount of Transfiguration was a prophecy of the Kingdom. He witnessed the presence of the promised Messiah, who was glorified in a miraculous fashion. Therefore, the vision itself was a prophecy of Christ in the future Kingdom. Although Peter and the other apostles had seen the risen Jesus during the 40 days following his resurrection, they had not seen him in this manner. “We made known unto you the power and coming [presence] of our Lord Jesus Christ, ... [and] were eyewitnesses of his majesty” (2 Pet. 1:16). While Peter realized he had seen a vision, the vision was prophetic. Therefore, when Peter says that we have “a more sure word of prophecy,” he is saying that the Bible is “more sure,” reliable, and primary in importance than any vision. Peter was an eyewitness of a vision that predicted Jesus’ future majesty and glory.

Although the conversation in the vision was about Jesus' death, the apostles were so overpowered by the whiteness of his raiment and his face shining as the sun that the conversation was eclipsed. Even though here, at the Mount of Transfiguration, Jesus started to tell the apostles of his coming decease, the words did not penetrate. The splendor of the vision overpowered the conversation about Jesus' death. Here Peter is emphasizing the glory aspect of Jesus, not the suffering or death aspect.

“Take heed, as unto a light that shineth in a dark place, until the day dawn, and the day star arise in your hearts.” The “day star,” or sun, is Jesus, as shown in Revelation 22:16.

Comment: The word “until” seems to be the clue that unlocks this verse. The word “until” means that once that day does dawn and the day star does arise in our hearts, Lord willing, we will no longer need the “sure word of prophecy.” The day has not yet dawned and the day star has not yet arisen in our hearts. The general thought—that this “day” is the Millennial Day, which began in 1874—is erroneous. In this verse, Peter is talking about a time yet future (but in the *near* future for us).

Reply: Yes, to think that the “day star” has already risen in our hearts or that the “day” has dawned is a wrong thought. There are two ways to view the Millennial dawn. Technically, the new day starts at midnight, but the manifestation of dawn and light *precede* the actual sunrise. As the time nears for the sun to rise above the horizon, some light is seen, but that is not the dawning. Dawn is when the sun comes over the horizon and everyone sees it. In verse 19, as has been stated, the word “until” is very important and it is still future.

Q: It is understandable that the day has not yet dawned, but why would we say that the “day star” has not yet arisen in our hearts?

Comment: One reason is dispensational. If we say *in the present life* that the day star has arisen in our hearts, then we would have to say that Jesus, the day star, arose in the hearts of *all* the sincerely consecrated *all down the age* in their Christian walk here on earth. Peter is talking about a *finished* picture, about those of the consecrated who make their calling and election sure. We take heed unto the “word of prophecy” *until* the day that our *earthly career ends*, hoping that we will be with the Lord.

Reply: The two points are related, and the day star arising for the Church is conditional upon the day dawning. In Scripture, there are two dawns: the dawning that pertains to the Church and the dawning for the world of mankind. The Leeser translation makes clear the dawning in regard to the Lord's children. “God is in the midst of her; she shall not be moved: God shall help her, and that right early” (Psa. 46:5 KJV). “God shall help her [the Church], at the dawning of *her morning*” (Psa. 46:5 Leeser). The New American Standard has “when her morning dawns.” Since 1878, when the sleeping saints received their change, any of the Little Flock who die are caught up to meet the Lord in the air. Thus they see Jesus before they go in to see the Father. When Jesus greets them, it is like the light shining on them with a “Well done, thou good and faithful servant: thou hast been faithful over a few things, I will make thee ruler over many things: enter thou into the joy of thy lord” (Matt. 25:21). In other words, for any who are privileged to have this experience, it will be like the day dawning on them with a realization that they have made their calling and election sure. When the Great Company class receive their change after the marriage, the change will not be special, but it will be a revelation and they will be happy, nevertheless.

Q: Is John 4:14 related to the day star arising in our hearts? “But whosoever drinketh of the water that I shall give him shall never thirst; but the water that I shall give him shall be in him a well of water springing up into everlasting life.”

A: The water welling up within would be a part of the “day star” arising—the feeling of having made one’s calling and election sure and the feeling of new life. Even the resurrection of a person to perfection will be an experience in itself. For instance, if a person died as an Ancient Worthy and is awakened as a perfect human being, he will feel a vibrancy, but that type of life is a received life, whereas the Little Flock will receive an indwelling life. This is a very complex subject, which we do not want to discuss in detail except to say that the day star arising in the heart of the Christian would mean that he goes beyond the veil and sees Jesus. The very term “day star” implies JESUS and seeing *him*.

Comment: Right up to the end of their course, Christians can fall, so verse 19 is a finished picture of when the Little Flock have reached their goal beyond the veil.

Comment: Revelation 2:28 reads, “And I will give him the morning star.” This is a promise for all of the Little Flock beyond the veil.

2 Pet. 1:20 Knowing this first, that no prophecy of the scripture is of any private interpretation.

2 Pet. 1:21 For the prophecy came not in old time by the will of man: but holy men of God spake as they were moved by the Holy Ghost.

This Scripture will probably be used in the future to oppose Christians who are trying to be faithful. Their background and education, as well as their authority to speak and interpret God’s Word, will be held in question. They will be asked, “Who are you? Have you studied Greek? Do you know Hebrew?” Orthodoxy thinks of “private” as applying not to them as seminarians but to others. This text was used against the Pastor in questioning his background and authority because he was not a graduate of a seminary and ordained by man.

In view of the coming persecution, it is very important for us to know the proper interpretation of this Scripture. Of course verse 21 must be coupled with verse 20 to get the proper thought. If the verses are separated—in other words, if verse 20 is taken out of context—a diametrically opposed conclusion can be drawn, saying that the individual has no right to interpret Scripture. Verse 21 shows that verse 20 is speaking about a completely different subject. The point is that the “prophecy of the scripture” did not *originate* from man. The Bible originated with God, for “holy men of God spake as they were moved” by the Holy Spirit of God. The Greek word pertains to outgoing breath, or breathing, meaning that the breathing did not originate with man.

Comment: Out of the mouth of two or three witnesses is a thing established. Therefore, God’s Word proves itself.

Reply: “If they speak not according to this word [the law and the testimony], it is because there is no light in them” (Isa. 8:20). We are invited to study the Scriptures, to show ourselves approved. “Study to show thyself approved unto God, a workman that needeth not to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth” (2 Tim. 2:15). “Prove all things; hold fast that which is good” (1 Thess. 5:21). Instead of discouraging the common people from reading and understanding their Bibles, religious leaders should do the opposite and encourage them. The orthodox interpretation of 2 Peter 1:20 would inhibit private Bible study and restrict it to theologians or the Roman Catholic Church. God says, “Come now, and let us reason together” (Isa. 1:18)—this is the principle whether it has to do with sin or His own Word.

Comment: 2 Samuel 23:1,2 states, “David ... who was raised up on high, the anointed of the God

of Jacob, and the sweet psalmist of Israel, said, The spirit of the LORD spake by me, and his word was in my tongue.”

Reply: Yes, that is one instance of a holy man of old being moved by God’s Spirit.

Comment: The *Diaglott* interlinear has, “This first knowing, that all prophecy of a writing, of its own loosing not it is. Not for by will of man was brought at any time prophecy, but by spirit holy being moved spoke [holy] of God men.”

Reply: The thought is as follows. We are not inspired in speaking the Word of God. The Spirit originates with God, and holy men of Old Testament times and Jesus and the apostles spoke as they were moved by *God’s Spirit*. We should not accept a teaching just because a particular person uttered it—whether that person is Pastor Russell, the pope, or someone else. Only what can be proven by the Word of God should be accepted.

Comment: Verse 21 in the King James margin and also in the *Diaglott* has “any time” instead of “old time.” “For the prophecy came not *at any time* by the will of man: but holy men of God spake as they were moved by the Holy Spirit.” The point is that verse 21 is referring to all Scripture, not to just the Old Testament. Therefore, prophecy in the Word of God *is not of private origin—period!*

Reply: Hebrews 1:1 particularly emphasizes holy men prior to the Gospel Age: “God, who at sundry times and in divers manners spake in time past unto the fathers by [or through] the prophets.” The prophets spoke and wrote as they were moved by God, by His Spirit. God used them to transmit His commandments, prophecies, etc. Scripture did not originate with them.

Actually the division of Chapter 2 is arbitrary because the first verse of the next chapter is a continuation of the thought that there are true prophets and false prophets. Both purport to speak with authority according to a “thus saith the Lord.” The problem is to determine the true from the false. We accomplish this by comparing Scripture with Scripture.

Comment: In selecting our elders, our teachers, we should make sure not only that they are in harmony with the Scriptures but also that they have the ability to expound them.

Reply: That is one reason why those who entered the priesthood in the service of the Tabernacle had to be 30 years of age. Jesus himself had to be age 30, even though he had the knowledge. He waited until the official time came before presenting himself. Therefore, we should see some evidence of maturity before electing one as an elder. The general rule for electing elders is “not a novice, lest being lifted up with pride he fall into the condemnation of the devil” (1 Tim. 3:6).

2 Pet. 2:1 But there were false prophets also among the people, even as there shall be false teachers among you, who privily shall bring in damnable heresies, even denying the Lord that bought them, and bring upon themselves swift destruction.

Comment: This chapter of 2 Peter ties in with the Epistle of Jude. They are companion or parallel writings. The term “swift destruction” in verse 1 is a clue that Peter is writing about the end of the age, for down through the age, Christians lived out their course and did not know their destiny. “Swift destruction” shows the end of the age will bring a cutting-off time of judgment for those who “bring in damnable heresies.”

Reply: Similarly, the foolishness of Judas was manifested at the First Advent, at the end of the Jewish Age. He betrayed the Master and ended up committing suicide.

Q: Would a “damnable heresy” be a teacher who breaks a serious commandment and teaches men to do likewise? Matthew 5:19 states the principle: “Whosoever therefore shall break one of these least commandments, and shall teach men so, he shall be called the least in the kingdom of heaven: but whosoever shall do and teach them, the same shall be called great in the kingdom of heaven.”

A: Instead of being commendable, such a teacher would be condemnable. As we proceed, Peter will give clues as to what “heresies” he is referring to.

It is interesting that the Old Testament speaks of “false prophets” and the New Testament uses the term “false teachers.” Of course the pope is a “false prophet” when he purports to speak *ex cathedra*, but today among the brotherhood, the consecrated, we are not troubled so much by claims of infallibility. The emphasis of the Apostle Peter in this chapter is that trouble with *false teachers, false reasoning, and false doctrine* will arise within the inner circle, as it were, of the consecrated. Thus the entire chapter gives an insight into great and alarming dangers that are prevalent *today* within the *true Church*.

“False teachers ... privily shall bring in damnable heresies.” In what sense will this happen “privily”?

Comment: The parallel verse in Jude 4, as rendered in the booklet on Jude, reads, “For certain men have infiltrated [among you], those of old marked out for this judgment, impious ones [lacking reverence], turning the grace of God into lasciviousness, even denying our only Master and Lord Jesus Christ.”

Reply: The word “infiltrated” is the thought, rather than “privily.” It is sort of an osmosis effect.

Comment: The *Diaglott* has “heresies of destruction,” emphasizing the thought of “damnable.”

Reply: The heresies will lead to destruction. Dan is the “serpent by the way,” the “adder in the path, that biteth the horse[‘s] heels, so that his rider shall fall [off] backward” (Gen. 49:17). Falling off the horse backward means Second Death.

Comment: The next verse is a clue as to what these “damnable heresies” are. “Many shall follow their pernicious ways [*impure practices*].” The false teaching pertains to *conduct*.

Reply: We must obey the words of God, Jesus, the apostles, and the prophets. We are to obey the commandments *of God* rather than the commandments of men. Some of those who comprise the false teacher class sincerely come into the brotherhood initially, but they later introduce wrong thinking, destructive doctrines. Such false teachers do not infiltrate with deliberate intent. Thus there are two types of false teachers. The other type comes in like the FBI, attending meetings as strangers to see what is being discussed and then using the information for their own purposes. An example is Walter Martin, who went to the Dawn pretending to be very interested in the truth, and the brethren gave him *Volumes, Reprints*, and all kinds of literature. However, his motive was to write a book on cults, and he did the same to other groups. Since we cannot read each other’s hearts or thoughts, it is often hard to discern a false element, at least at first. Moreover, we see little of each other’s conduct outside of the ecclesia arrangement, so how do we judge one another? Partly by profession, partly by conduct, and partly by reasoning. Weighing all of these factors, we conclude one is a brother or a sister because of apparent dedication and desire to serve the Lord and because the lifestyle seems to be in harmony with the profession. We gather information and judge one another

based on fragments of information, and sometimes there are problems we cannot detect. Even the individual himself may be deceived, thinking he is really helping another when he is not.

In other words, the problem is not so much those with evil intent but just a lack of attention and carelessness in regard to God's Word and what it teaches. As a result, the false element gives misinformation and interpretations of Scripture that are harmful to the brotherhood.

Comment: For "privily," Young's *Analytical Concordance* has "to lead in sideways." In regard to doctrine, that would mean turning around 180 degrees and giving the wrong thought or application. Also, for "destruction," Young's has "perdition," which reminds us of the Judas application and seems to be a play on the words "even denying the Lord that bought them." Judas did not deny that Jesus was the Messiah, but he denied Jesus by his *own conduct*, that is, by betraying him.

Q: What about those who do not believe in the Second Presence and/or object to Bro. Russell's being "that servant"? At one time, they were with the brotherhood but have subsequently gone out and even published a paper that has deceived quite a few.

A: We make certain distinctions just as we do with sin. Sins committed before consecration and sins done after consecration are two different subjects. The same is true of those who never believed in the Presence versus those who once believed but now do not. Some have never believed in the Lord's Second Presence but are trying to please God as best they know how. We all started as babes, and we should not condemn others by measuring them with ourselves. However, if brethren have seen the truth and then turn from it, that is a completely different subject. Hebrews 6:4-6 tells of the danger for those who have tasted of the life to come and then fall away. "For it is impossible for those who were once enlightened, and have tasted of the heavenly gift, and were made partakers of the Holy Ghost, And have tasted the good word of God, and the powers of the world to come, If they shall fall away, to renew them again unto repentance; seeing they crucify to themselves the Son of God afresh, and put him to an open shame."

Years ago we had very close communication with a particular party who once believed in the Second Presence and later denied it. When the person gave the reason for first accepting and then rejecting the Presence, we felt quite differently toward him than toward some others. Anyway, it was advisable to wait and be a little careful in regard to the matter. Finally, after about a year's time and following discussions on and off throughout the year, the party said, "I now believe in the Presence." What he had said earlier is the following. When he first believed the doctrine, he was overwhelmed with the beauty of the truth and was outwardly persuaded but did not have the inner conviction. But later, after reconsidering the matter, he developed an inner conviction. The point is that sometimes we have to qualify our statements and realize there are gray areas. With this party, the Lord helped us not to be too condemnatory, since there were extenuating circumstances to be weighed. The party did some outstanding things privately, without show, that made us hesitate to speak as bluntly as we would normally. Generally speaking, however, when one has been enlightened with the truth and then goes into darkness, the Scriptures say, "How great is that darkness!" (Matt. 6:23). Usually when one falls away, he just goes farther and farther downstream—first with one doctrine, then with another and another and another—until the condition is total darkness as regards present truth. Yet the party may still profess to love the Lord.

In summary, one who has never accepted the doctrine of the Presence should not be judged at all. We should refrain from that type of judging because we were all in darkness at one time.

Comment: The concern is that these individuals are aggressively trying to get others to reject

the doctrine.

Reply: Of course we are not happy to see either these individuals or those they influence reject the doctrine. Some are even slipping away into the nominal Church.

Comment: In Matthew 7:15, Jesus warns us to “beware of false prophets, which come to you in sheep’s clothing, but inwardly they are ravening wolves. Ye shall know them by their fruits.”

Reply: A fig (fruit) tree brings forth figs (fruit), not thistles, meaning that we judge by conduct, generally speaking. If a person is always bringing forth thistles and thorns—if everything is destructive and nothing is constructive—then we should be wary. The general thinking, the general conduct, is the best we can go by. If one is always critical and never has anything good to say, we should disassociate ourselves from that person—or even from such an ecclesia.

Later in this chapter, we will find out how to discern false teachers. Some who outwardly seem to live devoted Christian lives, manifesting a Christlike character and serving the Lord zealously, do a lot of damage. Honest openness in difference is to be more appreciated than secret difference. Peter’s purpose in writing this epistle is to give us some guidelines in detecting false teachers and the doctrines of destruction, or perdition.

2 Pet. 2:2 And many shall follow their pernicious ways; by reason of whom the way of truth shall be evil spoken of.

The Apostle Peter is talking about an intrusion of false teachers into the true Church, but how do we know this condition will exist at the *end* of the Gospel Age? One reason is that the binding of the fallen angels took place at the *end* of the first dispensation, at the time of the Flood. Adam lived 930 years before he died, and sin seemed to grow and prosper more and more in the earth. However, the loosing of the fallen angels took place close to the Flood era—in other words, just a century or two prior to the Flood. The angels who fell mingled with mankind instead of returning to heaven. Forgetting their initial responsibility, they preferred to dwell here. Noah preached righteousness for the last 120 years before the Flood—which was a relatively short period of time at the *end* of the First World of 1,656 years.

“Many shall follow their pernicious ways; by reason of whom the way of truth shall be evil spoken of.” In other words, this testing or gliding away will take place in the true Church.

Comment: The King James margin has “lascivious” instead of “pernicious.” “Many shall follow their *lascivious* ways.”

Reply: That is a better translation, as will be seen when we compare the details. The falling away will be along the lines of the lust of the flesh, which is characteristic of the day in which we are living.

2 Pet. 2:3 And through covetousness shall they with feigned words make merchandise of you: whose judgment now of a long time lingereth not, and their damnation slumbereth not.

“Through covetousness shall they with feigned words make merchandise of you.” What is the thought here?

Comment: The wrong doctrine influences those who hear it without testing the words against Scripture. The salvation is adversely affected not only of those who teach the “damnable heresies” but also of those who accept the erroneous teachings.

Reply: Yes, the effect goes beyond the false teachers who are doing the deceiving among the consecrated. “There shall be false teachers *among you*” (verse 1). The lasciviousness will become more and more prominent as time goes on, but God will be patient with it for two reasons. One reason is that it develops the true Church, affording a testing period. Just think for a moment. How much persecution do we actually get from the nominal Church, at least until the hour of power comes? Virtually none because we have little communication with them. Therefore, this testing has to be a closer relationship than between the Truth movement and the nominal Church. In other words, the testing will occur *within the true Church itself*.

Q: Where verse 2 says, “By reason of whom the way of truth shall be evil spoken of,” isn’t this saying that *outsiders* will speak evil of the way of truth because of what is going on among the truly consecrated under this false teaching element? Who will speak evil of the way of truth? Will onlookers do this?

A: Yes, those in the nominal Church are closely observing what is happening with those who are professing to follow the Lord in the Truth movement.

Comment: A great deception in the nominal Christian world that is entering our midst too is the homosexuality issue. Allowances are made, saying that God is love.

Reply: All of these things start with little beginnings, and the little beginnings grow from tiny seedlings into larger and larger plants. The prediction here is that conditions will deteriorate until ultimately they will be very serious.

We will consider Jude 4 again because it is important: “For there are certain men crept in unawares, who were before of old ordained to this condemnation, ungodly men, turning the grace of our God into lasciviousness, and denying the only Lord God, and our Lord Jesus Christ.” The corrected translation from the Greek reads, “For certain men have infiltrated [among you], those of old marked out for this judgment, impious ones [lacking reverence], turning the grace of God into lasciviousness, even denying our only Master and Lord Jesus Christ.” This is done under the guise of God’s grace and love—twin sisters, as it were—that God is all forgiving and we should not be judgmental.

The Scriptures lay down guidelines for ways to handle certain issues. When a morals problem, a condition of grievous sin, arises in the Church, the local ecclesia has a responsibility to handle it, as far as possible, by the rules and regulations of Scripture. The problem should not be swept under the rug and kept quiet.

“Through covetousness shall they with feigned words make merchandise [gain] of you: whose judgment now of a long time lingereth not, and their damnation slumbereth not.” The destiny of this class is dark indeed, for God will judge them ultimately—the deceivers and those being deceived.

2 Pet. 2:4 For if God spared not the angels that sinned, but cast them down to hell, and delivered them into chains of darkness, to be reserved unto judgment;

In Jude 6, we read a duplication of this example: “And the angels which kept not their first estate, but left their own habitation, he hath reserved in everlasting chains under darkness unto the judgment of the great day.” Some down through history have felt that Chapters 1 and 3 of Peter’s second epistle are authentic but not Chapter 2 because it seems to be so repetitive of what is in the Epistle of Jude. First, this epistle of Peter was written before Jude. This sequence is even suggested by the order in which they appear in the Bible: James; 1 and 2 Peter; 1, 2, and 3 John; Jude; and Revelation. Next, the repetitiveness should not trouble us, for the duplication

is a second witness. Most people, including Christians, do not like to read or talk about unpleasant subjects when there is danger to self and one's own environment, but the repetition shows the importance of the subject.

Comment: The false teachers “make merchandise of *you*”; that is, of *Christians* who are studying God's Word.

Comment: Jude 3 not only makes clear that the consecrated are being warned but also shows the urgency: “Beloved, ... it was needful for me to write unto you, and exhort you that ye should earnestly contend for the faith which was once delivered unto the saints.”

Reply: Yes, and Jude is showing the importance of contending for the faith. We should not be quiet when an issue is discussed that God deems important.

Notice, too, that the chains which hold the Adversary are “chains of *darkness*,” not chains of light. An erroneous doctrine in the Truth movement is that the light of truth is binding Satan. Verse 4 is saying that the fallen angels, who include Satan, have been under chains of darkness. The Adversary has so many tricks in his trade that he maneuvers without any difficulty in this time of increasing light and truth in the Harvest period. As to how much influence the Adversary can have on a Christian, much depends on the individual himself—how close he is to the Lord and how much he leans on the Lord for help in resisting Satan. If light is binding Satan, what about the end of the Kingdom Age when he will be loosed and deceive many in the Little Season? At that time, the entire world will know the truth, yet Satan will succeed with some.

For thousands of years, darkness was a protection for the Christian in that Satan and his cohorts had to operate under chains of *darkness*. Seances are an example. Those who participated had to be in a dark room, hold hands, and get in a frame of mind in which they could contact the spirit realm. Today the fact that the Church of Satan is considered a religion, a tax-exempt organization, shows he is being loosed. Instead of the Adversary and the fallen angels being bound, they are *gradually being loosed* here at the end of the Gospel Age. In fact, the Scriptures indicate that the Great Company class, the last of the faithful Spirit-begotten, will be turned over to the Adversary for the destruction of the flesh. And Revelation 12:17 shows that Satan will make war with the remnant of the seed of the Church at the end of the age, i.e., with the feet members. Thus Satan will be instrumental in the death of both the Little Flock and the Great Company. If he is being progressively bound, how can he be engaging in these other activities? IT IS NOT POSSIBLE!

The very fact that today it is no longer necessary for seances to take place in the dark is one proof that Satan is not being bound. Things are happening of which the public is not too aware because the news media avoids them, but Satanic cults brutally murder little children and examine their organs, mutilate animals, etc. And people deal with the occult powers because they are real and they are supernatural, not realizing the great dangers involved. However, we make a distinction. Is that supernatural power a righteous or an unholy power? At this late date, we must be suspicious of *all* supernatural signs and wonders as being questionable. The best safeguard we have is to heed God's Word and not delve into occult “sciences.” The fact that people experience or feel supernatural POWER in their bodies and minds is a proof to them that the power is holy, but the Bible teaches otherwise. Satan can now operate through human beings without having them go to a certain location on a certain date for a gathering during the darkness of night. Just 75 years ago the police would break up a seance, but today some police departments consult mediums to find perpetrators of a crime. In the daylight, psychics advertise openly on television. At present, the fallen angels are being loosed gradually. Although they still have to operate at the end of a tether, as it were, they are no

longer fully restricted to darkness but are getting more and more liberty. One day that cord will snap, and except for a minority of repentant ones, the fallen angels will all materialize in bulk, en masse. Lying signs and wonders can take place at any time, and we are seeing the loosing of Satan, not his binding. He is making more inroads now than even a century ago.

2 Pet. 2:5 And spared not the old world, but saved Noah the eighth person, a preacher of righteousness, bringing in the flood upon the world of the ungodly;

The counterpart in Jude is verses 14 and 15: “And Enoch also, the seventh from Adam, prophesied of these, saying, Behold, the Lord cometh with ten thousands of his saints, To execute judgment upon all, and to convince all that are ungodly among them of all their ungodly deeds.” One comparison is “Noah the *eighth* person” and “Enoch ... the *seventh* from Adam.”

The mention in Jude 18 of “mockers in the last time, who should walk after their own ungodly lusts” indicates that conditions are getting worse. When people head downstream, the current goes more and more rapidly toward disaster. And so the evil is increasing to such a degree that it is controlling the world more and more and bringing to destruction all in the professed true Church who are within its influence.

2 Pet. 2:6 And turning the cities of Sodom and Gomorrha into ashes condemned them with an overthrow, making them an example unto those that after should live ungodly;

These examples all pertain to *lust*. Homosexuality was the particular sin of Sodom and Gomorrah, and even the use of animals for sexual perversion. In Denmark and Sweden, sodomy (with animals) is being practiced today. That is the extreme sin in trying to satisfy the basic instincts. In Noah’s day, lust and violence were the sins, for the fallen angels violently took the wives whom they chose, the exception being Noah and his family, whom the Lord specially preserved. And what were the fates of these two examples? Sodom and Gomorrah were destroyed, and the unholy angels were bound in chains of darkness.

2 Pet. 2:7 And delivered just Lot, vexed with the filthy conversation of the wicked:

“And delivered just [righteous] Lot, vexed with the filthy conversation [lewdness of behavior, or conduct] of the wicked.” Conditions are getting so bad now that even the news and nature programs on television contain sex. Instead of being frowned upon, this license is considered to be freedom. Some of the talk shows feature perverts as heroes. The vilest criminal or murderer is given fame, paid money to write a book, etc. The signs all about us indicate that we are living in the end time and that conditions will get progressively still worse.

2 Pet. 2:8 (For that righteous man dwelling among them, in seeing and hearing, vexed his righteous soul from day to day with their unlawful deeds;)

The word “vexed” should be “distressed” or “tormented.” Notice who was delivered: (1) righteous Noah and his family and (2) “just” Lot (even the Great Company, the Foolish *Virgin* class, is considered righteous). Thus a distinction is being made between those who are trying to serve God and those who could not care less and are presently dominating the scene.

Comment: Even though Lot was vexed by the sinful conditions in Sodom, he needed to be *pulled* out. He did not leave readily and voluntarily.

Reply: A virtue is that Lot obeyed the commandment not to look back. However, the initial step is important. The Little Flock seems to have more spontaneity in obeying. They obey with

a little more initiative, whereas the others have to be prodded and then obey when the chips are down.

2 Pet. 2:9 The Lord knoweth how to deliver the godly out of temptations, and to reserve the unjust unto the day of judgment to be punished:

Peter's message is a little different from that of Jude, for Peter brings in the contrast between the righteous and the unrighteous in a more marked fashion. Jude mentions that the devil contended with Michael for the body of Moses; he talks about the way of Cain, the error of Balaam, and the gainsaying Korah; he discusses "spots in your feasts of charity," "raging waves"; etc. (Jude 9,11-13). On the other hand, Peter emphasizes the righteous element. True, Jude mentions Enoch but just from the standpoint that Enoch prophesied concerning the coming judgment.

Without God's help, even the most righteous would be contaminated. With self-will alone, we cannot fight the battle against the world, the flesh, and the devil. The fight would be impossible without the help of the Holy Spirit and Jesus as our Advocate.

Not until around the third century was Peter's second epistle accepted as part of the sacred canon. The reason for the delay was probably because the epistle contains such bad news.

Comment: People who bring the bad news are not liked.

Comment: The wrong principle was expressed in King Ahab's words to Elijah: "Art thou he that troubleth Israel?"

Comment: This chapter is really saying that immorality will be tolerated more and more among the truly consecrated.

Reply: In both 2 Peter 2 and the Book of Jude, lasciviousness is the common chord in all of the testings. Since Jude names more individuals, that book is even more negative than Peter's writing—which is interesting because Jude appears later in the Bible and thus pictures conditions even further down the age when conditions get still worse.

2 Pet. 2:10 But chiefly them that walk after the flesh in the lust of uncleanness, and despise government. Presumptuous are they, self-willed, they are not afraid to speak evil of dignities.

Verses 9 and 10 are tied together. In other words (paraphrased), "The unjust are reserved unto the day of judgment to be punished; the unjust are chiefly those who walk after the flesh in the lust of uncleanness, despising government, being presumptuous and self-willed, and not being afraid to speak evil of dignities." Some translations have "daring" instead of "presumptuous."

By nature, those of us who have accepted Christ have different temperaments. Some, mostly leaders, are perhaps prone to be overconfident, and others, being too introspective, are self-condemning. Depending on our temperament, we can get two different perspectives in reading verse 10. To stabilize the meaning, notice that verse 9 says, "The Lord knoweth how to deliver the godly out of temptations," and verse 10 explains the temptations as being bound by circumstance in a situation where one is, at least for a time, surrounded by those who are walking "after the flesh in the lust of uncleanness." Much of this chapter and the Book of Jude pertains to lasciviousness. Peter is saying that one of the chief trials, or troubles, at the end of the age is this pervasiveness of lasciviousness, that its influence will intrude or creep into the true Church. The Lord knows how to deliver the godly from those who "walk after the flesh in

the lust of uncleanness, and despise government.” In other words, those who walk after the flesh despise government. This ungodly class, who live a lifestyle of license, misconstruing it to be liberty and love, are actually despising government by their actions.

Comment: The New American Standard has “authority” instead of “government.” Those who walk after the lust of the flesh despise authority. Other versions have “dominion” or “lordship.” The thought in Jude 8 is that “in like manner indeed these deluded ones defile the flesh, disregard lordships and blaspheme dignitaries.” Jude uses the plural “lordships,” whereas Peter uses the singular “lordship.” The singular would mean not obeying the specific instructions of the Lord. The plural would mean, in more general terms, despising not just the instruction of the Lord’s Word but also the Lord. The King James uses “government” to convey this broader sense.

Q: Could we apply this despising of authority to the present time when respect for the messengers is being questioned? Specifically, the role of the Pastor is being questioned but even the whole idea that the Lord has sent specific dispensational messengers to give messages to his people.

A: In descending order, there are various dignities: God, Jesus, the apostles, the messengers, and true saints (whoever they are from God’s standpoint). Those who walk in the lust of uncleanness are the ones who despise government. They mistake Christian liberty for license. Many who have gone out of the truth have spoken evil of the Pastor as not being “that servant.” They reason that we are all servants, but Luke 12:37–44 makes a distinction between “that servant” (singular) and a servant class (plural). The class who no longer accept the Pastor misinterpret the singular “servant” in Matthew 24:45,46 as meaning a group, but Peter is not talking about this class. Although this class may leave the truth and speak evil of dignities, we do not see them actually walking in the lust of uncleanness. Peter is describing an element that will creep into the ecclesia and *condone* wrong behavior and reasoning. There is too much looseness. With their actions, such ungodly ones are despising the Lord and speaking evil of dignitaries.

Q: Is Peter describing a Second Death class?

A: Yes, in the final analysis, as we will see later in the chapter.

Comment: The word translated “dignities” is used only twice in the Bible, and the other instance is in Jude 8. The Greek has the thought of glory or glorious ones.

Reply: The English word is usually “dignitaries.”

Comment: For “speak evil,” the Companion Bible has “blaspheme.” To “blaspheme dignities” carries an even stronger negative connotation.

Reply: Speaking evil of a dignitary would be blasphemy from God’s standpoint. In God’s sight, words spoken against one whom He especially loves are a serious sin.

Comment: We must fully develop to the condition where we *hate* iniquity and *love* righteousness.

Reply: The general rule is that we should hate the sin but not the sinner. The exception is when an individual has to be maligned because he is changing God’s Word and instruction, claiming that black is white and white is black. We hate the sin but not the sinner *unless the circumstantial evidence is proven by doctrine, deeds, or explanation*. A word alone is not sufficient proof, for

sometimes we misconstrue a word that is spoken, but when doctrine is given, when a line of reasoning is laid down step by step, we know what the individual really means. Therefore, lest we misunderstand and misjudge, we must be careful, as far as possible, to understand what others are saying.

Comment: A lack of humility is what causes one to speak evil of dignitaries.

Reply: People contradict themselves and make misstatements at one time or another, especially if they do a lot of talking. Misstatements should be recognized as such and not attributed to the real thinking of the individual. Therefore, we must be careful in judging the writings, teachings, and doctrines of others. Even the statements of a messenger must be proven and tested with God's Word. The Apostle Paul commended the Bereans for searching the Scriptures daily to see whether even his words were correct (Acts 17:11). The Bible is our measuring rod. Unfortunately, some use fear to inhibit an honest searching of the Scriptures, and others are indifferent and say it does not matter. We should be in between the two extremes. In *Pilgrim's Progress*, there were dangerous lions and cliffs on both sides, and so we must walk as circumspectly as possible with regard to God's Word. We know in our hearts whether or not we think of ourselves too highly, and we should continually search our hearts. This would be proper humility. False humility is allowing ourselves to be a rug on which people wipe their feet.

2 Pet. 2:11 Whereas angels, which are greater in power and might, bring not railing accusation against them before the Lord.

The thought is as follows. "Whereas [the guardian or holy] angels, who are greater in power and might, bring not judgment of blasphemy against them before the Lord." During the Gospel Age, all of the holy angels are employed in the service of the Church of God (Heb. 1:14). Our guardian angels know us well as individuals. With their judgment, they could easily feel they know us better than we know ourselves, but that is not always the case, for what is seen and heard is not always a true indicator of the worth of an individual. That is where Jesus comes into the picture, for he judges not merely by what he sees and hears.

Comment: The following statement in the booklet on Jude explains how Bro. Frank derived his translations of Jude and 2 Peter 2. It appears at the end of the Scripture comparison. "The above rendition of the Epistle of Jude and of the parallel portion of the Second Epistle of Peter is based on a diligent comparison of the several generally recognized and authentic English versions of the Greek New Testament available to the general public, such as the King James Version, the Living Bible, the Revised Standard Version, the New English Bible, Phillips' Modern English, and the Jerusalem Bible."

Comment: The closest parallel verse in Jude is verse 9: "Yet Michael the archangel, when contending with the devil he disputed about the body of Moses, durst not bring against him a railing accusation, but said, The Lord rebuke thee."

Reply: The term "railing accusation" means an accusation in the extreme. Verse 11 states that the holy angels, who are greater in power and might, dare not bring a *railing* accusation, and Jude 9 says that Michael, the *chief* of the holy angels, dared not bring against Satan, the worst enemy, a *railing* accusation with regard to the body of Moses. However, it is important to realize that Jesus did not remain silent. He "disputed" with Satan, saying, "Let God rebuke you," but did not bring a railing accusation. Jesus knew that Satan wanted the body of Moses to use as an icon and/or to lead the Israelites astray with the attitude, "We have Moses' body in our possession, so we are the authority." Because Jesus possessed the quality of loving righteousness and *hating* iniquity, he could not be silent but *rebuked* the Adversary. Thus, under

this abnormal circumstance, Jesus spoke strongly, and sometimes God's people must do the same, but they must be sure they are on proper ground.

Comment: In the Greek, the word translated "accusation" is *krisis*, which we usually think of as final judgment. Therefore, we can see the seriousness of the accusation.

2 Pet. 2:12 But these, as natural brute beasts, made to be taken and destroyed, speak evil of the things that they understand not; and shall utterly perish in their own corruption;

"But these, like unreasoning animals, born as creatures of instinct to be captured and killed, reviling where they have no knowledge, will in the destruction of those creatures also be destroyed" (American Standard Version).

Jude 10 is similar: "But these blaspheme what things they do not understand; but what things they, as unreasoning animals by natural instinct do know, in these things they are corrupt."

This ungodly class use *human* reasoning and human *emotional* reasoning, as opposed to God's reasoning, or spiritual reasoning. To a certain extent, animals react emotionally; for instance, they respond to kindness and brutality. This class go by their own reasoning and their human emotions rather than allowing themselves to be guided by the checks and balances of God's Word. Out of the mouth of two or three witnesses in Holy Writ should a matter be established, whereas those who react emotionally require only one witness. And even that one witness may be misconstrued. The value of multiple witnesses—two or three—is that the counsel is balanced. We are either deterred or supported in our thinking if we obtain two or three witnesses. And if we are unsure what the Lord's Word has to say on a matter, we should be silent rather than risk teaching error.

Comment: This chapter began with a stern warning that these false teachers would "bring upon themselves swift destruction." Then verse 3 mentioned that "their damnation slumbereth not." Now verse 12 says that as "natural brute beasts," they are "made to be taken and *destroyed*"; they "shall *utterly perish* in their own corruption." The penalty is clearly Second Death.

Comment: Philippians 3:18,19 would apply to the 2 Peter context: "(For many walk, of whom I have told you often, and now tell you even weeping, that they are the enemies of the cross of Christ: Whose end is destruction, whose God is their belly, and whose glory is in their shame, who mind *earthly things*.)"

Reply: Yes, the enemies of Christ were "mind[ing] earthly things," meaning they rationalized along human lines instead of following God's instruction. It is interesting that Paul wrote these words to the Philippian brethren, for whom he had very tender feelings. They were thoughtful of his needs. Now he was "weeping" over the "enemies of the cross of Christ" in that locale.

Comment: The phrase "made to be taken and destroyed" sounds as if the Second Death destiny of this class was preordained.

Reply: Peter is saying in effect, "How foolish these individuals are to allow themselves to be governed by basic instinct and not the Lord's Word!" This class rationalize like a brute beast to their own destruction. They are well learned in their ignorance because they cater to the basic instincts.

2 Pet. 2:13 And shall receive the reward of unrighteousness, as they that count it pleasure to riot in the day time. Spots they are and blemishes, sporting themselves with their own deceivings while they feast with you;

This verse indicates clearly that the ungodly class Peter is writing about will be in the true Church. Peter says, “They feast *with you* [the true Church],” feeding on God’s Word.

“They ... count it pleasure to riot in the day time.” Even though we are still living in the nighttime of evil, Paul tells us to live as if we were in the day. Because we are “children of light,” we should walk as though it were day (1 Thess. 5:5). What used to be done in secret and/or under cover of darkness is now done brazenly and openly “in the day time.” What a change the world has undergone from the puritanical condition that existed earlier in this century! For example, people did not know about intimacies until they were young adults, but today the subject is taught even in elementary school.

Comment: We would normally think of grievous sins being committed under the cloak of darkness, but now sins are done openly. There is virtually no conscience.

Reply: This chapter is a prophecy of the end time, and we are seeing the prediction of evil conditions being fulfilled.

For many years, we have opposed the doctrine that Satan is being bound by chains of light. The fact the Adversary can do things in the open means that instead of being bound, he is being loosed more and more. He is gaining more and more power and getting more and more corrupt. It does not make sense to say that Satan is being bound while conditions are getting worse. In fact, it is an insult to say that Christ is reigning when conditions are so sinful in the world.

Verse 13 is an exposé of God’s thinking about the evil conditions that would exist in the world and in the true Church in the end of the age. In this chapter, Peter is revealing how bad conditions really are, but the comforting thought is that God “knoweth how to deliver the godly out of temptations.” How much we need the help of God’s Holy Spirit to combat the evil that surrounds us! We could never survive in our own strength of will.

Comment: Romans 13:12–14 is a pertinent text. “The night is far spent, the day is at hand: let us therefore cast off the works of darkness, and let us put on the armour of light. Let us walk honestly, as in the day; not in rioting and drunkenness, not in chambering and wantonness, not in strife and envying. But put ye on the Lord Jesus Christ, and make not provision for the flesh, to fulfil the lusts thereof.”

2 Pet. 2:14 Having eyes full of adultery, and that cannot cease from sin; beguiling unstable souls: an heart they have exercised with covetous practices; cursed children:

2 Pet. 2:15 Which have forsaken the right way, and are gone astray, following the way of Balaam the son of Bosor, who loved the wages of unrighteousness;

We are still talking about false teachers as well as others, including sisters, who have influence by teaching in private conversation. The fact these individuals “have *forsaken* the right way, and are *gone astray*” indicates a consecrated class. They were in the truth at one time but departed from it. They were legitimate “children” of God, but now they are “cursed.” The sins enumerated are prevalent in the world, which is almost like Sodom and Gomorrah, and the sins have entered the nominal Church, but Peter is describing a condition of perilous times that will arise in the *true Church* at the end of the age.

When these Scriptures were discussed with brethren about 40 years ago, comments were made to the effect that “this type of outward immorality can *never* happen with us; these verses are

all spiritual.” Today conditions are radically different, and the prediction is that they will just get worse and worse and worse. Although 2 Peter 2 and Jude are similar, Peter’s epistles were written first. Jude subsequently took part of Peter’s admonition because he felt that this second chapter was so important for the end time.

Verse 13 had said this ungodly element were “spots ... and blemishes, sporting themselves with their own deceivings while they feast with you.” These verses will have a literal fulfillment. When various newer translations are compared, different adjectives and nouns may be used, but they are all along the lines of smut and licentiousness.

The ungodly and immoral conditions will encroach upon and come right into the ecclesia. The immoral conditions start gradually with a small beginning and will continue to develop until they get to a situation that is blatantly wrong. However, the ones in the Church who commit the grievous sins will not be embarrassed, and in a subtle manner, they will begin to teach a tolerance for these conditions. Conditions will deteriorate until they get to a point where the false teachers cannot be converted.

Comment: The media is so polluted. Even news programs are not immune to immorality. Therefore, it should not surprise us that immorality will creep into the house of God.

Reply: We are living in Satan’s world. As the god of this world, he makes sure that his message gets across in one way or another, and we are in the midst of this situation.

“Beguiling unstable souls.” In order for “unstable souls” to be beguiled, someone has to be promoting the false doctrine of permissiveness.

“An heart they have exercised with covetous practices.” We are living in treacherous times that require all of our effort to remain untouched. Prayer and earnest concentration are needed in order for us to be protected from this situation. We need the Lord’s help.

Comment: In one instance of a departure from the truth, the brother wrote a booklet on homosexuality for others to read. He certainly was teaching through the printed page.

Reply: Yes, there are impure practices in addition to adultery. Some will quote Scripture, or even a spurious passage, to justify a liberal outlook. An example is John 8:7 (paraphrased): “Let him who is without sin among you, cast the first stone.” If that were a true Scripture instead of a spurious text, it would stop all mouths.

Comment: This morning we saw a car with a bumper sticker from the Presbyterian Church that read, “Open-minded, open-hearted.” Such a slogan invites immorality.

Reply: And this was done in the name of Christianity!

Some use the Lord’s Prayer improperly. “Forgive us our trespasses, as we forgive those who trespass against us” (Matt. 6:12). But notice that we have the liberty to forgive those who trespass against us, not those who trespass against *others* or against *God*. What right do we have to forgive someone’s trespass against God or against another person? The principle is grasped by emphasizing the word “as”: “Forgive us our trespasses *as we forgive* those who trespass against us.”

Comment: Another cliché is, “Judge not, that ye be not judged” (Matt. 7:1). Some use this verse to say we should not judge anything.

Reply: The context of the verse is teaching that we should not be hypercritical. Other Scriptures tell us that there are things we should judge. For instance, Paul said (paraphrased), “Don’t you have even one individual there with common sense enough to judge the matter that is so glaringly bad?” (1 Cor. 5:12; 6:5). In time, the Little Flock will even judge angels.

What is damaging is that those who tell us not to judge seem to, at least superficially, have the Lord’s blessing in giving such *carte blanche* statements because they are quoting Scripture. But the Scriptures are either misquoted or taken out of context.

Comment: In the Lord’s Prayer, forgiveness is based upon repentance. Just as we ask God to forgive us (“*Forgive us our trespasses*”), so when we forgive others, it would be based on *their* repentance and asking us for forgiveness (“*Forgive us ... as we forgive those who trespass against us*”). To forgive others without their repentance would do them a disservice.

Reply: Yes, in the Lord’s Prayer we are asking God to forgive us, which shows we are in a penitent attitude and want to be forgiven.

The Prodigal Son did not come to his senses until after he had despoiled his inheritance by living a dissolute life in rioting, drunkenness, and pleasure. Not until he was brought so low that he had to eat swine’s food did he repent and desire to return to his father. In referring to this parable, some erroneously teach that when the father saw the Prodigal Son returning, he ran out to embrace him without requiring repentance. But the point is that the father welcomed the son because the son was in a sorrowful and penitent attitude. When the father looked afar off and saw the son coming, he saw the deplorable state and repentant attitude of the son. Under that condition, it was proper for the father to welcome the son. Notice what the Prodigal Son said, “*Father, I have sinned [both] against heaven, and before thee, And am no more worthy to be called thy son: make me as one of thy hired servants*” (Luke 15:18,19). His words show a repentant attitude—which *preceded* and was a prerequisite for the killing of the fatted calf and the celebration. Symptoms of contrition are essential before we can give *carte blanche* forgiveness. Otherwise, our generosity in forgiving can be very obnoxious in God’s sight.

2 Pet. 2:16 But was rebuked for his iniquity: the dumb ass speaking with man’s voice forbad the madness of the prophet.

Comment: The statement that Balaam “was rebuked for his iniquity” is interesting from two aspects. (1) For those who go out of the way, God will grant opportunity for them to return. (2) The opportunity to return is not given in a coddling way but in a rebuking way.

Reply: Yes, and notice that Balaam is called a “prophet.” “The dumb ass ... forbad the madness of the *prophet*.” Wanting a curse to be pronounced on the children of Israel, Balak invited Balaam, who had a reputation, to come to upper Mesopotamia, to the Peor area. Although Balaam may not have known in advance why he was being summoned, we can be sure that his expenses were paid, that something was done to make the journey worthwhile. We are told that Balaam “loved the wages of unrighteousness” (verse 15).

A point to be noticed is that Balaam was called simply a “prophet,” not a false prophet. In Old Testament times, the Lord did deal in certain ways with people other than the Israelites. For example, when God told the nation of Israel, “You only have I known of all the families of the earth,” that statement applied in a particular sense (Amos 3:2). The Book of Genesis mentions “the God of Nahor” as well as “the God of Abraham” (Gen. 31:53).

Comment: Balaam ended up “cursing” the Israelites by giving bad advice.

Reply: At first, Balaam was reluctant to curse the children of Israel, and when he finally tried to pronounce the curse, out of his mouth came a blessing. Later, when the Israelites were about to enter the Promised Land, heathen women were told to seduce the males, and many died because of that seduction. Thus the bad advice Balaam gave was along the lines of the context here in 2 Peter.

Q: How did the dumb ass forbid the madness of Balaam?

A: Balaam was riding the ass when suddenly the animal talked to him and told him that what he was about to do was wrong. How startling! Balaam was at least temporarily shocked into not pursuing his purpose. In other words, the animal's words were a temporary deterrent in the madness (mental unsoundness) he was about to perform against God's people.

Balaam was ostensibly one of the Lord's prophets. The analogy today, at the end of the age, is that within the true Church, false teachers will arise and introduce damaging doctrine. Both Balaam and the false teachers give advice that is harmful to unstable souls.

Comment: If we should start to go astray, the Lord will somehow tell us we are going the wrong way. Then it is up to us to hear the warning and turn around. Through the dumb animal, God tried to tell Balaam not to curse the Israelites. In some way, He will warn the consecrated of this age too.

Reply: The excuse cannot be made that we were not told. In the antitype, the "dumb animal" would be the unconsecrated. God can even warn us through someone in the world.

2 Pet. 2:17 **These are wells without water, clouds that are carried with a tempest; to whom the mist of darkness is reserved for ever.**

People such as Balaam are "wells without water, clouds that are carried with a tempest; to whom the mist of darkness is reserved for ever." What thought is conveyed by the expression "wells without water"? Water is truth, a source of refreshment and cleansing. The "wells" here are not cisterns into which rain water drains but *springs*, as some translations such as the New International Version say. A spring is a *source* of water, whereas a cistern is a receptacle. In other words, the false teachers purport to be wells, or springs of water, truth, and cleansing, but they are dry. Imagine that we are in a desert and know there is a well, or spring, at an oasis up ahead. However, when we reach the oasis, we find the spring is dry. What would be our reaction? Utter disappointment. And that is the lesson in verse 17—that which formerly was a source of refreshment is now the opposite.

What about the expression "clouds that are carried with a tempest"?

Comment: Clouds are supposed to contain water, and these false teachers are supposed to have truth. But when a storm, or tempest, occurs, the clouds are driven away, just as the false teachers "have forsaken the right way, and are gone astray" (verse 15). Instead of holding fast the principles of the Word of God, the false teachers are carried off, or blown away, as it were.

Reply: Again there is disappointment, for a cloud should bring rain. Another purpose of a cloud is to provide shade. There are two thoughts: (1) clouds being driven away and (2) instability. In other words, we cannot depend on the false teachers because they are unstable characters.

"To whom the mist of darkness is reserved for ever." Peter is saying that the ultimate destiny of this ungodly element is Second Death. "Mist" conveys the thought of being foggy, that is,

not clear in understanding. It is hard to see clearly in a fog.

Comment: The parallel text in Jude 13 is, “To whom is reserved the blackness of darkness for ever.”

Reply: Again the destiny of this class is shown to be Second Death.

2 Pet. 2:18 For when they speak great swelling words of vanity, they allure through the lusts of the flesh, through much wantonness, those that were clean escaped from them who live in error.

The New International Version reads, “For they mouth empty, boastful words and, by appealing to the lustful desires of sinful human nature, they entice people who are just escaping from those who live in error.” The Phillips Modern translation says that this class speaks “high sounding nonsense.”

Q: Who are “those that were clean escaped from them who live in error”?

A: The implication seems to be that these individuals have recently come out of the world or out of the nominal Church into truth, and what happens? They are shaken out by the false teachers who speak the high-sounding phrases. A little flattery is also implied, for the teachers speak “great swelling words of vanity.” In other words, the false teachers tend to flatter their hearers. For this reason, public speakers should not use too much humor. Humor has its place but must be used like a jewel—with *scarcity*. Flattering the audience paves the way for them to be more receptive to the message. That is why, according to the Law, honey was not to accompany a sacrifice (Lev. 2:11).

Comment: Ephesians 4:14 tells us to “henceforth be no more children, tossed to and fro, and carried about with every wind of doctrine, by the sleight of men, and cunning craftiness, whereby they lie in wait to deceive.”

Comment: The way the NIV words part of verse 18 (“they entice people who are just escaping from those who live in error”) implies these individuals are at a pivotal time where they can be easily swayed one way or the other, and the false teachers are responsible for pushing them the wrong way.

Reply: Yes, they have been attracted to present truth, and then they are exposed to false teaching. This is a reminder of what Jesus said on one occasion to the scribes and Pharisees. “Woe unto you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! for ye compass sea and land to make one proselyte, and when he is made, ye make him twofold more the child of hell [Gehenna] than yourselves” (Matt. 23:15). These individuals escape from the world or the nominal Church into present truth and then, through false teaching, are worse off than before. Previously they were the onefold child of Gehenna, and now they are the twofold child.

Comment: Unclean conversation during fellowship can also cause damage and harm. Newcomers might assume this type of talk is acceptable among the consecrated. Our words should be wholesome and pure.

Reply: Yes, this class can be male or female, elders or otherwise. Sometimes just one comment—just a few words—can rescue a soul from death, and sometimes a single comment can do the opposite, leading one to destruction.

2 Pet. 2:19 While they promise them liberty, they themselves are the servants of corruption:

for of whom a man is overcome, of the same is he brought in bondage.

The promise of liberty is appealing and subtle. If we are uncomfortable in a situation and a doctrine that is pleasing to the flesh offers some relief, that doctrine could seem to be a road to liberty, whereas it is really a road to license.

Comment: A couple of thoughts are along this line. One is not properly understanding what the Lord's grace is and what it actually entails. Another is the concept that there is no Great Company—that basically one just has to believe in the Lord and trust in Him, that there are no standards, and that we do not have to live a life of sacrifice. Holding such beliefs would give a false sense of freedom.

2 Pet. 2:20 For if after they have escaped the pollutions of the world through the knowledge of the Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ, they are again entangled therein, and overcome, the latter end is worse with them than the beginning.

2 Pet. 2:21 For it had been better for them not to have known the way of righteousness, than, after they have known it, to turn from the holy commandment delivered unto them.

2 Pet. 2:22 But it is happened unto them according to the true proverb, The dog is turned to his own vomit again; and the sow that was washed to her wallowing in the mire.

Comment: In regard to the latter end being worse with this ungodly class than the beginning, Matthew 12:43–45 applies. “When the unclean spirit is gone out of a man, he walketh through dry places, seeking rest, and findeth none. Then he saith, I will return into my house from whence I came out; and when he is come, he findeth it empty, swept, and garnished. Then goeth he, and taketh with himself seven other spirits more wicked than himself, and they enter in and dwell there: and the last state of that man is worse than the first. Even so shall it be also unto this wicked generation.”

Reply: That is an interesting citation to bring in, especially the statement “the last state of that man is worse than the first.” Matthew is talking about an Israelite from whom an evil spirit was exorcised. The danger was that while the room was swept clean, if the individual did not fill the vacuum with furniture of a constructive nature, there would be a relapse, and the previous demon would not only return but would bring seven other demons with him. Thus the individual's last state would be worse than the first. Of course the situation here in 2 Peter is more serious because it pertains to the consecrated. However, the principle of operation, the principle of cause and effect, is the same with one who is demon-possessed.

Comment: Prior to consecration, we are instructed to count the cost and to act with a sober spirit and understanding, realizing that all can be lost in Second Death if we return to willful sin.

Reply: Yes, that is one reason for the Lord's advice to the one contemplating consecration.

Comment: The “pollutions of the world” do not necessarily have to be evil deeds; they can be worldliness.

Comment: If anyone has doubts about this chapter referring to Second Death, the questions should be completely dispelled with verses 20–22. There could be no other explanation for the statement “it had been better for them not to have known the way of righteousness, than, after they have known it, to turn from the holy commandment.” Hebrews 6:4–6 comes to mind: “For it is impossible for those who were once enlightened, and have tasted of the heavenly gift, and were made partakers of the Holy Ghost, And have tasted the good word of

God, and the powers of the world to come, If they shall fall away, to renew them again unto repentance; seeing they crucify to themselves the Son of God afresh, and put him to an open shame.” Also, Hebrews 10:26 talks about being in a state of knowing the truth and then turning away. “For if we sin wilfully after that we have received the knowledge of the truth, there remaineth no more sacrifice for sins.”

Reply: Yes, the Book of Hebrews refers to a spiritually enlightened class who seal their fate. We are not to forsake the assembling of ourselves because “if we sin wilfully after ... we have received ... the truth, there remaineth no more sacrifice for sins.”

The turning of the sow to the mire and the dog to the vomit means that the person has forsaken the truth and gone into the world. Paul is not talking about the struggle that all Christians fight against the spirit of the world, bad thoughts, principalities, powers, and spiritual wickedness in high places. He is speaking about those who actually forsake the truth, meetings, and fellowship and drift back into the condition they were in prior to consecration. Those who do so without repentance have sealed their fate.

Comment: The key part of verse 20 is the phrase “and overcome.” “If after they have escaped the pollutions of the world through the knowledge of the Lord ... , they are again entangled therein, *and overcome*, the latter end is worse with them than the beginning.” Such individuals are no longer struggling but have been overcome.

Q: Are we talking about the false teaching element here or those under their influence?

A: The teachers, the blind who are leading the blind, are already overcome. Verse 19 says, “While they [the teachers] promise them [the hearers] liberty, they themselves [the teachers] are the servants of *corruption*.”

Q: Does the clause “If after they have escaped the pollutions of the world” refer to the newly consecrated or to the teaching element?

A: Verse 18 tells about the teachers who “speak great swelling words of vanity” and “allure through the lusts of the flesh ... *those that were clean escaped* [the newly consecrated or those who have just come out of the nominal Church].” Thus the new ones come under the influence of the false teachers, but what was quoted in Hebrews 6 and 10 pertains more to those who were previously established in truth. Therefore, the principle operates both ways. One should never be overconfident.

Q: In verse 22, does the dog returning to its vomit refer primarily to doctrine and the sow wallowing in the mire (mud) refer primarily to immoral conduct?

A: Yes.

Q: How do those who believe “once in grace, always in grace” answer Hebrews 6:4–6 and 10:26?

A: Scofield, who holds that doctrine, calls those who return to gross sin “unsaved professors.” In other words, the thought is that they were never saved to begin with.

Comment: That is wresting the Scriptures, for verse 20 says plainly that “they have escaped the pollutions of the world.”

Reply: Once one is swayed by these erroneous doctrines, it is very difficult for him to get

detached from the long-time persuasion.

Those who “have escaped the pollutions of the world” (verse 20) are the same as “those that were clean escaped” (verse 18). Peter is talking about an unstable element who recently enter the Truth movement. In other words, they never were stable, and thus when they come into the Truth movement with pure, honest, open hearts, they are in a dangerous, vulnerable situation. The doom of the teachers is already sealed because they have more or less come to a fixed erroneous conclusion. For this reason, it is wise to proceed slowly in teaching, for years of a careful, slow process of development are needed. Those who come in hastily wanting to be teachers are dangerous both to themselves and to those under their influence.

Comment: Matthew 5:19 warns teachers in the Church: “Whosoever therefore shall break one of these least commandments, and shall teach men so, he shall be called the least in the kingdom of heaven: but whosoever shall do and teach them, the same shall be called great in the kingdom of heaven.”

Verse 20 states, “If ... they are again entangled therein, and overcome, the latter end is worse with them than the beginning.” For one who is overcome, for one who succumbs, the battle stops. As with Judas, “the latter end is worse with them than the beginning.” It would have been better if he had not been born. “Woe unto that man by whom the Son of man is betrayed! it had been good for that man if he had not been born” (Matt. 26:24).

Comment: Knowledge brings responsibility.

Q: Do the following paraphrased excerpts for verse 20 from the 1981 study still apply? “Referring to the immature, newly consecrated Christians who follow the false counsel of the false teachers, Peter says, ‘The latter end is worse with them than the beginning.’ This does not necessarily refer to Second Death. There is no question that the false teachers go into Second Death, however. Those who are influenced by such teachings are more liable to Second Death than if they had heard the truth for the first time in the Kingdom when all instruction will be done by sight. Their chances for life would be better in the Kingdom. ‘Be not deceived: evil communications corrupt good conduct.’ These verses are a confirmation that the mathematical possibility of extrication is very, very slim. The proverb shows that, generally speaking, in the overall picture, those who get entangled again go into Second Death. With the teachers, there is no possibility of getting life, for they have deliberately given counsel above God’s Word.” In other words, there is the possibility of extrication for the newly consecrated. The language is very strong.

A: The comments from the 1981 study are better stated because we have an illustration in 1 and 2 Corinthians regarding the grievous sinner who repented and was reinstated after being disfellowshipped.

2 Pet. 3:1 This second epistle, beloved, I now write unto you; in both which I stir up your pure minds by way of remembrance:

2 Pet. 3:2 That ye 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 Saviour:

From a historical standpoint, these two verses help to explain to whom the second epistle was addressed, for 2 Peter 1:1 does not give this information. However, in 1 Peter 1:1, the apostle tells that he is addressing the epistle to the churches in Asia Minor. In the final analysis, both epistles are addressed to the same individuals.

“I stir up your pure minds by way of remembrance: That ye may be mindful of the words which were spoken before by the holy prophets.”

Comment: The words “pure” and “holy” help us to see that Peter’s real emphasis is on the flesh and on conduct, even above doctrine.

Reply: Yes, especially 2 Peter 2, which warns against lasciviousness. Peter is indicating that in the latter days, the most pervasive damaging influence to the consecrated would be along the lines of the flesh. The words of the *holy* prophets are an offset to the *unholy* lascivious conduct discussed in the second chapter.

Comment: In verse 2, Peter is referring to both the Old and the New Testaments: “That ye may be mindful of the words which were spoken before by the holy prophets [in the Old Testament], and of the commandment of us the apostles of the Lord and Saviour [in the New Testament].”

Peter is leading up to the fact that some of the churches he is addressing were taught by Paul. In other words, Peter has a reason for saying, “The commandment of us the apostles.”

Comment: Words that stand out in the two verses are “remembrance” and “that ye may be mindful of the words which were spoken before.” Peter is not teaching something new. He simply wants the brethren to keep reviewing what they learned so that they will not forget. How helpful this information is for us, for we, too, need to keep going over the principles of God so that we stay apart from the world!

Reply: One reason we have Bible studies is to always keep principles and moral instruction in remembrance, for with *Volume* studies, that is not the case. Just consider the *First Volume, The Divine Plan of the Ages*. Topics treated are the doctrine of the Ransom, restitution, the difference in natures, the Kingdom of God, the kingdoms of this world, and so forth. In this *Volume* as well as in *Volumes 2–4*, moral instruction is lacking. It is true that *Volumes 5 and 6* contain a little moral instruction, but the study of a particular *Volume* usually takes years. Therefore, years go by without any moral instruction. The Bible should be studied along with the *Volumes*. The *Volumes* help us to rightly divide the Word of truth, assigning Scriptures to the proper ages, but if we study the Bible, we are continually receiving moral instruction and help with character development. Bible study is not optional—it is essential. If Bible study is not done on the ecclesia level, then it must be done privately lest we fail to make our calling and election sure. We must be continually reminded of God’s instruction.

2 Pet. 3:3 Knowing this first, that there shall come in the last days scoffers, walking after their own lusts,

2 Pet. 3:4 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 the creation.

“Knowing this first” shows the importance of being aware that “scoffers” would come in the last days “walking after their own lusts.” It is important to identify these “scoffers” correctly. What was said in the 1981 study?

Comment: Of the lengthy explanation, here are a few excerpts: “The word ‘presence’ forces us to connect 2 Peter 3:3 with Jude and his warnings about conditions that will occur in the *true* Church at the end of the age. Although the secret, invisible presence of Christ at his Second Advent is an important doctrine to us, the world could not care less. They are not even concerned about Jesus’ coming, let alone about the presence, and if they do hear anything at all

about the Second Advent, they think of Jesus as ‘coming,’ not as his ‘being present.’ The same is true of the nominal Church, for they think of the Second *Coming* of Jesus, not of his invisible *presence*. Therefore, the nominal Church would not even be in a position to combat this subject and/or take it as their stance. Instead of asking, ‘Where is the promise of his presence?’ they would ask, ‘Where is the promise that he will even come?’ The fact that [the Greek] *parousia* is used makes this experience applicable to the Lord’s people. This confrontation will be in the true Church. The consecrated of present-truth circles will debate this type of reasoning.”

Reply: Yes, that is the principle to be used in identifying these scoffers as being within the true Church at the end of the age.

Comment: *Strong’s Concordance* defines the Greek word for “scoffers” as “deriders” or “false teachers.”

Comment: *Young’s Analytical Concordance* defines “scoffers” as “childish triflers.” The Greek word is *empaiktes*.

Reply: The thought of “child” is in the Greek. One who is mature can see through the shallow reasoning of the false teachers, whose words may have a *seeming* ring of truth or plausibility but, upon reflection, are seen to be irrational. Most people like clichés, fancy slogans, or even homey illustrations that are easy to understand but are not necessarily Scriptural. Moreover, it is hard for us to know what the scoffers are thinking and saying unless we are actually present. Peter is warning us about the scoffers, but we generally hear only secondhand or thirdhand reports. Scoffing usually starts with some “going out of the truth” by attacking certain relatively fundamental doctrines. Of course Peter is talking about the presence. When the false teachers get a little confidence from their hearers, they reveal their innermost (and damaging) thinking; namely, they do not believe in the presence.

This class are “walking after their own lusts.” Hence they like what they are hearing because it does not oppose their conduct. There is no criticism on the part of the speaker.

We are living in the “last days,” but Peter’s admonitions indicate that conditions will get worse. Dangers along the line of disputing the presence will develop more and more.

The scoffers will say, “Where is the promise of his coming? for since the fathers fell asleep, all things continue as they were from the beginning of the creation.” Peter is obviously making a parallel illustration of the people and conditions before the Flood in Noah’s day. Noah spoke about a coming deluge and was building a huge boat on dry land when it had not even rained (Gen. 2:6). The question would mockingly be asked, “Who will pull the Ark into the ocean?” Of course Noah would respond that the Flood would come to float the vessel, but the people could not see any danger because they were accustomed to having no rain. Peter’s analogy to the days of Noah will get stronger as we proceed.

In effect, the question is, “Where is the *evidence* of his presence? Things are not any different now than in past generations.”

2 Pet. 3:5 For this they willingly are ignorant of, that by the word of God the heavens were of old, and the earth standing out of the water and in the water:

2 Pet. 3:6 Whereby the world that then was, being overflowed with water, perished:

Comment: The scoffers are “*willingly ignorant*” about the doctrine of the presence.

“By the word of God the heavens were of old, and the earth [was] standing out of the water and in the water.” In succinct terms, this verse is explaining the Vailian theory. Not only were there oceans of water down here, but previously a canopy of water circled the earth like the rings of Saturn. The translucent canopy seemed normal to the people living in that day, for it existed throughout their lifetime up to the time of the Flood. The canopy of water was kept in store, or reservation, until the Lord gave the release command in Noah’s day.

“By the word of God ... the world that then was, being overflowed with water, perished.” God can speak a command, and it is accomplished, for He knows the lock, or mechanism, of that which is His. Just as some people have a sensing device whereby pressing a button will open a garage door or lock and unlock a car door, so God can do this and much more with His words. He both creates and destroys with just a command. Sometimes He uses angels, storms, individuals, messages, etc., to accomplish His will, but His word alone is sufficient to set in motion the necessary operations—even if 7,000 years are required to fulfill the purpose.

Q: Does the phrase “by the word of God” mean “by means of God’s *spoken* word” or “by means of the *recording* of His words”?

A: The verse can be read either way, and both versions apply.

Comment: It is interesting that the King James marginal reference is Genesis 1:6, “And God said....” This Scripture supports the idea of remote control through God’s voice.

Reply: Most brethren would say the “word of God” refers to the Logos, but *God* is the Creator, not Jesus, as abundant Scriptures show.

Comment: Another pertinent Scripture is Isaiah 55:11, in which God says, “So shall *my word* be that *goeth forth out of my mouth*: it shall not return unto me void, but *it shall accomplish that which I please, and it shall prosper in the thing whereto I sent it.*”

Reply: God’s words have a percolating and accumulative effect. Seven thousand years seems like a long time to us, but it is nothing for the God *of eternity*.

“The world that then was, being overflowed with water, perished.” The *cosmos*, that is, the arrangement of society, was destroyed, not the planet. Had the people known that a canopy of water was in reserve above the earth, they would have realized it was an impending catastrophe. And God intended that the canopy would collapse but in His own due time.

Q: Wouldn’t verses 5 and 6 prove the Flood was not universal?

A: Yes. In Noah’s day, the Flood came on the living generation in that portion of the earth. Not only did waters come down from above for 40 days and a telluric snow cascade in at the poles, but also the land in the Flood area sank so that the surrounding seas (the Mediterranean and the Adriatic) flowed into the hollow. Thus the catastrophe was caused by waters from below and waters from above. Both sources were imminent dangers.

Comment: In regard to Jehovah’s being the Creator, John 4:34 reads, “My meat is to do the will of him [God] that sent me, and to finish his work.” This verse proves there is a distinction between some work God has done and the subsequent work Jesus finishes.

Reply: The Father worked during the six Creative Days. On the seventh Creative Day, He rested and the Son was operative. At the end of the Kingdom Age, the seventh Creative Day will have accomplished God’s will and purpose for planet Earth.

2 Pet. 3:7 But the heavens and the earth, which are now, by the same word are kept in store, reserved unto fire against the day of judgment and perdition of ungodly men.

2 Pet. 3:8 But, beloved, be not ignorant of this one thing, that one day is with the Lord as a thousand years, and a thousand years as one day.

When Peter says that “one day is with the Lord as a thousand years, and a thousand years as one day,” he is referring to the thousand-year-long Day of Judgment. We have already entered the Day of Judgment, which will not terminate until the end of the 49,000 years of creation, the 49,000 years of the ordering of the earth’s surface for man, and the seventh one-thousand-year day of the Seventh Creative Day. All three will end at the same point of time. *During* the 1,000 years of the Day of Judgment, the “perdition of ungodly men” will be accomplished, but not until the *end* of the 1,000 years will the “perdition of [all] ungodly men” and the Adversary be complete. In other words, the loosing of Satan will take place within the time period of Jesus’ reign, within the Day of Judgment. God “hath appointed a day, in the which he will judge the world in righteousness by that man [Jesus] whom he hath ordained” (Acts 17:31).

Q: In verse 7, what “heavens” was “kept in store”?

A: The *spiritual* heavens will be destroyed. Just as the literal sun and moon were not removed when the Flood came, so they will remain intact in the future judgment. The “heavens” and the “earth” of verse 7 are the ecclesiastical heavens, the financial heavens, the political heavens—the arrangement of society.

Verse 7 is not saying that the instant the “day of judgment” begins, the destruction will occur, for “judgment must begin at the house of God” (1 Pet. 4:17). The “house of God” can be considered from two standpoints, namely, the true Church and the nominal Church. The judgment of the true Church occurs first, starting with the pronouncement “Come out of her [the nominal Church], my people, that ye be not partakers of her sins, and that ye receive not of her plagues” (Rev. 18:4).

2 Pet. 3:9 The Lord is not slack concerning his promise, as some men count slackness; but is longsuffering to us-ward, not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance.

Habakkuk 2:3 reads, “The vision is yet for an appointed time, but at the end it shall speak, and not lie: though it [seems to] tarry, wait for it; because it will surely come, it will not tarry.” Even though the time periods are fixed, God knows how long to allow repentance before that time limit is reached. He takes into account the long-suffering aspect.

One point in this context is that the Judgment Day is 1,000 years in length, but there is a hint of something else. For many thousands of years, all things have apparently continued the same with no change. (“All things continue as they were from the beginning of the creation”—see verse 4.) Peter has been discussing the problem in the true Church. The whole context is about the consecrated, about those who are truly the Lord’s people, and the inherent dangers to making their calling and election sure or even to getting life. Scoffers in the true Church ask, “Where is the evidence of his presence [*parousia*]?” For thousands of years, there was no change, so what is another 100 or 200 years? This attitude can be developed by looking at the past: “Others predicted so-and-so, but it never materialized.” The account is saying that the Lord has a fixed time, so there will be no tarrying, but in that fixed time, He has taken into consideration the entire Harvest period, including the gleaning work, which is the long-suffering period.

There is still another point. Notice the order: God is “not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance.” Not perishing *precedes* repentance, whereas usually it is the other way around. In other words, Peter is taking into consideration the Great Company class, who fail to make the high calling and who, at the end of the age after the marriage, will be in danger of slipping into Second Death. When we consecrated, our past (Adamic) sins were cast over the Lord’s back. Except for willful sins to a certain extent, we started with a clean slate. However, of those who walk the new life, some slip and get spots and wrinkles on their robes. To get life, this class will have to wash their robes white in the tribulation. God is concerned that they do not fail utterly and “perish,” i.e., go into Second Death. They repented initially and were forgiven, and now they must repent again. Those who remain here after the door is shut will have to reappraise themselves if they want to get life. They will have to closely scrutinize themselves and ask, “What have I done wrong? Why did I fail?” And they will conclude, “I must be in need of cleansing.” This second repentance is essential if they would wash their robes and get life. In other words, God is long-suffering toward the Great Company class.

The entire epistle, all three chapters, deal with the consecrated—those who are knowledgeable and liable to extinction. But here in Chapter 3, the Great Company is particularly being addressed. God is “not willing that any should perish” of this consecrated class who have not made their calling and election sure, but desires that they “all should come to repentance.” Verse 10 helps to explain verse 9.

Q: Does the end of verse 9 refer back to verse 7, which reads, “But the heavens and the earth ... are ... reserved unto fire against the day of judgment and perdition of ungodly men”? Then when verse 9 says that God is “not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance,” is the reference to the world of mankind?

A: Verse 9 pertains to the consecrated, not to the world, and the teachers who cause some of the consecrated to stumble are the most responsible. These unfaithful teachers are the “ungodly men” of verse 7. Why are they called “ungodly”? Because they do not obey the precepts of Jesus and the Holy Scriptures—and this ungodly class, who are described in all three chapters of 2 Peter, will perish. The word “perish” means to die *eternally*, and the world of mankind is not under that judgment yet.

In regard to those who have been misguided in their covenant with the Lord by false teachers, there is hope of retrieval, hope of their not perishing, *if* they wake up in time and see the error of their past conduct. Verse 9 is talking not about the Little Flock but primarily about the secondary (Great Company) class. For instance, the first part of the next verse reads, “But the day of the Lord will come as a thief in the night.” Invariably this text is interpreted as applying to the secret presence. However, it should be distinctly noted not merely that there are several phases of the Time of Trouble—that is, different troubles will come on different classes—but also that “the *day* of the Lord will come as a thief.” When the Lord says, “Behold, *I* come as a thief,” he is speaking of the secret presence, but when “the *day* of the Lord” comes as a thief—the *Day of Judgment*—the perspective is a little different. For “the day of the Lord” to come as a thief means that it will come *suddenly and unexpectedly*. The reference is not to the secret presence, which covers an enduring period of time.

“Therefore be ye also ready: for in such an hour as ye think not the Son of man cometh” (Matt. 24:44). This “coming,” which is not the *parousia* but refers to the rapture, will be sudden, and it ties in with 2 Peter 3:10. Suppose we have been living in a house for many years. All of a sudden, without any previous warning, a thief is about to enter a window, and we hear him. It is in that sense that “the day of the Lord will come as a thief in the night.” And this thief who comes unexpectedly in the night is accompanied by a loud noise, for the ecclesiastical heavens

will pass away with a *great noise*. This is the fall of Babylon. The true Church (the feet members) will be taken *before* the fall of Babylon, and the consecrated who remain behind will be here when Babylon falls. For this remaining class, the Lord is particularly long-suffering, for He has made arrangements to give them a period of time to wash their robes, to reconsecrate and rededicate themselves. Although discouraged at first, they will subsequently wake up and become almost as zealous as the Little Flock was previously. At the very end of the age, just before the rebirth of Israel takes place, the Great Company will be delivered.

In Matthew 24:44, Jesus is saying, “I have told you in advance so that you will not be caught unawares, for in such an hour as ye think not, the Son of man cometh.” Notice that the word “hour” is used, which is a shorter period of time than a “day.” The 365 1/4 days in our calendar year seem like a long period of time, and a day is a shorter period of time, but in contrast, an *hour* is a *very sudden period of time*.

In connection with the Day of Judgment, the Lord does not wish to lose those who repented at the time of consecration but have subsequently gotten their robes soiled and stained. Therefore, He is allowing time in which, in order for them to get life, they *must repent* and cleanse themselves with the blood in the Time of Trouble, or great tribulation (Rev. 7:14). It is not the Time of Trouble that cleanses the Great Company but their going back to the blood of Christ. The time of tribulation will wake them up to the realization of their need for cleansing, and in the final analysis, the Great Company will get life. But the ungodly teachers will be so crystallized in their thinking and have so committed themselves in the error of their way that it will be too late for them to repent. The Apostle Peter zeros in on this class unwittingly, for he did not understand such details for our day. (Of course Paul, being caught up to the third heavens, did understand.) In other words, through the Holy Spirit, Peter was speaking above himself. He was speaking like a prophet under inspiration. We know that in the Old Testament, the prophets spoke mechanically without understanding, but to a certain extent even the apostles did the same. The *Apostles* Peter and Jude speak about this ungodly Second Death class at the end of the age, and as apostles, they could write above their understanding.

When the heavens pass away with a loud noise, the Great Company class will still be here for at least three years based on the three days that Elisha and the sons of the prophets looked for Elijah’s body (2 Kings 2:15–17). The Great Company will witness the destruction of Babylon but not the destruction of Gog and Magog, the final or real end of the Time of Trouble, when God delivers Jacob. Thus, although the Great Company will be delivered *before* Jacob’s Trouble, they will be *in* the Time of Trouble. In His mercy, the Lord will rescue this class—the ready and willing at that juncture of time. Of course the hope is that we are so alert to this situation that we will be taken earlier and, therefore, not be of the ones who are here when the Time of Trouble comes.

In the *Fourth Volume*, the Pastor heard the noises and ferment and saw the trouble coming long in advance, but the Time of Trouble did not start in his day. It is just that his vision was so acute in seeing future events that he gave them a present application. His writings describe the ferment that exists in the financial, ecclesiastical, and civil world. He discerned the anarchistic mood, but Peter is writing about the actual anarchy still future. When the Time of Trouble occurs, it will come suddenly and without too much warning.

Q: In the 1981 study, there was a clarification on the term “the day of the Lord.” Do the comments harmonize with the current explanation, or is this current (1996) study updated thinking? The “Day of the Lord” will be the Day of God, not the Day of Jesus. Based on the fact that the Day of the Lord is a thousand years in length, the thought was expressed that the Day of God is a thousand years long beginning in 1874. However, with regard to the phrasing in verse 10, “*in the which* the heavens shall pass away,” and in verse 12 about the day “*wherein* the

heavens being on fire shall be dissolved,” the thought was stressed that *during the thousand-year period*, there would be a great hissing and passing away of the elements. The point is that the thousand-year application was given to the term “Day of God.”

A: The two thoughts harmonize, for the Day of Judgment begins with the true Church. The first judgment occurred in 1878 with the raising of the sleeping saints, when they were awakened from death and given spirit nature. But other members of the Little Flock are still here during the Harvest period, and they must be dealt with next. As individual saints died during the Harvest, they were immediately caught up in the air. In addition, the feet members will be caught up as a group to meet the Lord. All of these activities are part of the Judgment Day of the *true* house of God.

Next to be considered is the judgment of the nominal Church. To a certain extent, the nominal Church had a partial judgment in 1878 (the same year) when the call to come out of Babylon went forth. But that judgment was merely the *pronouncement of a message*—the *actual fall* is yet future. The finalized judgment of mystic Babylon will occur after the Little Flock is complete beyond the veil. All of these events take place *within* the thousand-year Judgment Day. However, if we look at the whole context, Peter is saying that when the heavens fall with a great noise, that is not the beginning of the Day of Judgment from the standpoint of being the beginning of the thousand years, but it will be the practical, visible, demonstrable, obvious beginning. When the nominal Church falls, all will see it. The principle of a thousand years has always been operative because each Creative Day is 7,000 years long. Adam fell at the beginning of the Seventh Creative Day, and the Creative Days are made up of multiples of thousands. God moves slowly and majestically from our standpoint but quite swiftly from His standpoint.

In the end period, the Lord will be long-suffering to the consecrated class remaining behind, “not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance.” Peter says that the Little Flock will gain an *abundant* entrance (2 Pet. 1:11), but the Lord’s attitude toward the Great Company is much different. He is “not willing [if possible] that any should perish [in Second Death].” The Lord will do everything possible to help them gain life.

All of these events take place within the last 1,000 years of the 49,000 years or, stated another way, within the last 1,000 years of the Seven Creative Days.

2 Pet. 3:10 But the day of the Lord will come as a thief in the night; in the which the heavens shall pass away with a great noise, and the elements shall melt with fervent heat, the earth also and the works that are therein shall be burned up.

This verse helps to explain verse 9. “The day of the Lord will come as a thief in the night.” Invariably this text is interpreted to apply to Jesus’ *secret* presence. When Jesus says, “Behold, I come as a thief,” he is referring to his secret presence. But when the Day of the Lord, the Day of Judgment, comes as a thief, the perspective is one of *suddenness*. The Day of the Lord will come suddenly and unexpectedly. Thus Peter is not referring to the *parousia*, which is an enduring period of time.

Comment: The words “in the night” are spurious in the *Diaglott*. By retaining these words, some confuse the subject with Jesus’ coming as a thief in the night.

2 Pet. 3:11 Seeing then that all these things shall be dissolved, what manner of persons ought ye to be in all holy conversation and godliness,

2 Pet. 3:12 Looking for and hasting unto the coming of the day of God, wherein the heavens

being on fire shall be dissolved, and the elements shall melt with fervent heat?

As Bible Students, we realize Peter is talking about the *figurative* heavens and earth, not the literal heavens, in which the sun and stars shine. The “heavens” (spiritual powers) and the “earth” (civil powers) are to be dissolved in the near future.

Comment: In the 1981 study, a punctuation change was suggested for verses 11 and 12. “Seeing then that all these things shall be dissolved, what manner of persons ought ye to be? In all holy conversation [conduct] and godliness, looking for and hasting unto the coming of the day of God, wherein the heavens being on fire shall be dissolved, and the elements shall melt with fervent heat.”

Q: Would the thought of “hasting” be related to Matthew 24:20, “But pray ye that your flight be not in the winter, neither on the sabbath day”? Would the time when the heavens are “dissolved” be the same as “winter”?

A: Yes. The Little Flock will flee from Babylon before the “winter” Time of Trouble comes, before mystic Babylon falls.

Q: Is the coming of the Day of God related to the Day of Christ?

A: The “day of the Lord” in verse 10 is the “day of God.” The Day of God will come like a thief.

Comment: Micah 1:3,4 reads, “For, behold, the LORD cometh forth out of his place, and will come down, and tread upon the high places of the earth. And the mountains shall be molten under him, and the valleys shall be cleft, as wax before the fire, and as the waters that are poured down a steep place.”

Reply: “LORD” in all capital letters means Jehovah.

Comment: With the words “in the night” not being in the original Greek in verse 10, the Day of the Lord coming like a thief refers not to 1874 but to a later time.

Reply: It refers to the Day of Vengeance, the more self-apparent aspect. For instance, Peter said the heavens will pass away with a tremendous noise. When this Time of Trouble commences, it will be so severe that all people will know it is occurring.

Comment: The word for “Lord” in verse 10 is the Greek word *kurios*, which sometimes refers to God and sometimes to Jesus. Because of the expression “day of God” in verse 12, we know that the “day of the Lord” in verse 10 refers to Jehovah.

Comment: If we go back to verse 9, we can see that the context is talking about God. God “is not slack concerning his promise.”

Reply: Yes, the whole context here is referring to God. Elsewhere the Kingdom work is spoken of as being of God or of Jesus or both. It is both the Day of God and the Day of Christ. God “hath appointed a day, in the which he [God] will judge” (Acts 17:31). This “day” is not merely the Day of Vengeance aspect but extends into the whole Kingdom Age, which is called the Kingdom of God. However, the details of that same Scripture show that God has appointed a “man” (Jesus) to do the actual *direct* face-to-face judgment in the Kingdom. In other words, His Son will be His representative. “Because he [God] hath appointed a day, in the which he [God] will judge the world in righteousness by that man [Christ Jesus] whom he [God] hath ordained; whereof he [God] hath given assurance unto all men, in that he [God] hath raised

him [Jesus] from the dead” (Acts 17:31). The Kingdom is sometimes called the Kingdom of God and sometimes the Kingdom of Christ, but in regard to *direct* judgment, Jesus will deal with the world of mankind and then eventually hand the Kingdom over to the Father.

Comment: The *Diaglott* translates “looking” as “expecting,” and *Strong’s Concordance* has “to anticipate,” the idea being “forward watching.” Thus it is more than a casual looking. The combination of “looking” and “hasting” conveys an attitude of great expectation, great anticipation, and eagerness in wanting the day to come.

Reply: Yes, “earnestly desiring” is the thought. As Christians, we look forward to this day, but we must also look forward to ourselves, to our own heart condition.

2 Pet. 3:13 Nevertheless we, according to his promise, look for new heavens and a new earth, wherein dwelleth righteousness.

Verse 13 expresses the current attitude of the Lord’s people. We look forward to the coming Kingdom. Not only was this verse true at the beginning of the Gospel Age, but it is more true today because we are living at the end of the age.

Comment: “According to his promise” refers to Old Testament Scriptures, one being Isaiah 65:17, “For, behold, I create new heavens and a new earth: and the former shall not be remembered, nor come into mind.” The context subsequently talks about building houses and inhabiting them and the wolf and the lamb feeding together.

Reply: Yes, Isaiah 35 also gives Kingdom promises.

Notice the word “*righteousness*,” and verse 11 has “*holy conduct and godliness*.” Peter is emphatically showing the importance of holiness here in the last times. Holiness is essential if we would be in tune with our expectation. We should make strenuous effort to progress mentally, morally, and spiritually. Peter is saying, “See that you shape up! Examine yourself.”

The “new heavens” and the “new earth” are figurative. Without present truth, nominal Christians generally take such expressions literally. The other extreme is to spiritualize literal Scriptures. Either extreme causes problems. It is important to interpret literal Scriptures literally and figurative texts figuratively. And where verses lend themselves to both interpretations, we should see the literal as well as the spiritual.

Comment: In a study with someone in the nominal Church, the individual said, “I really do not want to be here when the locusts come out of the pit with the armor on and scorpion tails. That will be hideous!”

Reply: He was using the wrong time frame, as well as making a symbolic thought literal.

Comment: Whereas we look for the “new heavens” and the “new earth,” the Apostle John saw them in vision in Revelation 21:1, “And I saw a new heaven and a new earth: for the first heaven and the first earth were passed away; and there was no more sea.”

Q: This chapter is particularly concerned with the destruction of the present society and the overturning of unrighteousness, and Peter urges the consecrated to live a holy and righteous life. Verses 4, 9, and 13, respectively, all mention a “promise”: “Where is the *promise* of his presence?” “The Lord is not slack concerning his *promise*.” “Nevertheless we, according to his *promise*, look for new heavens and a new earth.” Is it possible that verse 4 is referring to the promise of *God’s* coming rather than Jesus’ coming, for Peter especially emphasizes the

vengeance aspect of the coming of the Day of *God* as the chapter continues? Verse 4 is usually associated with the beginning of the *parousia*, but isn't the real thrust of the chapter on *God* and when *He* takes action to overturn all of the unrighteousness that Peter is thundering against in this and the previous chapter?

A: The emphasis is primarily on God, but verse 2 also mentions Jesus and the apostles. Yes, the brethren back in Peter's day would more or less think of the emphasis being on God, and they understood very clearly that when the man Jesus was with them in the flesh, he was not God but God's representative. And they looked for the Second Coming of Jesus, but because of their familiarity with the Old Testament, they also looked forward to God being very actively involved in connection with the Second Coming arrangement.

Comment: To refute the erroneous thought that the "new heavens" and the "new earth" are a literal re-creation, we have the familiar texts "the earth abideth for ever" (Eccl. 1:4) and God "created the heavens ... [and] the earth ... not in vain [but] ... to be inhabited" (Isa. 45:18). There is sufficient Scriptural evidence that Peter is talking about the ecclesiastical heavens and the civil arrangement on earth.

2 Pet. 3:14 Wherefore, beloved, seeing that ye look for such things, be diligent that ye may be found of him in peace, without spot, and blameless.

Comment: "Spot" pertains to a stain from the outside, from "without," and "blameless" pertains to that which is within.

Reply: In 2 Peter 2:13, Peter spoke about "spots," or false teachers, in the spiritual feasts whose destiny is Second Death (compare Jude 12). The false teachers are extreme spots, but there are different degrees of spots. For instance, the Lord's people get spots and wrinkles on their garments, but the spots are to be washed in the blood of Christ, and the wrinkles are to be pressed with an iron. The spots are more outward and the wrinkles more inward in the sense of the individual's needing to be more energized and zealous. If ignored, a spot can get so deep that it cannot be washed with the blood, and that is where the teachers have more difficulty.

2 Pet. 3:15 And account that the longsuffering of our Lord is salvation; even as our beloved brother Paul also according to the wisdom given unto him hath written unto you;

"And account that the longsuffering of our Lord is salvation." The long-suffering of God provides not merely for the salvation or calling of newcomers but also for the salvation of those who are already consecrated. There is also the thought that in the little time frame of the coming Time of Trouble, those with spots on their garments will have an opportunity to awaken to their need of cleansing and to wash their robes white in the blood of Christ. The subtle implication here is that Peter is addressing not only the Little Flock but also the Great Company, and the Great Company will find themselves in the trouble. They will hear the fall of Babylon and witness the beginning of the dissolution of all law and order. First, the nominal Church will fall. A little while later all civil powers will go down. Finally, the nation of Israel will experience a time of trouble. In other words, the Time of Trouble will begin with the fall of mystic Babylon and climax with Jacob's Trouble. Trouble prior to the actual fall of Babylon is just tremors preceding the great earthquake, or rupture of society. The Great Company will not only see the fall of Babylon but also be here in the anarchy. Their spiritual change will come just before the deliverance of the Holy Remnant.

Thus Peter is hinting at the need for cleansing on the part of the Great Company. Some brethren who are now sleepy will become very alert and sensitive to this instruction after the Little Flock is off the scene. The Great Company will reread these Scriptures and become

reenergized. In addition, the Holy Spirit will give solace so that their sentiments will be, “Yet I will rejoice in the LORD, I will joy in the God of my salvation. The LORD God is my strength, and he will make my feet like hinds’ feet, and he will make me to walk upon mine high places” (Hab. 3:18,19). But first, before the strengthening, will come weeping, remorse, repentance, and the washing of the robes. Then a little period of joy will follow. Why? Because the Great Company will realize they are being used. They will be instrumental in the final witness to Israel, and it will be a *real witness*, not just a patting on the back.

2 Pet. 3:16 As also in all his epistles, speaking in them of these things; in which are some things hard to be understood, which they that are unlearned and unstable wrest, as they do also the other scriptures, unto their own destruction.

The word “all,” which is not included in some of the ancient manuscripts, should be omitted. The verse should read: “As also in [some of] his [Paul’s] epistles.” In other words, more than once Paul spoke of the things that Peter was discussing.

The meekness of Peter is apparent as he says that Paul wrote on “some things hard to be understood.” He acknowledged Paul as his superior, telling others that Paul was wiser than he.

Comment: Not only did Peter earlier accept Paul’s rebuke and learn accordingly, but he held no grudge. Now he goes a step further in verse 15 and calls Paul his “beloved brother.” Peter had warm affection for Paul.

“They that are unlearned and unstable wrest [some of the hard-to-be-understood things that Paul wrote about], as they do also the other scriptures, unto their own destruction.” This second epistle of Peter was written just before his death and just before the holocaust of AD 70 and the prominence of John as the last apostle. During this time when John was the surviving apostle, a class of Christians liked some of Paul’s teachings but wrested them “unto their own destruction.” They liked the idea of the inner man (the new creature) and the outer man (the old man)—a distinction that the Apostle Paul pointed out—but they twisted his thoughts and used them as an occasion for the flesh. They said we should not judge the outer man because what is inside is the important thing. (Sometimes we even hear this philosophy today.) The false teachers in John’s day used this distinction between the inner man and the outer man as an excuse for the failings of the flesh. However, the inner man must consent to the wrongdoing in order for it to occur, and as the inner man develops, the outer man should proportionately be beneficially affected.

Comment: The false reasoning is referred to in 2 Peter 2:18,19. “For when they speak great swelling words of vanity, they allure through the lusts of the flesh, through much wantonness, those that were clean escaped from them who live in error. While they promise them liberty, they themselves are the servants of corruption.”

Reply: Yes, the false teachers emphasized the importance of the heart to the neglect or permissiveness of their conduct. This philosophy was called docetism, and that same philosophy is starting in the movement right now. Although already in the Bible Student movement, docetism is suppressed at present. It is like an illness that starts slowly and then grows and grows until finally it becomes incurable.

Comment: Some excuse improper conduct with the words “he [or she] has a good heart.”

Reply: Paul’s statement “Henceforth know we no man after the flesh” (2 Cor. 5:16) sounds wonderful from the standpoint of license or a libertine philosophy. Christian liberty and license are not the same. Libertine reasoning is as follows: “Henceforth know we no man after the

flesh. Therefore, we love one another and do not judge conduct.”

Comment: “They that are unlearned and unstable wrest ... also the other [Old Testament] scriptures, unto their own destruction.” Peter seems to be making the connection that “all his [Paul’s] epistles” are now part of Holy Writ and the Old Testament texts are the “other scriptures.” Peter was giving validity to Paul’s epistles.

2 Pet. 3:17 Ye therefore, beloved, seeing ye know these things before, beware lest ye also, being led away with the error of the wicked, fall from your own stedfastness.

Peter sums up (paraphrased): “Be careful that you are not led away with the error I previously described.” Of course the Epistle of Jude must be read too with the examples of the “way of Cain,” the “error of Balaam for reward,” the “gainsaying of Core,” and the angels who left their first estate (Jude 6,11).

2 Pet. 3:18 But grow in grace, and in the knowledge of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ. To him be glory both now and for ever. Amen.

“To him be glory both now and for ever. Amen.” In this case, the “him” refers to Jesus, and Peter’s emphasis is a clue that he did not copy Jude word for word and that Jude did not copy him. Jude’s epistle was written later, after the two epistles of Peter. The order is 1 and 2 Peter; 1, 2, and 3 John; Jude; and Revelation. Since John outlived Paul, Peter, and Jude, there was a time during the writing of the Book of Revelation that he was the only living apostle.

In Jude 25, the emphasis is on Jehovah: “To the only wise God our Saviour, be glory and majesty, dominion and power, both now and ever. Amen.” The ancient Greek manuscripts favor this thought.

Peter’s earlier experience of denying the Savior left a scar in his life. As a result, his personal affection for Jesus can be seen in verse 18 where he calls *Jesus* the Saviour. In the Book of Jude, *God* is called the Saviour. From the standpoint of *principle*, not emotion, God is the Savior as well as Jesus.

Comment: In connection with the admonitions of what kind of persons we ought to be, we have the Scripture “But seek ye first the kingdom of God, and his righteousness; and all these things shall be added unto you” (Matt. 6:33).

Reply: That is true if the seeking of the Kingdom of God is not merely one point in time but a *continuing* focus. We had that focus when we first consecrated, and it should remain with us to the end of our course so that we will “be not weary in well doing” (2 Thess. 3:13).

[Note: Although considerable commentary has already been devoted to this third chapter of Peter's second epistle, the subject matter is so timely, so sobering, and so essential for Christians living at the end of the age that a separate discourse given by Bro. Frank Shallieu in June 1995 on 2 Peter 3:1–10 has also been transcribed and appears below.]

2 PETER 3:1–10

2 Pet. 3:1 This second epistle, beloved, I now write unto you; in both which I stir up your pure minds by way of remembrance:

2 Pet. 3:2 That ye 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 Saviour:

It is interesting that not until this third chapter, which is after the startling introduction of the first and second chapters, does the Apostle Peter say, "This *second* epistle, beloved, I now write unto you." He is saying in effect, "I will now go into the *real reason* that I am writing this second epistle to you, namely, to show the necessity for our own personal character development in order to be ready to meet the Lord." We need more than mere "news" development—more than just knowing about prophecy and what is to take place—for when that day comes, when the Lord comes to take the feet members, the crucial issue is that *we are to be ready!* Therefore, Peter now declares his intention to introduce somewhat belatedly the more important matter to be discussed: "I stir up your pure minds by way of remembrance: that ye may be mindful of the words which were spoken before by the holy prophets, and ... the apostles."

Peter is telling us that what he is about to say is not a new subject, for both the Old Testament and the New Testament bear testimony on the subject of the last days.

2 Pet. 3:3 Knowing this first, that there shall come in the last days scoffers, walking after their own lusts,

2 Pet. 3:4 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 the creation.

"Coming" is *parousia* in the Greek, that is, "presence." "Where is the promise of his [Jesus'] presence?" The word "presence" gives a little clue as to the nature of the scoffers, for they will mock present truth. While, in effect, they will be scoffing at God, they will be directly mocking those who are purportedly in present truth. The preponderant number of the scoffers has been correctly identified as being in the nominal Church. In other words, professed Christianity will turn on those who profess present truth.

However, instead of trying to identify this prophecy as occurring now, we believe it pertains to events that *have not yet happened*. At present, we are not being particularly mocked. Whatever is said privately or in seminaries about present truth does not really trouble us, for we can still meet in peace. Therefore, the fulfillment of this prophecy must be thought of as still future.

"Where is the promise of his coming?" has the thought of "Where is the *evidence* of Jesus' presence?" Professed Christians will laugh and say, "To us, your claim that he is already present is ridiculous." The very fact the word is "presence" suggests an attitude and situation that are just beginning to take place; that is, some with a present-truth background, some who are associated with what we call the Truth movement, are going into the nominal Church. At present, they are going because they are dissatisfied with certain things. But there is another point: when the hour of the beast takes place, when persecuting power is formulated, when it

is time for us to refuse to say, “A confederacy,” pressure will be brought to bear on the Truth movement to join in the ecumenical movement in a meaningful way. Even now the various denominations are trying to unite, but the time will come when pressure is exerted on all who profess Christianity, whoever they are, to join the ecumenical movement. For instance, the evangelical churches are already joining together to try to apply pressure business-wise. Along financial lines, the evangelical movement is trying to have Christians do business with fellow Christians. They also exert pressure along political lines and say, “If you believe in righteousness and godliness, why don’t you vote, participate, and join instead of just talking?”

However, the hour of power will add another dimension. Instead of just preaching ecumenism, they will try to enforce it through real pressure and persecution. Those of our membership will then have to make a decision, and many will join the ecumenical movement. The trend we see starting now will increase as the hour of power approaches, the result being that many right in the congregations of the nominal Church will be knowledgeable about present truth and the *parousia* of Christ. Stated another way, a knowledgeable element will be on the opposing side, and this element will develop into the Judas class. Based on the type of Jesus’ last week, a Judas class will turn on fellow brethren at the end of the age. Just as Judas met with the scribes and Pharisees to discuss how to betray Jesus, so the Judas class will associate with the nominal Church and betray their consecrated brethren in present truth. Whereas the motive of Judas was greed, the motive of the Judas class will be expediency and prudence.

Of course, of those who do not join the nominal Church at that time, not all will be in the Little Flock. However, those who do not make their calling and election sure will be protected in the Time of Trouble in the sense that the wrath of the people will be against the false Christian Church and not against those whom the public realizes led a life of sincerity. When pressure is brought against the nominal Church and the system falls, the Lord will overrule so that the Great Company class does not feel the brunt of the trouble but is forced out of Babylon. It is the compromising class—those who pursue a policy of expediency—who will develop into the Judas class.

The attitude of the scoffers in the nominal system will be, “Where is the evidence of his presence? All things continue the same as they were from the beginning of the creation.” Evangelicals expect Jesus to come as a future *visual* event.

Comment: On religious radio stations, the comment has been made that Christians should hire Christians. A “Yellow Pages” directory of Christian businesses has been prepared, and it is urged that we should use them when we want work done.

Reply: In other words, this is a foregleam of the mark of the beast, and those who do not cooperate will find their pocketbook pinched in various ways. The Freedom of Information Act, which allows public access to private information including Social Security numbers and bank accounts, has the potential for aiding persecution.

What does the term “walking after their own lusts” mean? There are all kinds of lusts. In fact, expediency or protecting one’s own financial interests or fellowships is a form of “lust.” With the presence starting in 1874 and the current date being more than 120 years later, the time seems long and the expectations of the spiritual rapture of the Church have not materialized. The test of time, mixed with sarcasm and mocking, leads many to question the invisible presence.

2 Pet. 3:5 For this they willingly are ignorant of, that by the word of God the heavens were of old, and the earth standing out of the water and in the water:

What about the word “willingly”? This class either did not want to be instructed or, if they had understanding at one time, went contrary to it. If a Christian goes into darkness, “how great is that darkness!” (Matt. 6:23). And why is this class “willingly ignorant”? Because they walk “after their own lusts.”

Comment: 2 Thessalonians 2:10–12 applies to this class who go back on the truth they once had. “They received not the love of the truth, that they might be saved. And for this cause God shall send them strong delusion, that they should believe a lie: That they all might be damned who believed not the truth, but had pleasure in unrighteousness.” Their “unrighteousness” is related to lusts and lawlessness.

Reply: This previously enlightened class go into darkness and receive just condemnation. Because they received the truth but *not the love* of the truth, they will be extinguished in Second Death. This falling away within the Truth movement is described in principle in Psalm 91:7, “A thousand shall fall at thy side, and ten thousand at thy right hand; but it shall not come nigh thee.”

“By the word of God the heavens were of old, and the earth standing out of the water and in the water.” At the time of Noah, there was not the full realization that three quarters of the surface of the earth is water and only one quarter is land. In those days, the world’s population lived in the Middle East in a relatively small portion of the earth. Hence the people were not cognizant of the mass of water on the face of the globe. In addition, there was a mass of water over their heads, that is, the last water ring, which fell at the time of the Deluge.

Long before human beings lived on earth, many deluges occurred, and some of the later ones buried the dinosaurs in the Carboniferous Era, when the atmosphere was so heavy-laden that the bone structures had to be enormous to survive. Thus large sea and land creatures were buried in ice long before Noah’s day. Prior to man’s creation, the heavier materials were filtered out by gravity as various rings collapsed. What was left in Noah’s day was a clearer, more transparent veil of water around the earth that diffused the sunlight and gave the air a hazy appearance. The haziness seemed normal to the people back there, for they had never seen a clear atmosphere. They did not realize that the water ring was creating the hothouse climate or effect. However, the fact that Peter describes the people as “willingly ignorant” means they had been previously informed. The Scriptures do not give us the information, but someone knowledgeable about the water ring was on hand to inform them. And then Noah came along and said the water ring would collapse and cause a Flood. Therefore, the people theoretically knew about the ring, but because it had existed for more than 1,656 years, they did not believe it would collapse.

The point is that if God predicts and describes coming trouble, *it will occur*. Even though rain had never fallen up to that point, *the Flood came as prophesied* by Noah. And just as Noah prophesied back there, so in the Truth movement today, there is knowledge of trouble to come in the near future.

2 Pet. 3:6 Whereby the world that then was, being overflowed with water, perished:

2 Pet. 3:7 But the heavens and the earth, which are now, by the same word are kept in store, reserved unto fire against the day of judgment and perdition of ungodly men.

2 Pet. 3:8 But, beloved, be not ignorant of this one thing, that one day is with the Lord as a thousand years, and a thousand years as one day.

The coming judgment at the end of the age will be a “judgment ... of *ungodly* men,” a judgment

of those who merit *perdition*, or Second Death. The strong point is that those who sincerely profess consecration and then later depart and never come to repentance will go into Second Death if they are deemed culpable. One purpose of the “fire” is the “perdition of ungodly men” at the end of the Gospel Age. In the testing of the Little Season at the end of the Kingdom Age, another “perdition of ungodly men” will occur. Therefore, Peter brings in the thought that “one day is with the Lord as a thousand years, and a thousand years as one day.” God’s purpose is to have a clean universe without sin. After the Little Season, anyone who sins will go into Second Death immediately. God will always hold that prerogative.

Q: Wouldn’t the phrase “perdition of ungodly men” have special force because it follows the second chapter of this epistle, which discusses the Judas class and parallels the Book of Jude?

A: Yes, these ungodly men “have forsaken the right way, and are gone astray, following the way of Balaam ... who loved the wages of unrighteousness” (2 Pet. 2:15). They are “wells without water, clouds that are carried with a tempest; to whom the mist of darkness is reserved for ever” (2 Pet. 2:17). The crux of the matter is that there will be a perdition of ungodly men both in the last days of the Gospel Age and at the end of the thousand years. In other words, the thousand years are a screening process that will eventually clean out the universe—like a filter.

Q: Are verses 7 and 8 saying that the “day of judgment” is the *thousand-year period* and that the incorrigible will be screened out in the forepart, throughout, and at the end?

A: Yes, it is a screening process. The *seeming* slackness concerning God’s promise led to the earlier question “Where is the *promise* of his coming [presence]?” What in reality *is not a delay* just seems to be a delay, but the stress of waiting unsettles some to their injury, spiritually speaking.

2 Pet. 3:9 **The Lord is not slack concerning his promise, as some men count slackness; but is longsuffering to us-ward, not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance.**

“Us-ward” refers to the consecrated of the Gospel Age. It is true that God wants to save mankind and has appointed the Kingdom Age of mercy for that purpose, but the consecrated of the Gospel Age, who are already informed, who are informed in advance, are responsible. Thus there are two “screening outs”: during the Gospel Age for the consecrated and in the Kingdom for the world of mankind.

2 Pet. 3:10 **But the day of the Lord will come as a thief in the night; in the which the heavens shall pass away with a great noise, and the elements shall melt with fervent heat, the earth also and the works that are therein shall be burned up.**

“The day of the Lord will come as a thief in the night.” How does a thief come in the night? He sneaks in undetected, stealthily. Therefore, Jesus’ presence is a secret presence at first. Just as the thief’s presence is discovered later, *after the fact*, by a smashed window, the loss of goods, etc., so the “day of the Lord” comes secretly. From a natural standpoint, it is a shock or surprise when people suddenly realize a thief has broken into their house.

Thus there are two aspects: (1) a secret, unobserved intrusion (*parousia*) that is (2) later realized (*epiphania, apokalupsis*). The day of the Lord comes in as a thief, and the explosion, or “great noise,” occurs later. The initial invisible presence will subsequently become manifest with light, fire, revelation, and startling revelations when the Lord speaks in anger in Israel. He will be revealed when He visits judgment on Gog and Magog and delivers the Holy Remnant.

Q: 2 Peter 2:21 reads, “For it had been better for them not to have known the way of righteousness, than, after they have known it, to turn from the holy commandment delivered unto them.” Would this verse apply particularly to a newly consecrated class? If so, it seems to apply especially to what is happening in the Bible Student movement today where some of the younger ones are going into the nominal Church.

A: Yes, that is true at present. However, under the “pressure cooker” at the very end of the age, some of the consecrated of all ages and lengths of consecration will be affected.

The entire thrust of 2 Peter 3 is an admonition to sincere Christians, who are desiring to please the Lord. While we desire to hasten the coming of the Kingdom and the exoneration of God’s character, there is also a measure of trepidation. Some say we should never fear, but that is not what the Bible says. God appreciates those who fear and tremble at His Word (Isa. 66:5; Phil. 2:12).

The thought of lasciviousness in the Book of Jude is a little different from the aspect Peter treats. Jude goes into the reason for walking after the flesh, whereas Peter goes into greater depth in his two epistles, especially in the end-of-the-age aspect of his second epistle.

Q: What is the time sequence from the beginning of Jesus’ invisible secret presence until his presence is recognized by all?

A: The suggestion has been 120 years, but the question is when to start counting. Do the 120 years date from 1874, the initial return of Christ, or from 1878, which marks the resurrection of the sleeping saints, the start of the Harvest period, and the beginning of the return of favor to natural Israel?

To Protestants, the worship of the Virgin Mary is a hard pill to swallow, but when they see the trouble, they will compromise and join the confederacy (Isa. 8:12). Even today we see the standards deteriorating. Protestants used to *protest*. We live in an age of compromise and homogenization.