

BIBLE COMPANION COMMENTARY:

2 PETER

2 PETER

PREFACE

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Are there errors of thought and intellectual process in these volumes? Surely there are. Let me know about them. But don't fail to see the wood for the trees. Never let the wonder of the simple, basic Gospel of the Lord Jesus Christ and His Kingdom become obscured by all the angst over correctly interpreting this or that Bible verse. Believe it, respond to it, be baptized into Him, and let the word become flesh in you as it was so supremely in Him.

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Duncan Heaster

2 PETER CHAPTER 1

1:1 *Simon Peter, a servant and apostle of Jesus Christ, to those that have obtained the same precious faith with us in the righteousness of our God, and the Saviour Jesus Christ-* Peter progresses in his humility from calling himself "an apostle of Jesus" (1 Pet. 1:1) to adding "a servant and an apostle". Growing humility should characterize all spiritual growth. He saw faith as what was "obtained"; even faith is the gift of God in that some are called and others are not (Eph. 2:8; 2 Thess. 3:2). The Greek for "obtained" is the same word used for receiving a lot cast, when many other words could have been used. We sense in Peter at the end of his life a deep awareness that all is of grace, and we respond to that grace in faith, but thereby even faith is a gift, *charis*, grace of God. That faith is in the reality of righteousness imputed to us in Christ, on which basis we can be humbly confident of future salvation. If we do really believe it, we cannot be idle in this knowledge of Christ; it will elicit in us a response (:8 RV).

1:2 *Grace to you and peace be multiplied in the knowledge of God, and of Jesus our Lord-* This was no mere standard greeting; Peter believed that his prayerful wish for his readership would be fulfilled in them appreciating the grace hinted at in :1, and having an ever multiplying peace with God. This assurance of grace and peace is from knowing the

Father and Son in the Hebrew sense of 'knowing' a person, i.e. having a relationship with them, rather than growing in incremental knowledge of theology.

1:3 *Seeing that His divine power has granted to us all things that pertain to life and godliness, through the precise and correct knowledge of Him that called us by His own glory and virtue-* The grace explained on :1 is God's power to us; the Spirit is both the power of God and also His work within us, empowering us to have "all things" required for the spiritual life. The precise knowledge of Him doesn't mean that the more theory we acquire, the more power we have. For Peter's audience would have included many illiterate folk, whose access to the Old Testament scrolls was limited, and who only heard the earliest New Testament documents read to them. The knowledge in view is therefore that of relationship, as noted on :2. Indeed the Greek is better rendered "acknowledgment"; it is the recognition of God's power at work in us, and an openness to receive all the empowerment He gives, which is so critical. God's Spirit power works through His calling us; as noted on :1, we "obtained... faith" because we were called to it. And the end result of God's system of calling some by grace is to His glory by us in marvel and thankfulness.

1:4 *Whereby He has granted to us His precious and exceedingly great promises, that through these you may become partakers of the divine nature, having escaped from the corruption that is in that world by lust-* Just as "faith" is "obtained" or granted (:1), so too the promises which form the basis of the new covenant are likewise "granted" by the power of the Spirit (:3). The preciousness of the faith we have been given (:1; 1 Pet. 1:7) connects with the preciousness of the promises in which we have faith. The precious "faith" given is therefore specifically faith / belief in the precious promises. Whilst on one hand God will not force people to believe, on the other hand, our faith is so weak that without God's involvement in it we shall never believe enough.

The context here is of the new life possible in the power of the Spirit. The great and precious promises could refer to the promises of the Holy Spirit. Or the plural "promises" may be an intensive plural for the one special promise, of the Spirit. Peter's initial audience were those he had baptized at Pentecost, urging them then to accept the "promise" of the promised Holy Spirit (Acts 2:38,39). The Lord had promised the Spirit several times, and Paul likewise refers to the promise of the Spirit (Gal. 3:14; Eph. 1:13). Acts 2:33 had also made the connection clear between promise and Spirit: "He has been raised to the right side of God, his Father, and has received from him the Holy Spirit, as he had promised". It was and is these promises of the Spirit which empower us to overcome "lust". The land promises to Abraham do not of themselves contain that promise.

The very fact we have received the promises should mean that therefore we separate ourselves "from the corruption that is in the world". We will be happy to have a light hold on possession of property, knowing that this earth is ours, it's just that for now, we are just passing through it, surveying it, after the pattern of Abraham. Yet the corruption of lust has overtones of immorality, which we noted on 1 Peter were a problem for the Jewish converts.

The past tense "having escaped" suggests that partaking in the Divine nature is something we now experience. Peter will soon use the same word, again in the past tense, to speak of how we "have escaped" from the world (2:18,20). Those who have escaped are "partakers". The same word is used by Peter in describing himself as a "partaker of the glory" (1 Pet. 5:1). Insofar as we escape the corrupting lusts of the world, we partake right now in the "Divine nature". This is hard to define if we isolate the phrase, but it could be summarized as the essence of God, what by nature He stands for, His Name. And :5-7 go on to define what the characteristics of God's essential nature really are- the various aspects of the Spirit which we can now have in our own spirit. And we partake in those things as we disassociate or end our partaking / fellowshiping with the world of lust and corruption; we

partake in His Spirit as we stop our partaking in the flesh. "The Divine nature" is put as the opposite of "the corruption... through lust". The idea is as in Heb. 12:10, of being right now "partakers in His holiness". The phrase broadly parallels Paul's idea of receiving God's holy Spirit into our hearts.

Partaking of Divine nature is therefore ongoing now. It is not correct to think that we live now as any other secular person does, but with our baptism guaranteeing some huge change to Divine nature for us at the Lord's return. We are on a process and path of partaking of that nature now, although it will be physically and materially expressed in the change of nature required for us to become immortal.

1:5 *Yes and for this very cause you on your part should show all diligence-* We are now partaking in Divine "nature" (:4). The essential idea of the Greek word for "nature" is that of growth; for God is His Spirit, He is dynamic. We are therefore, "for this very cause", to experience ongoing growth, with the various aspects of spirituality reinforcing each other as we grow. The spiritual characteristics now listed are the things of the "Divine nature" (:4) which we now partake in. "Diligence" in Greek carries the idea of speed, haste and urgency. This would fit with the reasoning we will encounter in chapter 3- that the sooner we develop spiritually, the sooner the Lord will come.

To your faith add virtue, and to virtue, knowledge- This cannot mean that we consciously plan our own growth by adding characteristics to those developed earlier. Life doesn't work like that, nor does development of character and personality. If the idea was that we progressively add things to our own personality then a different Greek word would surely have been used; the word is usually translated 'to minister to'. The idea is that someone ministers or adds to another. Peter uses a form of the word in 1 Pet. 4:11 to describe how God "gives" or "adds" in order for us to have the ability to serve Him. Vine comments: "The verb originally means to bear the expense of a chorus, which was done by a person selected by the state, who was obliged to defray all the expenses of training and maintenance. In the New Testament the word has lost this technical sense, and is used in the general sense of supplying or providing". It is used nearly always about the ministering or supply of the Spirit to us (2 Cor. 9:10; Gal. 3:5; Col. 2:19). Our partaking in these things of the Divine nature is of course our choice, and yet the Spirit is operative in leading us on this path of development. The Spirit of God is His mind, His way of thinking, what He is by nature; so partaking in His nature will be through the gift and operation of His Spirit. And a synthesis develops whereby one spiritual characteristic leads to another.

The "virtue" we are to have is a reflection of God's "virtue" in calling us (:3); and that calling was by grace, energy expended in order to intervene in our lives by grace and seek to lead us to salvation. It is that "virtue" we are asked to have.

There is a great emphasis by Peter on the need for "knowledge" to overcome the coming tribulation: 1 Pet.3:7; 2 Pet.1:2-6,8,16; 2:20; 3:18; an impressive list. By all means compare this with Dan. 12:10, which prophecies a sudden jump forward in understanding God's word by the faithful of the last days. But 'knowledge' in its Hebraic sense refers to relationship; and it would have been difficult for an illiterate readership to amass technical knowledge. Peter himself was likely illiterate; Peter's confidence in preaching to the wise of this world in his *a-grammatos* way (see on Acts 4:13) is continued in the way his letters stress that the only true knowledge is that of Christ (2 Pet. 1:5,6; 3:18). He was writing in response to the Gnostic heresy that *gnosis*, knowledge, enlivens the eternal spark within man until a man's knowledge becomes his 'immortal soul'. Peter didn't leave this for the more erudite to combat. Like an illiterate peasant farmer unashamedly challenging atheistic evolution, Peter powerfully made his point.

1:6 *And to your knowledge self-control, and to your self-control patience, and to your patience, reverence toward God-* As noted on :5, this process is not consciously controlled by

the believer, but is the path of operation taken by God's Spirit for those who are open to it. There is no chronological sense here- otherwise it would be a case of having self-control and patience before having any reverence toward God. The sense rather is of a symbiotic growth towards spiritual maturity.

1:7 *And to your reverence toward God, brotherly kindness, and to your brotherly kindness, love-* Relationship with God is reflected in relationship with others, especially our brethren, as John's writings often make clear. We are not able to claim a relationship with God whilst ignoring our brethren. The fruit [singular] of the Spirit is love, love manifested in all the various ways we have listed in the descriptions of the "fruit of the Spirit". And here likewise, we are not reading of sequential, chronological development, in which "love" is not supplied into the mix until the end of the process; rather, the entire symbiotic relationship which comprises our spirituality is summarized in love.

Our experience of tribulation leads to the development of patience, then real hope of salvation, and above all, as the final stage of maturity, "the love of God is shed abroad in our hearts by the Holy Spirit which is given unto us" (Rom. 5:5). It is the work of the Spirit within us which matures us towards the final maturity of love. Here, 2 Pet. 1:5-7 describes a similar upward spiral of chronological development, again culminating in brotherly kindness and then, love. And again it is the work of the Spirit which effects this work.

1:8- see on 3 Jn. 11.

For if these things are yours and abound, they make you to be neither idle nor unfruitful in the precise and correct knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ- "In the... knowledge" is better "unto the... knowledge". By living in the Spirit, and developing every aspect of the characteristics which comprise "the Divine nature", we come to 'know Christ' in the sense of relationship with Him. And that point of mature relationship is "love"; and it is not a relationship for the sake of it, but like any good relationship, ours with Jesus has fruit, it motivates and inspires to action and activity, rather than being idle in our knowledge / relationship with the Lord Jesus. And there is an upward spiral in it all; if the fruits of the Spirit abound in us, then they in turn make us fruitful in our knowledge / relationship with our Lord Jesus. This is the secret to spiritual growth; and this is a window onto quite how the human Lord Jesus could be as morally perfect as God.

1:9- see on Lk. 17:12.

For he that lacks these things is blind, seeing only what is near, having forgotten the cleansing from his old sins- If we lack spiritual fruit, we have forgotten our cleansing from sin. The implication is that an awareness of our cleansing urges us in gratitude toward spiritual growth. To not 'see' the forgiveness of past sins is to be short sighted, to live seeing only what is immediately before our vision. And that is the sad state of the majority of people. The Jewish converts to whom Peter was writing had forgotten that they were serious sinners, forgiven by grace, and could not 'see' the significance of their baptism for the forgiveness of sins. Peter in preaching to them in Acts 2 had laboured the need for forgiveness; and now he is writing to those same converts many years later, sad that they had lost sight of that urgency for cleansing which they had initially had. The moment of cleansing from sin was on the cross (Heb. 1:3 s.w.). The Lord's cross failed to speak to them as it once had.

1:10 *Wherefore brothers, give the more diligence to make your calling and election sure-* We were called and chosen from the beginning, by pure grace. But this is not to say that one man is zapped for salvation whilst another is not, and there is no further say in the matter. We must "make sure" that calling by living appropriately to the fact we have been saved by grace. The way to do that was to focus on the development of spirituality as just mentioned in :5-7.

For if you do these things, you shall never stumble- The "things" in view are the "things" of :8, the spiritual attributed of :5-7. If we live in the spirit of those things, in the upward spiral of spirituality which we discussed on :5, then we will not have the opportunity to stumble in our walk. This again is a window onto how the Lord did not stumble in His path. He gave Himself over fully to the path of spirituality, whereby one aspect reinforces and elicits others; and so the opportunity to stumble arose with far less force than it does in the life of the immature person who tries to fight each temptation with steel will and knuckles white with the tension of attempting self-control in our own strength.

1:11 *For thus shall be richly supplied to you the entrance into the eternal kingdom of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ-* Entering the Kingdom is a phrase commonly on the Lord's lips in the Gospels. Jn. 3:5 teaches that we can only enter the Kingdom if we are born of the Spirit, and it is that work of the spirit which has been in view throughout 2 Peter 1 so far. But we must play our part, doing the things (:10) which the Spirit leads us to.

Perhaps the richness or abundance of entry implies that there will be different degrees of reward in the Kingdom. Are these not a reflection of the different levels which men have served God on in this life? One star will shine brighter than another; one will rule over five cities, another over two. There is entry into the Kingdom, and an 'abundant' entry (AV). Or the idea may simply be that the final moment of entry into the Kingdom will be the highest exemplification of the Lord's abundant or rich grace toward us.

1:12 *Wherefore I shall be ready always to put you in remembrance of these things, though you know them and are established in the truth which is with you-* One of the themes in Peter's second letter, written as it was at the very end of his life (2 Pet. 1:14), was that of the need to "remember" the words of the Lord Jesus (2 Pet. 1:12,13,15; 2:3; 3:1). This was with evident allusion (the same word is used) to the way that on his shameful night, Peter had remembered the word of Christ, and wept those bitter tears of ineffable regret (Lk. 22:61). Peter knew some of his sheep were weary with the way, and needed a like repentance and subsequent energizing which he had known. He was wishing all his readers (and that includes us) a path of growth that followed his. He had always *known* the words of Christ; indeed, he had loved them. He shows himself an enthusiast for Bible study and reflection on the Lord's words. But he didn't remember them in that they weren't living as a compelling force within his conscience. After his first denial and the cock crowing, surely he 'remembered' the Lord's words: that before the cock crowed twice, he would deny Him thrice. He must have shrugged off that first cock crowing as coincidence, sure he wouldn't deny again. And then the second denial- well, there was no cock crow, so, don't worry... But he wasn't aware enough of his own liability to failure to have the Lord's warning words in the forefront of his mind. He didn't pause to reflect that the cock would soon crow again, and therefore he would be sorely tempted to make the third denial. He knew the word of the Lord, but failed to remember it. And this he now realized. And he urges his readers to learn more quickly and less painfully what he had to be forced to learn.

Now Peter was converted, he was strengthening his brethren (Lk. 22:32). This theme of strengthening was evident in Peter's letters (s.w. 1 Pet. 5:10; 2 Pet. 1:12; 3:17). Some of his last written words were that "You... are *established* in the present truth" (2 Pet. 1:12 AV); he uses the same Greek word which the Lord used when He asked Peter so *strengthen* his brethren (Lk. 22:32). Peter at the very end knew that he had made it. His awareness of his own failures was at the root of his appreciation of his Lord's grace, and this was the motive power behind all his pastoral work. But "truth" often refers to the sure reality that we shall be saved; the hope, the confidence, that if we die now or the Lord returns, we shall definitely be in the Kingdom. This is as the AV puts it "the present truth". This doesn't mean that truth varies and is true only at any given moment for that time. The idea is not of 'truth' as in

intellectual purity, but "truth" as in assurance of the highest and most ultimate truth- that at this present moment, I shall be saved. That is the basis for a sure hope, and of all joy and peace through believing. We may fall away tomorrow; but we can rejoice in the "present truth", what is true at this present moment.

1:13 *And I think it right, as long as I am in this tabernacle, to stir you up by putting you in remembrance-* Peter saw his death as a taking down of a tent (2 Pet. 1:13), using the same word for the tabernacle he had wanted to build for his Lord at the transfiguration (Mt. 17:4). Then, he had wanted the tent to be set up so that the time of the Lord's departure wouldn't come; so that the Lord would stay with them there, with Moses and Elijah, in what must have seemed like the Kingdom of God. Again, Peter didn't want the cross, either for his Lord or for himself. But now he had learnt his lesson; he saw that his tent must be taken down, the vision of the glory of the Lord Jesus, the words of His coming death and future Kingdom, these were quite enough. There had been no need of the tent on the mountain, and now he saw there was no need for the tent of his body either. We are all the same. Our death will literally be a death with the Lord, in that our resurrection will be after the pattern of His (Rom. 6:5).

Yet Peter goes on to talk about the transfiguration in :17,18. He had that in mind, and so perhaps unconsciously uses the same word for "tent" or "tabernacle" as was used for the tent he had wanted to build then. There may be no direct semantic connection with the later reference to the transfiguration, but we have here a wonderful evidence that this letter really came from Peter, albeit under Divine inspiration; for the process of thought and use of language is just as we would expect from a man who really was at the transfiguration and is now writing a letter some years later. For "remembrance", see on :12.

1:14 *Knowing that the putting off of my tabernacle comes swiftly, even as our Lord Jesus Christ indicated to me-* For "tabernacle", see on :13. Peter sensed that the end of his mortality was soon. It could be that like Paul, he reasoned and felt as if the second coming was imminent. Or perhaps he knew within himself due to illness or being imprisoned under a death sentence that his end was near. And he of course recalled the Lord's words to him in Jn. 21:18, that he was to die in a way that glorified Him, perhaps also by crucifixion, in the manner that the Lord Jesus "hath shewed me" (AV) by His own example. This connection with the Lord's words suggests to me that Peter, unlike Paul, expected to die before the second coming. The way he now writes of them remembering his message after his death (:15) is clear enough in this regard. This difference in perspective shows how two sincere believers can have different understandings whilst believing the same Gospel.

1:15 *Yes, I will give diligence that at every time you may be able after my death to call these things to remembrance-* "My death" is Gk. *eksodos*. As he faced up to his own imminent time of dying, he saw that his death would be a death with the Lord (Paul also spoke of his death in this way). He spoke of his death as "my *eksodos*" (2 Pet. 1:15), using the very same and specific word which he had heard at the transfiguration, when Moses and Elijah comforted the Lord regarding His *eksodos* (Lk. 9:31). The Lord's death was his death; he would die as the Lord Jesus had shown him by example (see on :14). The Lord's death is our death; the symbolism of baptism is to be remembered by us particularly at our death, and in our understanding of the death of our brethren. His death was a crescendo, the end point of a process, very intense at the end. This adds huge meaning and significance to old age and terminal illness; we are not to be seen as no longer significant, a burden merely to be carried by others, by medical staff and our families. We are being led to final identity with His death, that we might live eternally with Him in the power of His resurrection.

How could Peter try his best to ensure that after his death, they would remember his message? Perhaps he means that he would try to ensure that his message was written down

and preserved; and that "diligence" was achieved, for we to this day hold his inspired letters in our hands. "That you may be able" is literally 'that you may have it'; which makes sense if Peter had in view a written record of his words.

The emphasis on remembering the words is to be understood in the light of the transfiguration experience. His brethren were to take heed to the word, just as he had to be almost rebuked: "This is My beloved Son: *hear him*". Peter loved the word, but so often didn't hear it, and at the crucial moment didn't remember his Lord's word. He had said "at thy word" I will let down the net; but when he saw the huge catch, he was amazed; he realized that he hadn't really believed his Lord's word. And he knew he was simply "a sinful man", worthy of condemnation for his lack of faith ("depart from me"). He had to be taught that his own natural abilities were nothing at all. He was taught this in relation to fishing, to his faithfulness, commitment to laying down his life for Christ. He was made to learn that he knew nothing as he ought to know. And he implicitly admits this to his readers, when he asks us to take heed of the word which we may think we well know, just as he had to. Peter learnt the lesson of the transfiguration when he told the Jewish authorities that he had to hear God's word rather than theirs (Acts 4:19).

1:16 *For we did not follow cunningly devised fables, when we made known to you the power and coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, but we were eyewitnesses of his majesty-* As witnessed elsewhere in the New Testament, the brotherhood [especially the Jews amongst them] were under the influence of the various Jewish fables (Tit. 1:14), the *midrash* of the rabbis which twisted the sense of God's actual word. The transfiguration was understood by Peter to be a foretaste of the Lord's power and second coming. What he witnessed on the mount was evidence that this same Jesus should likewise come in power to mount Zion at the last day. And he was not repeating Jewish fables; he was an eyewitness of that majesty. And he had "made known" to his readership this fact; the gospel records are transcripts of the preaching of men like Peter who were eyewitnesses. The Gospel is therefore to be found in the gospel records; and elsewhere I have suggested the gospel of Mark is Peter's gospel record. Peter would have been one of the eyewitnesses who gave material to Luke for the compilation of his gospel (Lk. 1:2).

1:17- see on Jn. 13:32.

For he received from God the Father honour and glory, delivered to him by such a voice from the Majestic Glory: This is My beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased- Perhaps Peter means to say that when this voice of Divine approbation came, there was a visible manifestation of glory around the person of the human Lord Jesus on the mountain top. But "This is My beloved Son" is a quotation from the voice heard at the Lord's baptism. All the Synoptics record it there. Peter says that the voice came "from the Majestic glory", using the same word as he has just used in :16 when he says that he was an eyewitness of the Lord's "majesty". This eyewitness experience was at the Lord's baptism. But he says that he heard the same voice again on the mount of transfiguration (:18). He could well be saying that the voice at baptism sounded the same as the voice at the transfiguration- it was God's voice. Here we have a profound evidence of the personality of God- He has a voice, and that voice sounded the same on the two occasions Peter heard it.

1:18 *And this voice we heard, delivered out of heaven, when we were with him on the holy mount-* Peter is struggling in words to explain how the voice heard was from Heaven, not from earth, and was the actual voice of God, written down by him in words. That same sense of wonder is to be found in fact in every word of the Bible- it is all in some sense God's word. Hence the Greek suggests "There came *such* a voice to (Christ) from the excellent glory... and this voice which came from heaven *we* heard... we have also a *more sure word* of

prophecy, whereunto *ye* do well that *ye* take heed" (2 Pet. 1:18,19). Notice the progression in his reasoning here. Peter considered it such an honour that he could hear the words which God primarily intended for Christ. And even more wondrous, the word of prophecy which we have all heard is an even *more* wondrous revelation of God's glory than the word of God which came at the transfiguration. Yet do we even begin to reach that sense of wonder which Peter had on the mount? That sense of rapture, of real spiritual transport, of reaching out of earthly things into Heavenly, that desire for the experience never to end, even though we realize that we only understand a fraction of the infinity which is revealed by God's word?

1:19 *And we have the word of prophecy made yet more sure*- The Greek is awkward here. I think the sense is that Peter is sparing a thought for those of us who did not hear the Divine voice at the Lord's baptism and transfiguration. He is saying that in any case for "we" who heard the voice in reality, the prophetic word is even more "sure" as a witness. Because events can be forgotten, no matter how momentous at the time; memory fades and also distorts. But the fulfilment of the prophetic word of God is more sure for Peter than even his personal experience of hearing God's actual voice. And it is to *that* recorded voice which his readers needed to pay attention to.

"Prophecy" in Hebrew refers to speaking forth God's word, more than prediction of future events. There were New Testament prophets, speaking forth God's word under inspiration. Peter has earlier appealed for his readers to give due attention to his own inspired words. He is reasoning that although they did not hear the Divine voice as he had done, the letter he was writing, along with that of the other prophets, was even more sure than his account to them of having heard God's actual voice. The written inspired word is no less the actual voice of God to men.

To which you do well that you take heed, as a lamp shining in a dark place, until the day dawns and the day-star arises in your hearts- The command "hear Him!" was given to Peter and those who heard it; but the witness of God's prophetic word is even "more sure", and all of us must likewise "take heed" to that; and Peter's readership were to take heed to Peter's own inspired words just as much. This even more sure word of prophecy is shining as a light (candle) in the dark ("squalid", R.V.mg.) place of our mortal mind, or of the dingy apartments the Jewish refugee converts in Asia were living in, "*until the day dawn, and the day star arise in your hearts*". When the day of Christ's coming arrives, we will then have the fullness of the light of God's revelation. The present word of prophecy is but a lamp struggling against the darkness of our natural mind, in this life. But at the Lord's return, our very innermost beings will be filled with the light of God's revelation in Christ. Somehow our knowledge of God will be of such a different magnitude, that we will no longer relate to the word of prophecy in the same way as we do now. We must take heed to the word *in our hearts*- this is the idea, rather than any suggestion of a mystical coming of Christ in our hearts.

1:20 *Knowing this first, that no prophecy of scripture is of private interpretation*- To appreciate the force of Peter's argument in the previous verses, it must be understood most importantly ("first") that prophetic Divinely inspired scripture is just that- it is not the personal interpretation of men, unlike the Jewish fables referenced in :16. "Private interpretation" is parallel with a word coming "by the will of man" (:21). We would better read the phrase as meaning that no prophetic, inspired word "is private interpretation", the kind of personal interpretation or take on things which the Jewish fables were.

1:21 *For no prophecy ever came by the will of man, but men spoke from God, being moved by the Holy Spirit*- According to our understanding of the inspiration process, so we will respect God's prophetic word. Men did not think up what they were going to say, or will themselves to prophecy. They were moved, carried or driven along, by the Spirit, so that the words they

spoke were of God, of His will rather than theirs. This explains why so many of the inspired writers in the Old Testament were of themselves unwilling; they spoke according to God's will and not their own.

But we need to clear up the misconception that the prophets were merely fax machines, dispassionately forwarding God's message to men. Their words were indeed the words of God, they were inspired, but they also had emotional involvement. All Scripture is indeed God-breathed, but this involved the prophets in breathing in of that Spirit and exhaling it, as it were (2 Tim. 3:16). The passage in 2 Pet. 1:19-21 has been somewhat misunderstood. Holy men of God indeed spoke as they were "moved" by the Holy Spirit; but, contrary to what is repeated parrot fashion by so many, the Greek for "moved" doesn't necessarily mean 'irresistibly carried along', as if the prophets had no personal input into what they said and were just treated as machines. The Greek word *phero* appears several times in 2 Peter:

- "The grace that is to be *brought* unto you" (2 Pet. 1:13)
 - "There *came* such a voice to [Christ] from the excellent glory" (2 Pet. 1:17)
 - "This voice which *came* from heaven" (2 Pet. 1:18)
 - "The prophecy *came* not in old time by the will of man: but holy men of God spake *phero* ['as they were...' is not in the original- it's in italics in the AV] the Holy Spirit" (2 Pet. 1:21)
- Clearly enough, *phero* in 2 Pet. 1 doesn't mean 'irresistibly carried along by'. The context of 2 Pet. 1:21 is a warning that as there were false prophets in Old Testament times amongst the people of God, so there will be in the new Israel (2:1). Peter's stress is that the Old Testament prophets were *holy*, they spoke according to the will of *God* and not the will of *man*; their words came from the Holy Spirit, and not the spirit of the flesh- in distinction to the false prophets who spoke of the flesh.

2 PETER CHAPTER 2

2:1- see on Gal. 5:1.

But there arose false prophets also among the people, as among you also there shall be false teachers, who shall secretly bring in destructive heresies- The failures of natural Israel are traceable to false teaching from the priesthood / leadership, rather than purely personal apostasy. All the examples of rejected false teachers mentioned in 2 Pet. 2 were responsible, and in the ecclesia of their times. These false teachers had once known the Truth [:12] and would therefore be reserved to judgment [:9]; they attended the memorial meeting [:13], they had or claimed to have the gift of prophecy as Balaam did [:15 cp. Heb.6:4-6], and had once left the world, although now they were returning to it [:20-22]. In other words, they had all the external trappings of good Christians. We must expect something similar in the latter day ecclesia.

The appropriacy of the allusion to Israel's history was in the fact that Peter is writing his letters to his own converts, who were largely comprised of the Jews he had baptized in Jerusalem at Pentecost.

Denying even the master that bought them, bringing upon themselves swift destruction- He warns that they even deny the Lord who bought them (AV). They *even* do this- as if denying the Lord was the worst possible, imaginable sin. And it was the very thing which he had so publicly done, three times, and had effectively done again when bowing to Judaist false teaching. They deny "the Lord"- and that had been Peter's favourite title for Jesus during the ministry. As he warned of the evil of the apostate brethren, his own sense of personal failure and frailty was so evidently shown. And yet it was no reason for him to simply say 'So, I can't judge, I can't

criticize another after what I did'. What he had learnt from the whole experience of forgiveness and grace was that the wondrous grace and atonement of Christ *must at all costs be preached and preserved*.

The tragedy is that Israel's rejection of Moses is typical of the rejection of Christ by those in the new Israel who turn away. The same word used about Israel *refusing* Moses as their deliverer (Acts 7:35) is used about those who *deny* (same word) the Lord (Jesus) that bought them. This is prefaced by the information that as there were those who lost their faith in the ecclesia in the wilderness, so there will be among the new Israel. Therefore "the Lord that bought them" is an allusion back to Moses as a type of Christ. The illogicality of Israel's rejection of Moses when he first appeared to them is so apparent. They were slaves in Egypt, and then one of the most senior of Pharaoh's officials reveals that he is their brother, and has been sent by God to deliver them. Yet they preferred the life of slavery in Egypt. This same illogicality is seen in us if we refuse baptism, preferring to stay in the world of slavery, or later when we chose the world as opposed to Christ. We deny, we refuse, we reject, the Lord who bought us by going back to the world from which he redeemed us. The illogicality of going back to the world is brought out by the illogicality of Israel's rejection of Moses. Israel rejected Moses because it was easier to stay where they were. Such is the strength of conservatism in human nature; such is our innate weakness of will and resolve. They rejected the idea of leaving Egypt because they thought it was better than it was, they failed to face up to how much they were suffering (Num. 11:5). And our apathy in responding to Christ's redemptive plan for us is rooted in the same problem; we fail to appreciate the seriousness of sin, the extent to which we are in slavery to sin- even though the evidence for this is all around us.

2:2 *And many shall follow their destructive ways, by reason of whom the way of the truth shall be blasphemed*- This has to be connected with the Lord's teaching that "many" (Gk. the majority) would fall away just before His coming (Mt. 24:12); Peter is perhaps picking this up, and shewing that this will be due to following false teachers. "Destructive ways" is literally 'the ways of condemnation'. The heresies they taught were likewise those of condemnation (:1); and their condemnation was therefore near (:3 s.w.). There is a great power in ideas; believing the wrong ones leads to destruction / condemnation.

False prophets bring forth bad fruit; the nature of the teaching therefore affects the nature of the fruit (Mt. 7:16). False teaching [which isn't the same as genuine intellectual failure] therefore elicits a bad way of life ("their destructive ways"); and the false prophets of the latter days will result in iniquity abounding (Mt. 24:11). This is why teaching does matter. Without faith- which comes from holding *the* Faith- it is impossible to please God. True righteousness is the fruit of the Spirit; the result of the word of the Gospel working within us, the result of the Spirit of Christ which God has sent forth into the hearts of His people. Many outside of the Faith appear to in fact be far more righteous than most of us, in terms of 'good works'. But these good works are an outcome of their natural personality type; this is how they *are*. But God has sent His Son to the sick who need a doctor, to those imprisoned by their own thinking, to the tragically blind. Through the power of the basic Gospel, we have the power to change.

Any student of the New Testament epistles cannot fail to notice these repeated warnings against false teachers. Peter reminded his readers of "the words... spoken by the holy prophets [New Testament ones?] and the apostles... knowing this first [i.e. most importantly], that there shall come [false teachers and mass apostasy] in the last

days" [2 Pet.2:3]. Unless we say that "the last days" is a phrase which has no reference to our own times, we have to accept that there will be major false teaching and apostasy within the brotherhood just before Christ's return.

2:3 *And in covetousness shall they with feigned words make merchandise of you-* So often, financial advantage figures in the motivation of the false teachers. They not only taught falsely, but demanded payment for it. They made their message as attractive as possible in order to be paid for saying it. Their "feigned words" suggests they were falsely claiming Divine inspiration for their message; this problem has been addressed in the immediate context in 1:16-21. They justified immoral behaviour by assuring believers that a special message from God had permitted it; and people paid for this to be true, as it were.

Their sentence now from of old does not linger, and their destruction does not slumber- The essence of the judgment seat is now. Their sentence and destruction / condemnation had already been issued and would not delay in fulfilment. This idea of the last day being somehow 'delayed' is returned to in chapter 3. God is not tuned out towards human behaviour now, only opening the books and reviewing it at the last day. He now is sensitive to our actions, and His judgment toward it is ongoing.

2:4 *For if God did not spare the angels who sinned, but cast them down to Tartarus and committed them to pits of darkness, to be reserved until judgment-*

It was presumably in one of the previous creations that the Angels were developed. They have knowledge of good and evil, just as fallen man has (Gen. 3:22). This could suggest that they too had the experience of temptation and choice between sin and obedience. Job speaks of the angels who were charged with folly as if this fact was well known (Job 4:18). John Thomas suggested that the "angels that sinned" in 2 Pet. 2:4 lived at this time. There is no doubt that this passage in Peter, and the parallel in Jude, has some reference to Korah's rebellion. However, there are many such warnings to God's people which combine reference to more than one historical event, and it could be the same here: as if to say, 'History repeats itself. The angels that sinned so long ago went through in principle the same process of apostasy as Korah's company, and you too are capable of falling from grace in the same basic way'. Apostasy has a long continuity; all who fall follow a similar pattern, ultimately sharing the same apotheosis. It could even be that the fall of the Kings of Tyre and Babylon (Is. 14; Ez. 28) are recorded in the language of an angel / "anointed cherub" who wanted superiority over the others, and who then fell from Heaven (Ez. 28:14; Is. 14:13,14 cp. Eph. 4:10). There are strong similarities between these passages and the Jewish understanding of Angels that sinned before creation. These similarities would be in order to show the same kind of historical continuity: between the Angels who once sinned, and spiritually blessed men who turned away from what they could have had. The fact that *all* the Angels *now* are righteous and incapable of sinning (cp. Lk. 20:35,36) doesn't mean that Angels never sinned in a previous creation. But the point to note is that they are now in the grave, chained in darkness- not running around as evil spirits causing mischief. They are "reserved unto judgment" (2 Pet. 2:4), when "we shall judge angels" (1 Cor. 6:3).

But this passage is of course seriously misunderstood by those who believe there are currently sinful Angels in existence. But if literal angels are referred to here, then they are not going around making people sin, seeing that they are kept safely chained up. They are "under darkness", i.e. not openly on the earth nor in heaven. The parallel passage in Jude 5,6 implies that this is a reference to a well-known fact: "I will therefore put you in remembrance, though ye once knew this". There is no record in

any other part of the Bible about angels sinning in Eden; how then could these Christians be reminded of these things? All the other examples which Peter and Jude mention are taken from Old Testament examples which were well known, and this is no exception.

There is no indication that these things happened in Eden. There is no mention of the angels starting to cause trouble after they sinned – the implication in Jude 6 is that they were immediately chained up under darkness. At the creation “all the sons of God (the angels) shouted for joy” (Job 38:7) and they saw “everything... was very good” (Gen. 1:31); there was no evil whatever.

The Hebrew and Greek words translated “Angels” can refer to men. These “angels” are to be judged at “the great day” of the second coming. The punishment of the unworthy at that day will be total destruction (Mt. 25:41); yet we know that angels cannot die or be destroyed (Lk. 20:35,36)– an angel walked with Daniel’s three friends in the fiery furnace (Dan. 3:27,28). We read of the angel that appeared to Manoah, “when the flame went up toward heaven from off the altar, that the angel of the Lord ascended in the flame of the altar” (Jud. 13:20). God “makes his angels spirits: his ministers a flaming fire” (Ps. 104:4). Therefore these “angels” who are to be condemned must be human ones, because fire cannot destroy Angels.

Jude 7 says that Sodom and Gomorrah also (“even as”) “are set forth for an example, suffering the vengeance of eternal fire” (i.e. total destruction after judgment – Mt. 25:41). This implies that the angels that sinned were made a public example (as was Sodom) of what would happen to those who disobey God. However, there is no Biblical record of angels sinning in Eden – so how are these “angels” “set forth for an example” (Jude 6)? There is no indication that even Adam and Eve saw the punishment of anyone apart from the serpent. Remember that sin entered the world “by one man” – Adam (Rom. 5:12) – not by an angel sinning.

Notice that the words “Devil” and “Satan” do not occur in these passages. 2 Peter 2:9–11 interprets the reserving of the angels unto judgment as “The Lord knows how... To reserve the unjust unto the day of judgment to be punished... them that walk after the flesh in the lust of uncleanness, and despise government... speak evil of dignities. Whereas angels... bring not railing accusations”. This is saying that the counterparts of the sinful angels are the unjust men who follow their human lusts. That these men are not Angels is shown by the fact that they speak evil of people, whereas Angels do not. Peter doesn’t imply there are different categories of angels, sinful and good. He does not say ‘the good angels do not...’, but rather he refers simply to “angels”, all of whom are good beings.

“Chains of darkness” represent death in Proverbs 5:22–23 (“cords” in v. 22 is rendered “chains” in the Septuagint). Thus the ‘angels’ are now dead. They are “reserved” unto the day of judgment. “Reserved” does not mean (in the Greek) ‘kept prisoner’, it implies rather that God has made a note of these people, and will give them their judgment accordingly, at the second coming of Christ. 2 Peter 2:1 sets the context for :4: “But there were false prophets also among the people (of Israel, in the wilderness, cp. Jude 5), even as there shall be false teachers among you”. Thus the angels that sinned appear to refer to false teachers amongst Israel in the wilderness. That God “spared not” the sinful ‘angels’ connects with how God “spared not” the sinful Israelites in the wilderness (Ps. 78:50). Indeed, the idea of God not sparing is often associated with His attitude to apostate Israel: Dt. 29:20; Jer. 13:14; 21:7; Ez. 7:4,9; 8:18; 9:10. The angels “reserved unto judgment” matches how the Jewish world was “reserved unto judgment” in AD70 (2 Pet. 3:7).

The immediate context is in 2 Peter 2:3 – the Judaizers were about to be suddenly punished (in the holocaust of A.D. 70) – “whose judgment now of a long time lingereth not, and their damnation slumbereth not”. Peter then reasons that as God immediately punished the ‘angels’ that sinned, so the judgment and damnation of the Judaizers would not be long delayed. If the angels were super-human beings who still have the liberty to go about tempting us to sin, and have had such liberty since the garden of Eden, then their day of judgment *has* lingered, it *has* been a long time coming, and therefore Peter’s use of the angels that sinned as an example of God quickly punishing sin in v. 4 does not apply. Jude was writing against a background of belief that sinful Angels were roaming the world and inciting people to sin. He surely is attempting to debunk this idea by stressing that “the Angels who kept not their first estate” – whoever we understand them to be – are safely locked up in chains, unable to influence anyone on earth today.

We have noted that this incident is probably concerning human “angels” at some point in the history of Israel, probably on the wilderness journey, and that it would be well known and documented in Jewish history (i.e. the Old Testament Scriptures). It also involved a great public punishment of the wrongdoers which set them “forth as an example”. The rebellion of the 250 princes of Israel in the wilderness led by Korah, Dathan and Abiram, as recorded in Numbers 16, seems to fit quite well.

“Angel” can mean “minister”, “messenger” (as John’s disciples were messengers or ministers to him, Lk. 7:24). Numbers 16:9 describes the rebels as “ministers” of the congregation. The Septuagint uses the word *aggelos* for “ministers”, which is the same Greek word translated “Angel” in 2 Peter 2:4. They left their first, or original, “principality” (Jude 6, A.V. margin); the rebels were princes, but wanted to be priests as well (Num. 16:2,10). Because of this, the ground opened and swallowed them (Num. 16:31–33), as a dramatic example to everyone of the fate of those who rebel against the Word of God. It was especially dramatic in that it is emphasized that this was the first time that such a thing had happened (Num. 16:30). Thus they are now dead, “in everlasting chains under darkness”, in the heart of the earth, to be resurrected and judged at “the judgment of the great day”. Jude 8 implies that “likewise”, i.e. like the angels that sinned, the Judaizers “speak evil of dignities”, e.g. Jesus and Paul. The rebels spoke evil of Moses and Aaron (Num. 16:11–14). “Cast them down to hell” (2 Pet. 2:4). “Hell” in this verse is *tartaroo* in the Greek and is used only once in the New Testament. It was used in pagan Greek mythology to describe a subterranean place of darkness for the dead. “Chains of darkness” is rendered “pits of darkness” in the R.V. The Greek word *serius* (pits) indicates an underground granary or prison, which corresponds with Korah, Dathan and Abiram’s destruction when they “went down alive into the pit, and the earth closed upon them; and they perished” (Num. 16:33).

That they were destroyed and were not left alive is shown by a comment on this incident in Psalm 73. Here Asaph describes how “my steps had well nigh slipped” (v. 2) because the wicked seemed to be prospering so much. Then, “I went into the sanctuary (tabernacle) of God; then understood I their end” (v. 17). This was because the brass censers of the 250 rebels were melted down after their death and beaten into plates with which the altar was covered – another example of the angels that sinned being publicly “set forth as an example” (Jude 7). Asaph would have seen these and reflected on the fate of the wicked men. Thus he reflects upon the rebels, the angels that sinned, “surely thou didst set them in slippery places: Thou castedst them down (by the earth swallowing them) into destruction” (v. 18) – therefore they are not alive,

but in the same way as Sodom was destroyed with eternal fire, i.e. totally, so, too, were these “angels” (Jude 6,7).

The language of being cast down to the underworld and the darkness of the grave all features in the record of Egypt’s judgment in Ez. 31:16–18. Yet Egypt was not literally cast down from Heaven. The allusion to Egypt is to show how the apostate Jews in the wilderness were treated as if they were actually Egyptians – because in their hearts they turned back to Egypt.

We must understand the immediate context in which Peter uses the idea of God having judged ‘angels’ [whoever they refer to]. He reasons that *if* God didn’t spare ‘angels’ who sinned in the past but judged them; and *if* God punished sinners by a flood but saved Noah; and *if* God overthrew the wicked in Sodom but saved Lot... *then* we can be assured that God knows how to rescue the Godly and to judge the wicked in a future day of judgment (2 Pet. 2:4–9). The example of angels being judged must be seen as a warning and a comfort to us in our day. The implication would surely be that just as the flood and the destruction of Sodom were well known Biblical examples of Divine judgment, so must the judgment of the ‘angels’ be. And therefore the interpretation which associates them with Korah and his rebellion in the wilderness would seem to be most appropriate. And note that there is *no* Biblical record of rebellious Heavenly angels being judged and thrown down to earth.

2:5 And did not spare the ancient world, but preserved Noah with seven others, a preacher of righteousness, when He brought a flood upon the world of the ungodly- Given this apostasy of the sons of God and the unwillingness of the world to listen to Noah's preaching (2 Pet. 2:5) the size of the ecclesia must have declined, until it was only 9 strong. H.P. Mansfield claims that 'Methuselah' means 'When he dies, it shall come'- suggesting that he died a few days or weeks before the flood came. We can imagine the ecclesia falling away one by one until it was just that old brother Noah, his wife and his three faithful sons (no doubt he had other grandchildren and children whom he failed to influence). The small, declining size of the faithful in our last days and the total apathy to our preaching should not discourage us- as with all negative things, a positive message can be read into them in the light of Scripture. And the message here is that such things clearly indicate that we are in the last days. The only people to survive the temptations of these 'last days' before the flood were one family unit. As these events are so pregnant with latter day relevance, it may be that we are to perceive here a faint hint that strongly led family units are the way to survive the last days. Noah is described as “the eighth” (AV), perhaps alluding to the fact that of the eight people saved in the ark, he was “the eighth”; he put the others first.

Peter here mentions Noah and Lot together (:6). There are many connections between Peter’s letters and the Gospels. I calculate that once every three verses, Peter is alluding to the Lord’s words. And the figure is probably higher, seeing that we don’t know all the words and actions of the Lord Jesus, and probably Peter is alluding to incidents and words which aren’t recorded. Like Paul, Peter’s mind was saturated with the Lord Jesus. This was the secret of his spirituality, this was why he could cope with the ministry to the Gentiles which he had so boldly started being taken away from him and given to Paul, this was why he didn’t slump into a life of melancholy bitterness. Some of his allusions are conscious allusions (e.g. those to the transfiguration). Others seem almost unconscious- e.g. the way he cites both Noah and Lot (2 Pet. 2:5-8) as warnings for the last generation, when the Lord had likewise used both of them together (Lk. 17:26-32).

2:6- see on 2 Tim. 2:14.

And turned the cities of Sodom and Gomorrah into ashes, condemning them to destruction, having made them an example to those that should live ungodly lives- According to Gen. 18:17-19, the reason God told Abraham what He would do with Sodom was because Abraham would teach others, and his descendants would teach others. This implies that Sodom's destruction was to be a special lesson for all generations. And 2 Pet. 2:6 says the same- Sodom was to be a perpetual "example unto those that after should live ungodly"; in this sense Sodom was "set forth for an example, suffering the vengeance of eternal fire" (Jude 7). The fire was "eternal" in the sense that the example of destruction was to be to all generations. This paves the way for Sodom's destruction to be understood as a particularly significant type of the last days.

This warning is in the context of the upcoming destruction of Jerusalem in AD70. Peter saw Jerusalem, the "holy city" of Judaism, as spiritually Sodom- just as Isaiah did (also Rev. 11:8). Yet Judaism prided itself on separation from Gentiles and obedience to Divine law. All this was covering up an utterly "filthy" and "unGodly" interior.

2:7 And delivered righteous Lot, distressed by the filthy conduct of the wicked- "Distressed" carries the sense of being oppressed; it is only elsewhere used in Acts 7:24 of the oppression of Israel in Egypt. The idea may not be that he was upset and worn down by the immorality all around him; it could be that he was actively persecuted by the wicked living people around him. This was why he needed to be "delivered", not just from the judgment to come upon Sodom, but from his persecutors. This was highly relevant to the Hebrew Christians being persecuted by and within Jerusalem, and it was they to whom Peter was writing. The same word for "delivered" is used of how God knows how to deliver the Godly from temptation / testing (:9). So Lot's deliverance was not simply from sharing in Sodom's destruction, but from the temptations and testing from living amongst such wicked people.

2:8 (For that righteous man dwelling among them, in seeing and hearing, tormented his righteous soul from day to day with their lawless deeds)- Lot's righteousness was not so great of itself. Perhaps he too had righteousness counted to him, as his uncle Abraham did. "Seeing and hearing" suggests a bombardment of his senses with the lawless deeds of Sodom- which are being used by Peter as parallel with the lawless deeds of Jerusalem and the temple cult. Their much vaunted keeping of law was in fact lawlessness, in God's eyes.

The calling of Lot out of Sodom is a type, on the Lord's authority, of our calling away to judgment. His position immediately prior to the Angels' coming must therefore connect with our situation now. Lot was in no way as spiritually strong as he ought to have been, nor as enthusiastic for the Lord's coming as his complaining about the evils of the city recorded in 2 Pet. 2:7,8 might lead us to think. The very fact that he chose to live in the area whilst Abraham steered well clear of it is testimony enough to his worldliness (Gen. 13:10,11). The offering of his two daughters to the Sodomites also betrays a certain unspirituality (Gen. 19:8). The fact that Sodom's fate was revealed to Abraham rather than Lot may also be significant.

2 Pet. 2:8 reveals how Lot "tormented his righteous soul from day to day with their lawless deeds" (AV). Seeing that he failed to influence his family to properly appreciate the sins of that city, and that he was so attached to it that he was unwilling to leave, this must be interpreted as little more than the sort of middle class, respectable 'tut-tutting' that present day Christianity abounds with. After all, he had

chosen to live there, he did not have to stay, and the record of his choice of Sodom in Gen.13 spotlights his unspiritual, worldly thinking in this regard when compared to Abraham, the stranger and sojourner. Whether this assessment of Lot's character is felt to be correct or not, it must surely be accepted that there was a serious dualism in his position which has strong similarities with ours today- vexing his soul about the sins of the surrounding world, and yet increasingly involved in it and greatly benefiting from it materially, at spiritual cost to himself and his family. Lot was effectively willing to betray his daughters to the men of Sodom, pointing forward to the Lord's prophecy of how in the holocaust to come, many will betray each other (Mt. 10:36), family life within the ecclesia will break up; a spirit of dissension will fall upon natural and spiritual families.

2:9 Therefore the Lord knows how to deliver the godly out of temptation- 'The Lord' to Peter meant 'the Lord Jesus'. He comforts them that the Lord Jesus knows how to deliver the Godly out of temptation. Surely he was referring back to how the Lord Jesus had prayed for him, knowing the temptation that was to come upon him in the High Priest's house, knowing Satan's desire to have him. And although it might have seemed that in the short term Peter's weakness rendered that prayer powerless, in fact in the end, his faith didn't fail, just as the Lord had prayed. And so from his own example he could comfort his readers that surely their Lord knew how to deliver from temptation, even if like Lot and like Peter those he delivers may deserve to be left to the outcome of their own words and actions.

To keep Lot from the great spiritual temptation provoked within him by that city, God destroyed it. Similarly God's abhorrence of this present world which Sodom typifies is largely due to the spiritual temptation it so evidently brings upon His people. And remember that it was thanks to Abraham's prayers that Lot was saved out of Sodom. Perhaps his prayers had been especially for Lot's spiritual deliverance from the situation he was in; and the destruction of Sodom perhaps happened exactly for that reason. There were surely many societies sinning at the time, but God didn't destroy them with fire and brimstone. He did so with Sodom because He realized that Lot wasn't strong enough to quit Sodom, and He wanted Lot's salvation. And so He destroyed them. All this for the sake of a weak man who later was to get drunk and sleep with his own daughters. We too pray that God will not lead us into temptation, and He may e.g. bankrupt the firm we work for in order to save us from working with the guys who will lead us to our destruction.

We can observe how Abram was asked to leave his family, so that God would give him a new family through his seed. But he was weak in obedience to this- he left Ur along with his father and Lot. But it was through that weakness that Lot came to be eternally saved, despite Lot's own weakness. God doesn't simply turn away from sin in disgust, but works through it.

And to keep the unrighteous under punishment to the day of judgment- There is no conscious survival of death. The sentence for sin is passed now (:3), but they only receive it at the day of judgment. They are therefore kept "under" that judgment, although dead, until they are resurrected to face judgment. The idea of keeping or reserving the wicked unto judgment at the last day is quite common with Peter (2:4,9,17; 3:7 all use the same word). Likewise our eternal inheritance and crown is "kept ['reserved'] in heaven" for us (1 Pet. 1:4). The judgment has already been made; but the result of the verdict is reserved or kept until the last day. As the Psalms make clear, we can know right now the Lord's judgments; they are revealed to us in His word, which is His judgments.

The 'keeping' in view is not conscious preservation of these sinners after their death. The contrast is with the first half of the verse. God kept Lot from temptation by destroying Sodom, because in his heart Lot wanted to be righteous- he like us was just weak. This is the work of the Holy Spirit. But conversely, those who wish to be wicked will be 'kept' by the "evil spirit from Yahweh" which affected king Saul- they will be kept in the path of life which leads to their condemnation. Because although God is not a manipulator, nor is man a mere puppet in His hand, He is a confirmer of men in the psychological path they choose.

2:10- see on Jude 14.

Chief among these are those that walk after the flesh in the lust of defilement and despise dominion. Daring, self-willed, they are not afraid to speak evil of dignitaries- Amongst those to be condemned, there are "chief" and also lesser ones, just as there will be grades of reward amongst the righteous. These gradations reflect the Father's huge sensitivity towards human behaviour.

In a sense, the Angels deal with men according to men's own perceptions of themselves, and with what can only be described as a certain spiritual culture. They do not "speak evil of dignities", as exemplified in the way the Angelic voice from Heaven addressed the wicked Nebuchadnezzar whom they were about to depose as "O king Nebuchadnezzar" (Dan. 4:31). This isn't only an example to us of not being abrasive to people even if we know them to be seriously in the wrong. It's an example of how we should seek to deal with people within the terms of their own perceptions. It makes one wonder whether at the judgment, the Lord will address those who were known in their lives as 'Doctors' or 'Reverends'... obviously making the point, as the Angel was to Nebuchadnezzar, that human advantage means so absolutely nothing before the ultimate analysis and set of values of His judgment.

The "them" of :11 refer to the same "dignitaries"; Angels do not rail at them but instead say "The Lord rebuke you" (in the parallel Jude 9). The example of this cited in Jude 9 is a quotation from how in Zechariah, the Angels rebuke the human adversaries / local government authorities who were opposing the rebuilding of Jerusalem. The "dignitaries" [*doxa*] are not Angels themselves, because :11 goes on to say that Angels do not talk about "dignitaries" in this way but rather call down the Lord's rebuke upon them (Jude 9). Seeing there are no sinful Angels, it cannot be that the "dignitaries" are Angels. Note that *doxa* is used of sinful humans and not Angels by Peter in 1 Pet. 1:24.

I noted on 1 Peter that some of Peter's Jewish refugee converts in Asia were getting in trouble with the local authorities and considered themselves above the local laws. They slandered "dignitaries" and also despised "dominion" or "government"; the word is used about human civil government in Eph. 1:21. These people are here called "self willed". They considered themselves above the law and had created themselves as the final arbiter of right and wrong; they were as James says, judging the law and speaking evil of it by considering themselves as the ultimate law (James 4:11).

2:11 *Whereas angels, though greater in might and power, do not dare bring before the Lord an injurious accusation against them-* As explained on :10, the "them" refers to local government authorities whom the Jewish false teachers were slandering and setting themselves over. The parallel in Jude 9 exemplifies this by a quotation from how in Zechariah, the Angels rebuke the human adversaries / local government authorities who were opposing the rebuilding of Jerusalem. The Angels are "before the Lord" in the court of Heaven; and so are all of us, effectively. Yet even they talk about sinful people on earth with appropriate respect and restraint, not

condemning them of themselves. This is a window into the awareness of God and the Angels concerning situations on earth, and how they discuss those situations with respect toward men. Their greater "might and power" do not make them disrespect those who are weaker. And that is truly a pattern for us, who each have some greater power than others in some way.

2:12 But these, as creatures without reason- "Without reason" is *a-logos*, without the *logos* of God's word. The parallel in Jude 10 says that they relied upon their natural knowledge and perception, rather than God's word.

Born mere animals to be taken and destroyed- The idea is that they were predestined to this destruction; and yet it was because they acted in the way they did of their own choice. There is a word play on the word "destroyed", which carries the idea of 'corruption'. Their final corruption in condemnation is because of their own corruption. Hence "in their destroying ['corruption'] they shall be destroyed / corrupted".

Speak reproachfully in matters of which they are ignorant; they shall in their destroying surely be destroyed- They were living out their own condemnation; human behaviour is of itself our judgment. Truly "we make the answer now" to the issues of the future day of judgment.

2:13 Suffering wrong as the wages of wrong-doing- This implies that the false teachers were even in this life suffering a punishment appropriate to the kind of sin they were committing. The phrase "the wages of wrong-doing" is repeated in :15 regarding how Balaam loved such wages. The only other usage of the phrase is in Acts 1:18 about how Judas bought a field with his "wages of wrong-doing". These false teachers were after money, but that love of money lead them to even now 'suffer wrong', just as happened to Judas. It would seem from some hints in 1 Peter that the 'wrong' they suffered was at the hands of the local civil authorities.

The allusion to Judas makes Judas out to be the arch apostate and betrayer of the Lord Jesus, whose example was followed by these false teachers. And yet Judas and Peter had committed in essence the same sin of denying their Lord, and at the very same time. Peter would have intensely been aware of this. And yet he holds up Judas as a prototype of all who fall, as if to say: 'And there, but for the Lord's grace, nearly went I. See the terror of it, and turn away from that road. I of all men can tell you that'.

They count it pleasure to revel in the daytime- One wonders about the way that Peter describes the apostate believer as drunk in the day time, when earlier he had dismissed with a confident logic the claim that he was drunk at Pentecost by saying that it couldn't possibly be so, because it was early in the day and people can only get drunk at night (Acts 2:15). Could it be that his perception of sinfulness and the grossness of this present evil world had increased by the end of his life?

Spots and blemishes, revelling in their deceivings while they feast with you- These people were apparently confidently participating in the breaking of bread meetings. As happened at Corinth, these meetings were being turned into drunken feasts. They were unashamedly out to deceive the Lord's people through participating at these feasts. These were the types who needed to be excluded from the Lord's supper- not sincere folks who may have failed in some ways or who honestly misunderstand some of His teachings. They were spots and blemishes upon the bride of Christ. The Lord Jesus is working to present us to Himself *without* blemish (Jude 24 s.w.). These false teachers were therefore working directly against the Lord's work and intention.

2:14- see on 2 Pet. 3:16.

Having eyes full of adultery, they cannot cease from sin, enticing unstable souls- The false teachers, both here and elsewhere in the New Testament, were sexual predators. The breaking of bread at Corinth was turned into a drunken feast where the equivalent of temple prostitutes were used. The Christian church was being operated just how most other religious cults of the time were- with sexual abandon and alcohol abuse used as part of their rituals. As suggested on 1 Peter, it seems that the converts Peter is writing to are those he made in the thousands in his early preaching to the orthodox Jews at Jerusalem. They had fallen a long way; from strict orthodox Jews full of faith in and love for Jesus, who had shared their goods amongst each other and then been persecuted, and for the sake of their faith had gone into exile in what is now Turkey... and there, the pressures of the refugee life had taken over. Bit by bit they had slipped into this state of immorality. We marvel at how a man can at one point in his life be so committed and spiritual; and only a few years later, end in the spiritual gutter. But we are surrounded by examples of it, and therefore the situation we are reading of here is not impossible to imagine. It is a sober warning that faith must be maintained. No apparent height of spiritual strength will be retained unless we in an ongoing sense exercise our hearts in the ways of the Spirit.

Having a heart exercised in covetousness, children of cursing- Their tragic decline was because of the bad exercise of their hearts. They were covetous, just as the orthodox Jews of Lk. 16:14 were. They came to Christ with great zeal, but that basic problem with coveting remained. It became the regular mental experience of their minds, and it eventually led them to this tragic collapse of faith, similar to what Paul laments in Hebrews concerning the Jerusalem Hebrew Christians who instead of going into exile, had reverted to Judaism. They were sons of cursing / condemnation; at that moment, they would be condemned if the Lord returned or they died. And they could change that.

2:15 *Forsaking the right way, they went astray, having followed the way of Balaam the son of Beor, who loved the wages of wrongdoing-* These false teachers were home grown within the church, rather than having entered in from outside it; they had gone astray, they were once in the right way, having been baptized. The stress is that they had a financial motive in their misbehaviour. The same term "wages of wrongdoing" is used about Judas in Acts 1:18. We marvel that love of money could lead to such awful behaviour, wrong beyond words, of betraying God's Son and destroying His people. But people commit all manner of murder for relatively small sums. This is the power of the love of money. No wonder Scripture warns against it so strongly.

2:16 *But he was rebuked for his own transgression: a dumb ass spoke with a man's voice and hindered the madness of the prophet-* Peter was unafraid to rebuke the high flying intellectuals who were wrecking the first century ecclesia. He likens his rebuke of them to the "dumb ass speaking with man's voice" which rebuked Balaam. This was what he chose to identify himself with; that inspired donkey. There was no great trained intellect in Peter; yet his zeal for God's word puts us to shame. As the time of the end progresses, it seems that more and more of Christ's church (in the Western world) are educated people. In this I see a tremendous danger. A man who could probably not read, who probably wrote his inspired letters by dictation because he couldn't write himself, had a zeal for understanding which puts us to shame. Paul correctly made the point (and who more aware that his intellectuality could run away

with him than Paul) that God has chosen the weak things to confound the mighty; He has chosen the simple of this world to confound the wise (1 Cor. 1 and 2). I get some kind of intuitive feeling that Paul had Peter at the back of his mind as he wrote this letter to working class Corinth (1 Cor. 1:26). The deep mutual respect between theologian Paul and fisherman Peter is a real working model for our ecclesias.

Yet "rebuked" can also be a legal term, meaning 'to convict'. So often in this passage we encounter this idea that the essence of judgment day is today. The convictions for sin are going on right now- and should be responded to. It's as if the guilty verdict and eternal condemnation is passed down to the guilty right now- but they can change the verdict by repentance. What urgency should there be therefore, when we are convicted of sin.

The dumb ass was speaking God's word. But that word was spoken in order to save Balaam from destruction at the hand of the Angel who stood in front of him. We see here God's justice and grace working together. God made the Angel go out to kill Balaam; and made the ass speak to Balaam and collapse beneath him so that this didn't happen. It's rather like the Angel of death going out to destroy all the firstborn on Passover night, including that of the Israelites; but turning away from the houses over which the Passover Angel hovered. Thus one Angel delivered people from another Angel. There is no contradiction here; rather an insight into the careful balance within all God's operations with men. He doesn't simply operate on auto-pilot.

2:17 *These are springs without water*- They appeared to be fountains but had no substance as such. This would allude to how they were teachers, fountains, sources of water in the desert; but without water.

And mists driven by a storm; for whom the blackness of darkness has been reserved- These types "are carried with a tempest [in] the mist of darkness". The Greek for "carried with a tempest" only occurs elsewhere in Mk. 4:37 and Lk. 8:23 in description of how Peter and the disciples, proud of their sailing ability, were driven by the storm / whirlwind in the darkness. The Greek for "tempest" is highly specific- it refers only and specifically to the whirlwind storms which can arise on Galilee. Peter clearly intends the allusion back to the night when he too was driven in a Galilee whirlwind, and had been rebuked for his lack of faith. He is really saying that he too has been a condemned man and can relate to how they feel; yet he was converted out of it, and came to gracious forgiveness. And so, he implicitly appeals, can each of you my readers be.

They will be sent to a mist of darkness, as Paul walked about in a mist and darkness, not knowing where he was going (Acts 13:11). Thick darkness is associated with God's judgment (Is. 8:22; Joel 2:2; Zeph. 1:15)- and recall how the judgment of darkness upon Egypt was so severe that human movement required 'groping' (Ex. 10:21). Perhaps there will be a literal element to this in the experience of the rejected. Be that as it may, the utter *pointlessness* of life without God will be so bitterly apparent. And yet they would not face up to it in their day of opportunity. This likening of the rejected to scavenging dogs in the rubbish tips outside Jerusalem lends further support to the suggestion that the punishment of the wicked will be associated with literal Gehenna, outside Jerusalem. 2 Sam. 23:6 speaks of how the rejected will be "thrust away" by the Lord. The Hebrew means to wander, to be chased [and is translated this way elsewhere in the AV]. Significantly in this connection, 2 Sam. 23:7 speaks of how the rejected will be consumed in "the same place" where the seed of David was to overcome wickedness. Literal Gehenna was in the same vicinity as

Golgotha; and this in this sense His death was a foretaste of the future judgment, as we observe elsewhere.

2:18 *For when they speak-* They were teachers within the church.

Great swelling words of emptiness, they allure through the lusts of the flesh, through lewdness, the ones who have actually escaped from those who live in error- The lewdness and lusts of the flesh all have sexual hints. As noted on :14 and :19, they were justifying sexual immorality within the church and actually at the breaking of bread meeting. We recall how there was a false teacher code named "Jezebel" who taught fornication within the church, claiming that she was speaking inspired words of prophecy which permitted and commanded fornication (Rev. 2:20). Their words were "swelling", just as false teaching is likened to yeast which swells up.

2:19 *Promising them liberty, while they are in fact slaves to corruption. For of whom a person is overcome, of the same is he also brought into bondage-* As noted on :18, the "liberty" was the libertine sexual freedom to use prostitutes at church meetings. This was their interpretation of Christian freedom. It may be that they misquoted Paul's writings to this effect. He states in Rom. 3:8 that his message of grace and freedom from law was indeed wilfully misquoted in this way. The tension between freedom and slavery is at the heart of Paul's teaching about baptism in Romans 6. We are made ultimately free through slavery to the Lord Jesus. These false teachers were offering apparent moral freedom only because they had been overcome by sin, personified here as "a person". The same word is used in :20 for how they had previously been "overcome" by the immorality of the world. It is this which had overcome the false teachers, and they were trying to bring others into the same bondage which they were in. This is the same mentality behind why addicts may seek to get others hooked; there is a downward tendency in human nature, we wish to bring others down to our level. The path of the Spirit is what reverses all this.

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 in them and overcome, the latter end is worse for them than the beginning-* See on :19. The having "escaped" suggests a one off point when they escaped; see on 1:4. That point was surely baptism. It is through the knowledge of the Lord Jesus that we "escaped" the world; but theoretical knowledge of doctrine is surely not in view, for one can be aware of all that but still be entangled in the things of the world. Indeed, Peter in his letters doesn't appear to need to tackle any major theological errors (unlike Paul to the Corinthians). "Knowledge" is being used in the Hebraic sense of 'having a relationship with'. It is living, two-way relationship with the Lord Jesus which means we find the attractions of the world and flesh far less attractive. "Entangled" is a word only elsewhere used in 2 Tim. 2:4 about the spiritual soldier not entangling himself with the affairs of this life. The obsessive, entangling nature of the things of secular life are just as much a source of entangling as the defilements of the world in its worst sense. For those who have once escaped these things and return to them, their latter end is worse than at their beginning, when they were ignorant of the Gospel. For such people are not responsible to judgment. But having known the Gospel and then returning to the world, the fate will be resurrection to judgment, seeing the future that has been missed, and then having to die eternally, "the second death".

2:21 *For it were better for them not to have known the way of righteousness, than after knowing it, to turn back from the holy commandment delivered to them-* The Jewish converts whom Peter is addressing, those baptized by him at Pentecost, would

have heard John the Baptist's message. And that message of preparation for the new covenant is the only teaching described with this same phrase, "the way of righteousness" (Mt. 21:32). "The holy commandment" is a phrase used only elsewhere about the old covenant (Rom. 7:12). To turn away from the covenant was the ultimate sin for Jewish people. Peter is using this language of the old covenant about the new covenant. To have turned from the old covenant to the new, and now to turn away from it... meant that "it were better" not to have been born. The allusion is to Judas (Mt. 26:24), whom Peter sees as the epitome of all that fall; but see on :13.

2:22 It has happened to them according to the true proverb: A dog returns to his own vomit and a sow, having washed, to her wallowing in the mire- The word for 'washed' means a complete bathing, and would be appropriate to baptism. These orthodox Jewish converts who had come from hard line Judaism to being washed in Christ by Peter baptizing them... were returning to the wallowing in the mud which had been their former way of life. And that was how Peter therefore esteemed the hard line legalism of Judaism- a wallowing in mud, as pigs, the classic unclean animal. In another analogy, their conversion away from Judaism had been a vomiting up of rotting unclean food; and they were now returning to what they had once vomited up. Judaism is not at all spirituality, according to how Peter, Paul, Stephen and others allude to it. The washing of baptism is likened to a vomiting up of rotten food. Again the implication is that the vomiting of the old life was a one off act which occurred at a specific time- their baptism. Baptism is therefore a specific action of the Spirit upon us in moral terms.

2 PETER CHAPTER 3

3:1 This is now, beloved, the second epistle that I write to you; and in both of them I stir up your sincere mind by putting you in remembrance- 2 Peter 3 concerns the coming of the 'day of the Lord' both in AD70 and more importantly in our last days. The allusions to the Olivet prophecy, which is similar in this respect, and the use of the word *parousia* to describe this 'coming' of the Lord confirm this approach. This chapter contains warnings of a major apostasy that would arise within the latter day ecclesia, and urgent exhortations as to how we should live in the last days. It is not an exaggeration to say, in the light of this, that these words were fundamentally written for our generation, living just prior to the second coming, notwithstanding any other application to earlier generations. The purpose of this chapter, in common with the whole second epistle, was to "stir up (the Greek implies suddenly, with force) your pure minds... that ye may be mindful of the words which were spoken before by the holy (Christian?) prophets (e.g. Paul, v.15), and of the commandment of us the apostles" (v.1,2).

"Sincere minds" could be an example of Peter imputing righteousness to his readership, assuming their sincerity and standing "in Christ" despite being aware of serious failures amongst them. Or it could be that Peter is now focusing upon the faithful remnant amongst his readership.

3:2 That you should remember the words which were spoken before by the holy prophets and the commandments of the Lord and Saviour through your apostles- AV: "Of us the apostles". The things written in Peter's letters were therefore a reminder of what had been spoken by the New Testament prophets, and what Peter and the apostles had taught all the thousands of converts who were baptized at Pentecost. There was clearly follow up teaching in addition to the address recorded in Acts 2. The "prophets" would refer to the group of

Christians who spoke on that day as inspired prophets, fulfilling Joel's prophecy of prophets being raised up.

The letters of Peter urge his readers to "be mindful of the words which were spoken before". Yet this is evidently alluding to the frequent references to the disciples being slow to "remember" [s.w. "mindful"] the words which their Lord had "spoken before" (Lk. 24:6,8; Jn. 2:17,22; 12:16). Indeed, the same word is used about Peter 'remembering' [s.w. "be mindful"] all too late, the words which his Lord had "spoken before" to him (Mt. 26:75). So Peter was aware that his readers knew that he had not 'remembered' the words his Lord had "spoken before" to *him*- and yet, knowing that, he exhorts his readers to 'remember' or 'be mindful' [s.w.] of words which had been previously spoken. His readers likely had memorized the Gospels by heart. And yet Peter asks them to learn from his mistake, not to be as slow to remember as the disciples had been, and he especially. This is the basis of powerful exhortation- a repentant life, not an appearance of sinlessness.

3:3 *Knowing this first, that in the last days mockers shall come with mockery, walking after their own lusts*- The "first" or most important (Greek) thing they were to understand when it came to Bible teaching about the last days was "that there shall come in the last days mockers". The presence of false teachers within the ecclesia would be one of the clearest signs of the second coming. The Lord "began" His Olivet prophecy with a warning about false teachers, as if this would be the first main sign (Mk. 13:5). Likewise Paul says that it was needless for him to write to the Thessalonians about the "times and seasons" of Christ's return. "For yourselves know perfectly (clearly) that the day of the Lord so cometh as a thief in the night" (1 Thess.5:1,2); i.e. it would be when there were unready elements within the ecclesia, to whom Christ's return would be thief-like. In similar vein, John taught that the believers could be certain they were in the 'last days' of AD70 because of the presence of false teaching (1 Jn. 2:18).

Connecting this with our comment on 1 Thess. 5:1,2, it may well be that the 'false teaching' is not so much in terms of basic abstract doctrine, but in the encouragement of a way of life that is not alert for the second coming. As we progress through 2 Peter 3, and indeed the entire New Testament, it becomes painfully obvious that this class of people were to arise *within* the ecclesia. As there were false teachers among natural Israel, so there must be within the New Israel (2 Pet. 2:1). Peter implies that this fact is a major theme in the teaching of all the apostles and Spirit-guided brethren. There are a number of connections between the descriptions of these people in 2 Pet. 2, and the language of 2 Pet. 3.

Such false teaching was something which Peter was prophesying: "There *shall* come... scoffers... saying...". But now the tenses change to the present: "For (because) this they willingly *are* ignorant of...". Even then these brethren had shut their mind to Bible based reasoning, refusing to consider the power of God's word as exhibited in the Old Testament. It was therefore only a matter of time before they started speaking forth false ideas. And Jude's allusions to 2 Peter 2 are because the situation predicted had by his time already started to come about, in the AD70 context.

The "mockery" was in order to justify the indulgence of "their own lusts". I have noted several times in chapter 2 that the false teaching was rooted in a justification of lust, especially sexual lust. The reality of the second coming ought to be a guard against sexual misbehaviour. The subconscious desire for most false teaching is in order to make the way easier and justify human lust.

This links up with the false teachers of 2 Pet. 2 being styled "them that walk after the flesh in... lust" (2:10). Thus, as always, the motivation for the questioning of true doctrine, in this case that of the second coming, was in order to justify a fleshly way of life. There seems

a connection of thought here with the Lord's reflection that the servant who felt the Lord's coming was extensively delayed would start to "eat and drink with the drunken" and beat the fellow-servants. Peter's later reference to the Lord's thief-like coming for such brethren (:10) indicates that there is a connection here. This would show that Peter is interpreting the Lord's description of the man who thought that the Master was delaying His coming, as meaning that in reality he was questioning whether his Master would ever come. This must surely be where a disinterest in prophecy ultimately leads- in a man's heart, anyway.

3:4 And saying: Where is the promise of his coming? For from the day that the fathers fell asleep, all things continue as they were from the beginning of the creation- Note how the false teaching was expressed in the form of a question. This common characteristic of false teachers dates right back to the serpent in Eden, showing that they have the family likeness of the beast. But then came the thrust of their argument: "For since the fathers fell asleep, all things continue as they were from the beginning of the creation" (AV). If "the fathers" here refers to the ecclesial elders who had known Christ in the flesh (as the phrase is used in 1 Cor. 4:15; 1 Jn. 2:13,14), it would appear that these dishonest doubters of the first century were middle aged believers who had themselves been waiting some time for the Lord's return, having been baptized by Peter at Pentecost. Christ's parable of the wicked servant getting tired of waiting would indicate the same. In any case, a group of arrogant youngsters would be unlikely to have the impact on the ecclesia which 2 Pet. 2 and 3:17 indicate that these false teachers would have.

This idea that Christ would not literally return was doubtless wrapped up in very respectable terms. We cannot overemphasize that the motivation for this false doctrine was in order to justify a fleshly lifestyle. Apostasy from the truth always has this motive. Conversely, true enthusiasm for the Lord's return is invariably associated with a spiritual way of life (cp. Rom. 13:12). 2 Thess. 2:2 says that the deceiving brethren taught that the day of Christ is here" (R.V.)- presumably through the idea that the believers now are fully the Kingdom of God, that the Lord's mystical presence amongst us is in fact His real and only form of existence and 'coming' to be with us, and that therefore there was no need for a doctrine of a second coming. In such an hour as the unworthy "think not", the Lord will return (Mt. 24:44). The Greek translated "think not" implies a very strong level of conviction that he will not return; it doesn't just imply that they will be expecting him but not very eagerly.

It may be in this way that there is a claim of "peace and safety" within the latter day ecclesia, seeing that "peace and safety" is very much the Old Testament language of the Kingdom (1 Chron. 22:10; Ez. 28:26; 34:25,28; 39:26; Zech. 14:11). It is very difficult to achieve a balance between appreciating our high spiritual status now, and realizing that we are not yet the fullness of God's Kingdom. A true appreciation of our position should lead us to value the second coming more, to personally yearn for it, and see its vital necessity. Never will that be a dry doctrine which we just assent to.

But the question "Where is the promise of his coming?" has an extraordinary number of allusions to other Scriptures, which all confirm a uniform interpretation.

In Ezekiel 12, the desolation of Israel by the Assyrian invasion was foretold. The message was continually mocked by the false prophets, who claimed inspiration from God to claim that the day of judgment had been endlessly delayed. They also belittled the predictions made by the true prophets, spreading their ideas until it became a common joke that Yahweh's prophets kept speaking of a coming day of the Lord that never came. But God's reply was clear: "What is that proverb that ye have in the land of Israel, saying, The days are prolonged, and every vision faileth?... I will make this proverb to cease... say unto them, The days are at hand, and the effect (fulfilment) of every vision... I will speak, and the word that I

shall speak shall come to pass; it shall no more be prolonged" (Ez. 12:22-25). The similarities with the last days leading up to AD70 are clear. The true word of God regarding the coming day of the Lord was mocked; a belief that "the days are prolonged" led to the conclusion that "every vision faileth", as the thought that "my Lord delayeth his coming" resulted in a lack of faith in the word of promise. Our Lord's statement that "all shall be fulfilled" at His coming (Lk. 21:32) matches the assurance given here that "every vision" *would* be fulfilled when the day came. Those within the ecclesia of Israel at Ezekiel's time who were expressing such doubt, were matched by those within the ecclesia of spiritual Israel (perhaps also Jews?) in the first century. Clearly they must have their latter day counterparts.

Set against the background of the imminent Assyrian invasion, the denunciation of Israel in Isaiah 5 also has marked similarities with the words of 2 Pet. 3. "My people... have no knowledge... that say, Let Him make speed, and hasten His work, that we may see it... therefore as the fire devoureth the stubble, and the flame consumeth the stubble... (so) is the anger of the Lord kindled against His people" (Is. 5:13,19,24,25). Peter implies that the false teachers he is referring to should have "grown in knowledge" (3:18), and that because of their mocking request for God to speed up His purpose they also would have a fiery destruction. The irony was, of course, that the apparent delay was due to God's mercy in providing them time to repent (:9-12).

There are several allusions in 2 Peter 3 to the Olivet prophecy. The attitude Peter is speaking of here in :4 is related to that of the elder servant who decides that his Lord is delaying His return, and therefore he can act in a fleshly way as if the Lord will never come (Mt. 24:48). The person Jesus describes did not throw off the external trappings of his faith. "*My Lord delays his coming*" indicates that he still spoke of Jesus as his lord, and we are therefore left to conclude that he did not say these things in a spirit of public, gross abandon to the ways of the flesh, but rather deep in his heart, or perhaps as a new form of doctrine. Our Lord spoke of the man thinking this "in his heart"; but because our thoughts always find reflection in our words (Mt. 12:34), it is inevitable that Peter should speak of these people now actually saying those words. Thus the words of these false teachers had long been gestating.

The following verses in 2 Peter 3 speak of how God's word was present in the initial creation and His subsequent re-ordering of it. In just the same way, the word of God would have a part to play in the judgment of these false teachers. This would suggest that their claim that "all things continue as they were from the beginning of the creation" refers back to that of Gen.1. However, we can expect to see in the reasoning of these men a fair degree of complexity. It is just possible that the concept of a new creation in Christ was so common in the thinking of the early believers (Rev. 3:14; 2 Cor. 5:17; Col. 1:15,16; 3:10; Rom. 8; Eph. 2:10; 3:9; 4:24 etc.), that they were saying 'Since the apostles ("fathers") died, everything is going on fine since the new creation began on the cross. The spiritual graces we experience now as part of the new creation are such that there doesn't seem any need for this second coming doctrine'. The error was in focusing upon only one side of a bigger picture of Bible teaching, and then using that distorted picture to justify the way of the flesh. And yet the bottom line is that the latter day brotherhood will shy away from the second coming *in their hearts*, and doubtless each will articulate this in different ways: doctrinally, practically or simply in the attitude of their hearts.

3:5 *For this they wilfully forget, that there were heavens from of old and an earth compacted out of water and amidst water, by the word of God-* They had willingly forgotten that it was through God's word of command that the earth arose out of the water at the creation, and by this same word of God the water was commanded to overflow the earth again at Noah's time, taking the world (or that part of it) back to how it was before creation- a sphere covered in water. One message of creation is simply that God's word is powerful; for

creation is presented as creation through a spoken word of God. That same word is powerful and effective for both creation and destruction in judgment. The false teachers were exalting their word over that of God's.

3:6 *By which means the world that then was, being overflowed with water, perished-* The "means" is that of God's word, "by which" the present world was created, by commanding the waters to recede to let the dry land appear (Gen. 1:9). Peter had previously made the point that the promised judgment of God in Noah's time was delayed in order to allow the maximum scope for repentance by that wicked world (1 Pet. 3:20). The false teachers were ignorant of this fact through having forgotten what they once knew- i.e. that a similar delay was being experienced by their generation in the coming of the Lord's day. Because of this, they were now squarely matching those who mocked Noah. The times of Noah are a definite type of the 'last days' of the Jewish system leading up to AD70. "The *world* that then was... perished... the *Heaven and the earth* which are now, by the same word (of God) are... reserved unto fire" (cp. water; :6,7). Thus Peter equates the "world" with the present "Heavens and earth", implying that a "Heavens and earth" were destroyed in Noah's time. It was "all flesh" that perished (Gen. 6:11-13). This indicates a clearly figurative interpretation of "Heavens and earth" as meaning an order of things. This line of argument has yet to be answered by Pentecostals, Catholics and others, over-enthusiastic to see in these verses a destruction of God's own perfect dwelling place as well as this beautiful planet. The quotation of Is. 65:17 in :13 should also be appreciated- the new "heavens and earth" is a new system of things to come upon this (already) beautiful earth. The literal heavens and earth were hardly destroyed in Noah's time.

Elements of this prophecy refer to the ending of the Jewish system in AD70; the world of Noah "perished" (:6) as the Jewish world would. The same Greek word occurs in Heb. 1:11 concerning the 'perishing' of the Jewish heavens and earth due to the unchanging ministry of the Lord. This would indicate that the Law itself was in some way ended in AD70, although of course it was 'taken out of the way' on the cross (Col. 2:14-17). The same word for "perish" occurs in 2 Pet. 3:9 in the context of God's punishment of the wicked within the ecclesia- He is unwilling that "any (of them) should perish". Jude 11 matches this by warning the same class of how their prototypes "perished in the gainsaying of Core". It appears that the judgments which were to bring the Jewish system to a close would therefore be the same as those which would punish the false teachers. We can conclude from this that many of the first century false teachers were Jews or Judaist-influenced.

We are told by the Lord Jesus and Peter that the second coming is typified by the flood. There is therefore a similarity between the world of Noah's time, and our last days. It is easy for us to fail to appreciate the carnage of the flood; the Sunday School image of happy giraffes with extra long necks poking out of the ark really isn't correct. The destruction wrought by the flood was absolute and devastating. This gives us a clue to the huge amount of change which the Lord's coming will suddenly bring on the earth. 2 Peter 3 draws a parallel between Noah's world being destroyed by water, and ours being ended by fire. The flood water changed the climate, and totally remoulded the topography. We can safely assume that even *greater* physical changes will be brought about by the Lord's return. Is. 54:9 speaks of the latter day judgments upon Israel being "as the waters of Noah unto me: for the *mountains shall depart*, and the *hills be removed*; but my *kindness shall not depart* from thee, neither shall the *covenant... be removed*". Thus in the future, the mountains and hills *will* depart as they did at Noah's time; but God's kindness and covenant will not.

3:7 *But the heavens that now are and the earth, by the same word have been stored up for fire, being reserved against the day of judgment and destruction of ungodly men-* The flood was the result of God's commands to the Angels. "By the same word" could suggest

that when God spoke to the Angels about the flood, His commandments then also included details of the judgements at the second coming.

“By the same word” of God that had caused the earth to rise from the waters and later called the waters over the earth, “the heavens and the earth which are now... are reserved unto fire against the day of judgment” (AV). The allusion to Mt. 5:18 confirms that there must be some reference here to the passing away of the Law and the Jewish system associated with it: “Till heaven and earth pass, one jot or one tittle shall in no wise pass from the Law, till all be fulfilled”. Our Lord’s fulfilment of the Law was primarily on the cross, but the fact that 2 Pet. 3 speaks of the Jewish heavens and earth passing away in AD70 indicates that the finishing of the Law did not come into full effect until the destruction of the temple. This explains the many hints throughout the New Testament that the believers kept some parts of the Law prior to AD70.

2 Thess. 1:8 speaks of the Lord Jesus coming “from Heaven with his mighty Angels, *in flaming fire* taking vengeance” on those who had rejected the knowledge of God, and had consciously disobeyed the Gospel of Christ. This connection not only underlines the fact that both AD70 and our last days are spoken of in 2 Pet. 3, but also proves that the “heavens and earth” which suffer fire are representative of individuals. Hence Peter’s description of the day of “fire” as being “the day of judgment and perdition of ungodly men”.

2 Pet. 3:7 speaks of the heavens and earth being reserved unto “*the day* of judgment and perdition of ungodly men”, and then goes straight on to point out that “one *day* is with the Lord as a thousand years”. Whilst the judgment seat itself may last a very short time, does this read as if *the day* or era of judgment will in some way be the 1,000 years of the Millennium, even though the wicked individuals themselves will probably die fairly quickly? The Millennium will be the period in which the earth will gradually be cleansed of the results of the sins of “ungodly men”. See on Rev. 14:11.

2 Pet. 3:7 uses the same Greek word for “ungodly” as in 2 Thess. 1:8 to describe the false teachers; and it occurs an impressive six times in Jude’s letter concerning the same people. The warning that judgment would no longer be delayed shows that “the day of judgment” which came on the Judaizers must refer to AD70. But there can be no doubt that “The day of judgment and perdition of ungodly men” must refer ultimately to the second coming. The idea of punishment being “reserved” is continuing a theme of the preceding chapter. “The angels that sinned” were “*reserved*” unto judgment” (2:4), the responsible people to whom Lot preached are “*reserved*... unto the day of judgment” (3:7), and thus for the false teachers of the first century too, “the mist of darkness is *reserved* for ever” (2:17). As the first two examples received judgment in this life and also a ‘reservation’ of future punishment, so the sinners within the first century ecclesias would receive a punishment at the manifestation of the Lord in AD70, and also at his second coming. This explains the dual reference of 2 Pet. 3 to both these periods. The theme of judgment being “reserved” adds weight to Peter’s plea for his readers to realize that God was not suspending judgment indefinitely, but that despite an apparent delay in meting it out, judgment was without doubt reserved for revelation at a future date. The continued emphasis on God using the agent of His word to do this must be connected with Peter’s request for us to give more careful attention to that word as spoken by the true prophets / teachers (3:12,15,16). It will be by the Word and our attitude to it that we will be judged at the last day. As the word of God would be the agent of destruction for the unworthy, so it could bring salvation to the righteous.

I have earlier suggested that the language of creation used here may echo the idea of the new creation in Christ. “By the word of God the heavens were of old” suggests the account of

the new creation in Col. 1:17- and "the word of God" is a title of the Lord. Thus as He had brought about the new creation, so He was capable of punishing (in AD 70) and destroying (at the second coming) those parts of it which failed to reflect His glory.

3:8 *But beloved, do not forget this one thing, that one day is with the Lord as a thousand years and a thousand years as one day-* The attitude of willing ignorance by the unworthy can quite easily be adopted by us. "Beloved, be *not* ignorant (as those of :5 were) of this one (Greek 'other') thing, that one day is with the Lord as a thousand years, and a thousand years as one day" (AV). Peter bids us be aware of one other thing- that God can collapse and expand periods of time as He wishes. Not only can one of God's "days" be a vast expanse of time to us in human terms, but also one of our brief days can be turned into a thousand years by God if He wishes. This principle is illuminated by appreciating that Peter is here quoting Ps. 90:4. This prayer of Moses was bringing before God the miseries of the condemned generation in the wilderness, and pleading that God would repent of [i.e. change] His decision to bar them from entering the land (Ps. 90:12-17). After all, Moses had previously changed God's declared purpose of destroying Israel and making of him a nation; and had not God declared to him that He was willing to show Moses the fact that His purpose could be changed in accordance with human behaviour (Num. 14:34 A.V.mg.)? Thus Moses had every reason to try to change God's plan again through prayer. Against this background Peter is reasoning that if Moses could try to pray for the days of punishment for Israel to be shortened and for their sin to be overlooked, then we too can find reason to pray for the shortening of the days until the Kingdom, and for God's mercy upon the sinners of His people. There are a number of significant parallels between Peter's argument and Psalm 90:

Psalm 90	2 Peter 3
:2	:5
:5	:8
:6	The language of 1 Pet. 1:24; Is. 40:6-8 re. the first century Jews
:7	:7,10,12
:12	:2,15,18
:13,14	:12

And for the enthusiast: Ps. 90:16,17= Hab. 3:2 (re. the second coming) = 2 Pet. 3:12,13.

It is quite possible to translate 2 Pet. 3:8 as "One day with the Lord is as a thousand", which would suggest another Psalm allusion- this time to Ps. 84:18: "A day in thy courts is better than a thousand". In this case Peter would be saying 'By all means be aware that a day of judgment and condemnation will surely come, as outlined in :5-7; but beloved, do be mindful too of the wonderful reward. Just 24 (12?) hours of perfect fellowship with the Lord, unmarred by our sin, is worth a thousand years of this life!'. Truly an inspiring thought, and a motivation to come to appreciate the righteousness of God.

3:9 *The Lord is not slack concerning his promise, as some count slackness, but is longsuffering toward you, not wishing that any should perish but that all should come to repentance-* "The Lord... is longsuffering to us-ward" (AV) of the last days. This longsuffering of Jesus suggests the parable of the persistent widow, whose continued requests should match our prayers for the second coming (the vengeance of our adversaries which she requested will only come then). "Though he bear long" (s.w. 'longsuffering') with us, "God shall avenge His own elect, which cry day and night unto Him" (Lk. 18:7). The "us" whom Peter refers to as experiencing the Lord's longsuffering ('bearing long') are therefore to be equated with "the elect" in their fervent prayers for the second coming. The days being

shortened for the elect's sake therefore refers to the hastening of the second coming on account of the elect's prayers (Mt. 24:22). In view of the later references to Mt. 24, it is not unreasonable to think that Peter is consciously alluding to Mt. 24:22 concerning the shortening of the days for the sake of the elect's prayers, through his allusion to the parable of the persistent widow of Lk. 18:7.

Peter presses home the point: "The Lord (Jesus- :15,18) is not slack concerning his promise (to return- of Jn. 14:3,18,28), as some men (in the ecclesia) count slackness", but is longsuffering (:9). The Greek for "slack" here means 'delay'; this is assurance that God is not 'delaying' as men dilly-dally in the execution of their plans, but is rather postponing this for a good reason.

This kind of postponement, misinterpreted as "delay", was a major feature of God's dealings with natural Israel previously. So it is not surprising that there are a number of instructive Old Testament allusions here. Is. 30:17-19 records how Israel would suffer for their sins, but then God would wait for a certain time until they cried to Him in repentance, before bringing about a time of blessing on the earth based around the Lord's presence in Jerusalem. "One thousand shall flee at the rebuke of one (Dt. 28 language)... till ye be left as a tree bereft of branches (how Paul describes what happened to Israel in the first century, Rom. 11)... and therefore (i.e. because you are such sinners) will the Lord wait, that He may be gracious unto you, and therefore will He be exalted (through your repentance), that He may have mercy upon you: for the Lord is a God of judgment: blessed are all they that wait for Him. For the people shall dwell in Zion at Jerusalem: thou shalt weep no more (the language of Is. 65:17-25, quoted in 2 Pet. 3:13): He will be very gracious unto thee at the voice of thy cry (of repentance): *when* He shall hear it, He will answer thee". Not only is God delaying the Kingdom until there is repentance in Israel, but such is His *mercy* that He will not bring it about until such repentance. His purpose should not be seen, therefore, just in terms of the cold equation 'Repentance in Israel= second coming', but the supreme *mercy* and *love* which this arrangement shows should be appreciated. "And *therefore* will He be exalted" Isaiah comments- by those who understand these things. Rom. 11:32-36 is a marvellous example of this.

Peter's stress on how the word of God would bring about the day of the Lord shows his realization of how the false teachers were really trying to say that the word of God was untrue, and that *it* was delaying. Perhaps he had Hab. 2:3 in mind: "The vision (of the word) is yet for an appointed time, but at the end it shall speak, and not lie: though it tarry, wait for it; because it will surely come, it will not tarry". The context is a prophecy concerning the coming Babylonian desolation of Jerusalem. Evidently there were some in Israel who felt that the fulfilment of these words of God was 'tarrying' so long that it would never come. The next verse continues "But the just shall live by his faith", i.e. in the eventual fulfilment of the word of God. This is twice quoted in the New Testament concerning the first century believers (Rom. 1:17; Heb. 10:38). It is therefore in order that verse 3 concerning the coming 'day of the Lord' in the Babylonian invasion should have relevance to the same period. If 2 Peter 3 refers here, then this is indeed the case. It is noteworthy that prophecies like Jer. 17:27 speak of this Babylonian invasion as a "fire" in both literal and spiritual terms- as 2 Peter 3 also employs "fire". Reading between the lines of the New Testament epistles, it is evident that Paul often phrased things in such a way as to warn against what was presumably a common temptation- in this case, to think that the day of the Lord had been delayed so long that effectively the brethren felt that it would never come. Thus Heb. 10:37 quotes Hab. 2:3 which we have been considering with reference to the second coming: "He that shall come *will* come (cp. 'I am that I am'), and will *not* tarry".

The key to overcoming this temptation was to remember that the delay in the Lord's coming

was a sign of God's mercy in granting sinners time to repent. Rather than leading to slackness of service, the delay should lead to greater diligence.

This "longsuffering" is because God is "not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance" (AV). The "any" and "all" here evidently refer to those whom God has called- the responsible. The fact that millions of people throughout history have lived and died with no chance of repenting or avoiding 'perishing' through response to the Gospel, is proof enough that God is perfectly willing that many should perish and not come to repentance, as far as the world in general is concerned. But such is His desire for the *responsible* to live up to their spiritual potential, that He has delayed the coming of the Lord. Doubtless Israel deserved immediate punishment for their crucifixion of Christ- a human 'God' would certainly have reacted straight away- but judgment was deferred until AD70 in order to give them every opportunity to repent. God's judgments in the OT were often deferred because people repented (e.g. Is. 48:9; Nineveh); yet such is His supreme grace to Israel that when they unrepentantly crucified His Son, He *still* deferred judgment. The same is true in our days. What pain it must give our Father to see this time which has been allowed as extra opportunity being used irresponsibly! The bridegroom of the parable "tarried", the same Greek word translated "delay" in "my Lord *delayeth* his coming". Tragically, this resulted in the spiritual slumbering of all of the virgins rather than their greater eagerness and expectancy.

That this passage is indeed concerning the responsible is confirmed by the allusion it makes to Ez. 18:23: "Have I any pleasure (Heb. "will") at all that the wicked should die... and not that He should return from His ways, and live?". The context is concerning a Jew (i.e. responsible) who had been wicked but now had repented. The 'perishing' of 2 Peter 3:9 must refer to destruction at the judgment, God is not willing that any of us ("longsuffering to *usward*") should be condemned then, therefore that day is delayed. Perhaps we can infer that it is because of God's particular love for our very last generation of believers that the day is delayed- perhaps by 40 years, as in the case of Israel in AD70? It is possible that there may be a "generation" of 40 years after the blossoming of the fig tree- i.e. the first signs of Jewish repentance (cp. the Jews for Jesus movement?).

The way this worked out in the first century is demonstrated by the judgment of the false teachers in the Thyatira ecclesia. "I gave her space to repent of her fornication; and she repented not. Behold... I will cast her into great tribulation... I will give unto every one of you according to your works" (Rev. 2:21-23). This latter phrase clearly refers to the second coming (Mt. 16:27; Rev. 20:12; 22:12); but in addition to their judgment then, they were also punished in the "great tribulation" of AD70 referred to in Mt. 24:21,29. As explained in 2 Pet. 3, these people were 'given space to repent', but did not. Therefore judgment came. Sadly, there must be similarities with the last days. But it must ever be appreciated that God is doing all things possible to bring about that repentance; and we should likewise help these people to repent, so that the Lord's coming will be hastened. The idea of God being unwilling that any should perish but that all should repent must have some connection with the parable of the lost sheep. The efforts of the good shepherd should be replicated, so the context of the parable indicates, by the believers. Thus the parable is summarized: "It is not the will of your Father which is in heaven, that one of these little ones should perish" (Mt. 18:17 cp. 2 Pet. 3:9). The fact that there is / will be a delay in the second coming indicates that there will be a distinct stubbornness by some to repent in the last days- perhaps the last Christian generation is the lost sheep generation, whose repentance will bring the Lord's return? "*When* the fruit is brought forth, immediately he putteth in the sickle, because the harvest is come" (Mk. 4:29).

But what exactly does 'coming to repentance' imply? "Longsuffering" on the Lord's part takes us back to 1 Pet. 3:20, where we learn that God's longsuffering resulted in a delay in the flood coming, so that people had the maximum opportunity to repent and enter the ark, representing entry into Christ by baptism. The Greek for "come to" repentance has the idea of a one off act. A glance down a concordance under "repentance" shows that this word is associated with only two things- baptism, or a major repentance by a completely apostate believer. The delay in the second coming is for these two reasons- so that a seriously apostate group within the ecclesia can repent, and so that there can be the maximum possible allowance of time for the encouragement of people to be baptized. In addition to our prayers being able to speed the Lord's return, these two reasons for the delay involve our own effort speeding it. By repentance and encouragement of our weak brethren to repent, this really will happen; and the quicker we spread the Gospel world-wide, "baptizing all nations", the quicker the delay will end and the Lord will come (Mt. 24:14). The latter day Elijah ministry will presumably be after the pattern of John the Baptist- with an emphasis, therefore, on the baptism of Jesus as a means of preparing them for Christ's coming.

3:10 *But the day of the Lord will come as a thief*- This is an evident reference to another part of the Olivet prophecy, which has reference to both AD70 and the second coming. The Jewish "house" was "broken up" by the thief-like coming of the Lord. 1 Thess. 5 refers to this same passage, interpreting it as a description of how the Lord will come unexpectedly to the spiritually weak within the ecclesia. It will be a time when they think they are in "peace and safety" spiritually, and will publicly teach this ("When they shall say peace and safety"). This is exactly the theme of 2 Peter 3- the false teachers within the ecclesia of the last days will preach that the second coming is far off; that in fact all is in peace and spiritual safety within the household. But as the thief would break the house up, so 2 Peter 3 graphically describes the total dissolution of the Jewish system ("heavens and earth"). Mt. 24:43 indicates that the Lord comes as a thief to those who would be watching over the house- i.e. to the leaders of the ecclesia. The false teachers will therefore be in the leadership of the body- otherwise it would be hard for their ideas to gain the following which these prophecies indicate they did and will.

Then the heavens shall pass away with a great noise and the elements shall be dissolved with fervent heat, and the earth and the works that are therein shall be burned up- "The heavens shall pass away with a great noise" may therefore refer to the destruction of this class of leaders, the 'heavens' of the ecclesia. "A great noise" in Greek implies a whirring- perhaps referring to there being a manifestation of the cherubim at the second coming ("the sign of the son of man in Heaven"?). Jer. 30:23,24, in a decidedly latter day context, speaks of God's judgments coming as a mighty whirlwind, associated as it is with the cherubim (Ez. 1:4). "The elements shall melt with fervent heat" provides impressive evidence for the AD70 application of this chapter when it is realized that most of the occurrences of the Greek word for "elements" are concerning the Mosaic ordinances (Gal. 4:3; 5:21; Col. 2:8,20). "Melt" can mean 'to unloose', conjuring up the idea of the law as a burden which was now being unstrapped.

"The earth also and the works that are therein shall be burned up" (AV) may refer specifically to the judgments coming on the land ("earth") of Israel, and the ending of the works of the Law through the destruction of the temple in AD70. As Noah's world was destroyed with literal water, so it is not unreasonable to expect a literal aspect to the "fire" here mentioned, although this is not to question the symbolic reference of fire to the anger of God. The temple was destroyed with fire, although interestingly Dan. 9:26 speaks of its end coming with a flood; fitting in perfectly with Peter's connection of the AD70 judgments on

Israel with the flood.

The passing away of heaven and earth suggests another link with the Olivet prophecy: "Heaven and earth shall pass away, but my words shall not pass away" (Mt. 24:34). The physical heavens and earth being permanent (Ecc. 1:4; Is. 45:18; Ps. 78:69), our Lord must have been referring to the order of things which would end in both AD70 and the last days. The faithful who came through the figurative 'fire' of those times would do so through their clinging to the Lord's words. We have earlier commented that this is a theme in 2 Peter 3- by God's word the natural and spiritual creation came about, and by it too sinners can be destroyed if they fail to let it act upon them.

The detailed description of all the elements of heaven and earth being destroyed is embedded, as we have seen, in allusions to the Olivet prophecy. It is therefore to be expected that our Lord's talking there about the sun and moon being darkened, the stars falling etc. (Mt. 24:29) should also have some connection with 2 Pet. 3. The Olivet prophecy speaks of these things being obscured and affected- but 2 Peter 3 describes their complete and fundamental destruction. Sun, moon and stars have several associations with Israel (e.g. in Joseph's dream), and 'Heavens and earth' have also been symbolic of the Jews (e.g. Dt. 32:1). Mt. 24:29,30 describe how there will be signs in these things, and then the Lord would come with the clouds of heaven. 2 Peter 3 shows how this refers to the lead up to AD70, and that then the Jewish system was totally destroyed. This means that the son of man coming with the clouds of heaven to replace the previous sun, moon etc. would have a limited reference to the system of things based around Christ and his word (Mt. 24:34) which was firmly established in AD70. But most importantly, the dissolution of these 'heavens' refers to the second coming, with the destruction it will bring upon both the Jewish and Gentile worlds, and also upon the unworthy in the ecclesia. This shows that the signs in the heavens which warn of the second coming are not just in the Jewish and Gentile world- but (even clearer) in the state of the wicked within the "heavens" of the ecclesia, who will meet their judgment in this horrendous destruction of all that is evil.

A number of images found in 2 Pet. 3 also occur together in Nahum 1:4-8: "He (God) rebuketh the sea, and maketh it dry (cp. the earth standing out of the water in 2 Pet. 3)... the hills melt, and the earth is burned at his presence ("the elements shall melt... the earth shall be burned up", 2 Pet. 3:10), yea, the world, and all that dwell therein ("the earth and the works that are therein")... His fury is poured out like fire... with an overrunning flood (cp. 2 Pet. 3:6) He will make an utter end". But all this is prefaced by Nah. 1:3: "The Lord is slow to anger". As God always gave ample time for repentance in His dealings with both Israel and the nations in the Old Testament, so He would with spiritual Israel (and even more so?). All God's past dealings with men, as at the flood, with Israel at the Babylonian and Assyrian invasions, in His judgments of the nations, all these will find their summation in how God will deal with us in the last days. In this fact lies the value of following up the Old Testament allusions which Peter makes. That an appreciation of all this must have a fundamentally practical effect upon our lives is something which cannot be over-emphasized.

3:11 *Seeing that these things will be dissolved, what manner of persons ought you to be- in all holy living and reverence toward God-* The logic is irresistible; all things of the world as we know it are to be dissolved; only our Godly character will survive the fire; the word which develops this will also last beyond the destruction of the heavens and earth, seeing that it is through the word that they will be destroyed (cp. Mt. 24:34). By developing such a Spirit-formed character, we are "looking for and hasting the coming of the day of God" (:12)- a fair summary of what we have read between the lines of this chapter.

3:12 *Looking for and earnestly desiring the coming of the day of God, by reason of which the heavens being on fire shall be dissolved and the elements shall melt with fervent heat-* The earth being dissolved connects with Is. 24:19: "The earth is utterly broken down, the earth is clean dissolved". The earth may specifically refer to the land- that promised to Abraham, which is the centre of Bible prophecy. The previous verse alludes to the flood, as 2 Pet. 3 does: "The windows from on high are open (cp. Gen. 7:11) and the foundations of the earth do shake" (Is. 24:18). Is. 24, especially in the Septuagint, appears to have been very much in our Lord's mind during His Olivet prophecy. 2 Pet. 3 being based on the Olivet prophecy, it is to be expected that it will have connections with the same source passages. "The earth" in Is. 24 meaning 'the land' (of Israel) indicates that 2 Pet. 3 is also primarily concerning the troubles that came upon the land in AD70 and which shall come there in the last days.

Frequently the Greek word translated "look for" here is used in the context of the second coming, often translated "waiting" (Jude 21; 1 Cor. 1:7; Rom. 8:19; Phil. 3:20; Heb. 9:28; Tit. 2:13; 1 Thess. 1:10). Our 'waiting' for the Lord is not therefore a passive thing- it is shown by our "holy way of life", something which needs our constant active attention. All too often the impression is given that our 'waiting' is a grim, passive clinging on to a set of doctrines received at baptism. This is certainly part of it- but the quicker we take a dynamic approach to considering "what manner of persons" we ought to be, the sooner the Lord's coming will be hastened. That our spiritual effort, especially in prayer, preaching and pastoral work mentioned earlier, should hasten the coming of that great day should never cease to be a source of wonder and inspiration to us. But do we really want to see the day of Christ? Distractions of family life, the challenge of careers, personal ambition, a desire for a few more years to work on our character- these and many other factors lead us away from an all consuming desire to see the day of the Lord. And if we lack that, then there will be little true motivation for developing a spiritual character and doing the preaching and pastoral work, which we know between them will hasten the day. As if to provide motivation in all this, verse 12 repeats verbatim the language of :10 and 11 concerning the totality of destruction which awaits the present world order: "The day of God, wherein the heavens being on fire shall be dissolved (= :11)... and the elements shall melt with fervent heat (= :10)". This repetition underlines the fact that every element of the present system will be destroyed- the only common link between this life and the future world order is the spirituality which we now develop. We came into this world with nothing, a naked baby; and all we can leave it with is God's record of our spiritual character. Thus it will be by our real spiritual character that we recognize and relate to each other in the Kingdom, rather than by our present physical characteristics. For this reason even the rejected will be able to recognize (in this sense) giants of faith such as Abraham entering into the Kingdom.

The coming of the Lord is spoken of as being delayed (Mt. 25:5); and yet it is our spirituality which hastens the day of Christ's coming (2 Pet. 3:12). Putting these facts together shows that the day of Christ will not come when planned because the ecclesia are not as spiritual as they were 'expected' to be- or at least, that's how God wants us to see it.

3:13 *But, according to His promise, we look for new heavens and a new earth, wherein dwells righteousness-* As opposed to the present earth, where "the works that are *therein* shall be burnt up" (:10). For Peter, therefore, the vision of the Kingdom was centred around the fact that goodness and righteous principles would so evidently abound, being almost physically manifested in this planet; it will be a "new earth *wherein* dwelleth righteousness". Psalm 72 stresses the abundance of righteousness in that time, showing that David's picture of

that time was similar. Likewise if we truly *love* righteousness, this is how we will perceive the Kingdom- rather than as a glorified tropical holiday.

"According to His promise" shows that Peter is referring to a specific Scripture- surely Is. 65:17, where a picture of the Kingdom is titled "the new heavens and earth". "We, according to His promise, look for new heavens..." contrasts with the words of the mockers: "Where is the promise of his coming?" (:4). This indicates that "the promise of his coming" was not just the simple statement of Jesus that He would return (Jn. 14:3), but it included the details of the Kingdom which He would establish, as outlined in the promise of Is. 65:17-25. Thus the doctrines of the literal second coming and the future Kingdom on earth are inseparable. Thus the slippery slope ran: The Lord is delaying longer than I thought; maybe it isn't important that he comes: therefore the Kingdom on earth is a pipe dream. So "the faith" was lost. There is also a connection with Is. 66:22-24: "The new heavens and the new earth which I will make... it shall come to pass that... they shall go forth and look upon the carcasses of the men that have transgressed against me: for their worm shall not die, neither shall their fire be quenched". These last phrases are quoted in Mk. 9:44 concerning the punishment of the wicked at the judgment seat. The reference to fire fits the 2 Pet. 3 context, again showing that the 'heavens and earth' which are to be destroyed with fire include the wicked believers who will be punished in Gehenna. Note that the idea of the ecclesia being ultimately purged of false teachers is presented by Peter as a *comfort* to the faithful remnant.

3:14 *Wherefore, beloved, seeing you look for these things, give diligence that you may be found in peace, without spot and blameless in his sight-* With sins covered through the blood of Christ. Such a condition, even for these "pure minds" (:1), can only be achieved and maintained through much diligence. If it is our desire to be found acceptable by our bridegroom, our awareness of how near we are to meeting him will motivate us to constant self-examination so that we can be presented to him spotless.

Knowledge of the coming of judgment leads to self-examination: "The Lord, whom ye seek, shall suddenly come... But who may abide the day of his coming?" (Mal. 3:2 cp. Rev. 6:17). Belief in the second coming must provoke the question: "What manner of persons ought (we) to be...", as we hasten towards the day of judgment? "Wherefore, seeing that ye look for such things, be diligent, that ye may be found of Him... without spot, and blameless" (2 Pet. 3:11,14). When Israel knew Yahweh was going to appear, they were to prepare themselves against that day by sacrifice and atonement (Lev. 9:4). Jonah simply proclaimed that judgment would come upon Nineveh; as far as we know, he didn't appeal for repentance. But the very knowledge of judgment to come was in itself an imperative, a command, to the Ninevites to repent (Jonah 3:4,5). "Let the bed be undefiled: *for* fornicators and adulterers God will judge" (Heb. 13:4 RV). Sexual immorality is impossible if we truly believe rather than merely know... that judgment day is coming.

3:15 *And consider, that the longsuffering of our Lord is salvation. Even as our beloved brother Paul also, according to the wisdom given to him, wrote to you-* 2 Pet. 3:12,15 reminds us that by our prayers and spiritual development, the days before the second coming will be shortened. If they were not, even the elect would lose their faith (Mt. 24:22)- showing how those of us who are alive at Christ's coming will *barely* survive the spiritual traumas of the last days. The virgins were sleeping when they should have been watching; and Peter says that the righteous in the last generation (see context) will *scarcely* be saved (1 Pet. 4:18).

It sounds as if Peter had in mind a particular passage of Paul, the tenor of which is repeated in

all his letters. It may well be that he is referring to the idea of there being a delay in the second coming to allow repentance; however, if "these things" is the repeated warning against the false teachers of the last days, and advice on how to live in those times, then this is quite easily discernible. Moreover, there is a connection back to :2,3 where Peter reminds us how warnings against false teachers were a major theme of all the inspired writings of the New Testament. However, Peter writes as if he is referring to a particular passage in Paul's writings. A likely candidate is Rom. 2:3-5, which addresses the weak (Jewish) members of the Rome ecclesia, warning them that there will be a day of judgment, and that they should not despise God's love in delaying that day so that they could repent. "Thinkest thou... that thou shalt escape the judgment of God? Or despisest thou the riches of His goodness and forbearance and longsuffering (cp. 2 Pet. 3:15): not knowing that the goodness of God leadeth thee to repentance (2 Pet. 3:9)? But after thy... impenitent heart treasurest up unto thyself (cp. "kept in store", 2 Pet. 3:7) wrath against the day of wrath (cp. fire) and... righteous judgment of God" (cp. 2 Pet. 3:7).

Another possibility is Eph. 5:15,16: "Walk circumspectly... redeeming the time, because the days are evil". By 'buying up' the opportunities for spiritual development in the daily round of life, we are effectively "redeeming the time" in the sense of hastening the Lord's return. Paul pleads with us to see the urgency of this principle: "Wherefore be ye not unwise, but understanding what the will of the Lord is" (:17). *Seeing that* they could redeem the time to the second coming in this way, the exhortation is driven home: "Awake! Thou that sleepest!... and Christ shall give thee light" by His early return.

3:16 *As also in all his letters, speaking in them of these things. In his letters there are some things hard to be understood, which the ignorant and unstable twist to their own destruction, as they do also the other scriptures-* An underlying theme of Peter's argument is the supremacy of the word of God, and how through understanding of and obedience to it, a character can be developed which will pass through the judgments which that word will bring upon the world. Those who are to be destroyed at that time, such as the false teachers, will have failed to understand these things of which Peter and Paul spoke- they were 'ignorant'. But they were not unaware of Paul's epistles- they 'wrested' them through their wilful misunderstanding of them (:5). The beginnings of this sad situation are found in Heb. 5:11, where the Jewish believers are called "dull of hearing" God's word, and therefore found the exposition of Melchizedek "hard" to understand. It is to these same Jewish believers that Peter's letters are addressed. Thus a lack of sensitivity in Bible study and to the movement of the Spirit, resulted eventually in a wilful misunderstanding of basic teaching concerning fundamental doctrine, e.g. the second coming. It takes real faith in the teaching of God's word here to accept that this really can happen, and has done so. The example of the first century is there for our learning. Such wresting of the Scripture was done "unto their own destruction" (:16), using the same word translated as "perdition" in :7, as if their judgment was already working itself out in this life. That verse speaks of how the "ungodly" would meet their perdition in the day when the heavens and earth were destroyed by fire. Thus those within the ecclesia who were so wresting the Scriptures are the same group as those of :3-7 who would be destroyed at "the day of judgment and perdition (s.w. "destruction") of ungodly men".

Jude likewise talks of "ungodly men" who had crept into the ecclesia (:4). The evident similarities between 2 Pet. 2 and Jude are for a reason. 2 Pet. 2 and 3 are a prophecy of what *would* happen in the ecclesia, whilst Jude is the record of their fulfilment; hence his use of the present tense "there *are* crept in... ungodly men". The corrective is hinted at throughout all these prophecies: "Remember... be mindful of the words which were spoken before" (:1,2), meditating on the power of God's word in the past, in creation and at the flood, correctly understanding the teachings of Paul and Peter about the last days (:15,16), bringing our way

of life into conformity with our great hope of the second coming (:11,12), and so by all this growing "in grace and in the knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ" (:18).

Ex. 16:20 says that the manna, symbolic of God's word, "bred worms and stank" if it was not used properly. The Scriptures, we are told, can be "wrested" by those who claim to believe them, until the "unstable" 'believer' is destroyed morally (2 Pet. 3:16). The only other occurrence of the Greek for "unstable" is a few verses earlier (2 Pet. 2:14), where it is used in a sexual context. The implication is that those 'believers' who want to justify a deviant sexual lifestyle will find that they can "wrest" the Scriptures to suite them, but in so doing they will be working out their own destruction. This is the category who turn God's grace into license for sexual sin (Jude 4).

3:17- see on 2 Pet. 1:12.

Therefore beloved, you, knowing these things beforehand, beware; lest, being carried away with the error of the wicked, you lose your own stability- In some of his very last words, facing certain death, Peter alludes to this great failure of his- his second denial of the Lord. He pleads with his sheep to hold on to the true grace of God, lest "you *also*, being led away (s.w. Gal. 2:13 "carried away") with the error of the lawless, fall..." (2 Pet. 3:17). You *also* invites the connection with Peter himself, who was led away by the error of the lawyers, the legalists- whereas his sheep had the error of the lawless to contend with. The point surely is that to go the way of legalism, of denying the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, is every bit as bad as going to the lawless ways of the world.

"Stability" or 'strengthening' is the essential outworking of the Spirit abiding in our hearts (Rom. 1:11 s.w.; Eph. 3:16). If we are certain of salvation by grace, this is what Hebrews calls an anchor of our soul. The Lord used the same word in telling Peter to strengthen or stabilize his brethren (Lk. 22:32). It was therefore Peter's deep concern that his brethren might lose their stability. His worry about the false teachers was that they would destabilize his brethren and that therefore he would not be fulfilling the commission which the Lord had potentially empowered. But looking at this another way, we could conclude that the Lord may give us commissions to achieve and the power to do so- but that is only in potential, because all the same human freewill is respected by the Lord, and those who wish to call away or listen to false teachers shall do so. And the failure is theirs rather than ours, if like Peter we have done all we humanly can.

The "things" of :14 which the beloved look for are those spoken of in :17: "Beloved, seeing ye know *these things* before, beware lest ye also, being led away with the error of the wicked, fall from your own steadfastness". "These things" are therefore not just concerning the coming Kingdom, but also the warnings of the uprise of false teaching, the prophecies of their success, and the fact that the apparent delay of the Lord's return was to give the opportunity for repentance. Peter's double warning is because he knew how prone we are to forget such warnings, and to lose the reality of our love for the Lord's coming. It is as if Peter is speaking to us personally, as the last (?) generation before the full "day of the Lord". "Seeing ye know these things *before*" (:17) is yet another Olivet allusion- "False prophets shall rise... take ye heed: behold, I have *foretold* you all things" (Mk. 13:22,23) about this apostasy. "Take ye heed" is matched by "beware lest ye also, being led away with the error of the wicked" (2 Pet. 3:17). "The wicked" are the false teachers within the ecclesia, referred to in 2:14,18 as "beguiling unstable souls" (= 3:16) and 'alluring'. It follows therefore that the false Christs and prophets which our Lord warned of, would come, in whatever form, from within the ecclesia. The bizarre claims of the few bogus Messiahs that have appeared are hardly much temptation to us- but how different if they are to come from within the ecclesia?

3:18- see on 2 Pet. 1:5,6.

But grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ. To him be the glory both now and for ever. Amen- It would be hard to grow in grace if we consider grace as just a static theological concept. The *charis*, gift / grace in view is the gift of the Spirit, connected with the knowledge or relationship with the Lord Jesus. Peter frequently uses 'knowing' in the Hebraic sense of having a relationship with.

Peter's last words in 2 Peter are full of the theme of knowing Christ (1:2,3,5,8; 2:20). Finally, Peter came to really know the man whom he thought he once knew. His very last recorded words urge us all to follow his pattern: to grow in the knowledge of our Lord and Saviour (3:18). He wrote this with awareness that he had denied the knowledge of the Lord; his very last words reflected his sense of inadequacy and shame at his failures, and yet the sure and certain knowledge that he knew the grace of the Saviour whom he believed.

At the end of Peter's recorded words in Acts, he comes to a climax of understanding in coining the phrase "the Lord Jesus Christ". In 2 Pet. 2:1 he describes Christ as "Lord" using a word which is usually used in the Gospels for God. He saw the extent of Christ's perfection, the height of His exact manifestation of the Father. He was the "Lord" who bought us through His blood, and therefore and thereby He has an almost God-like authority over us. Appreciating the true implications of the cross leads to a true sense of His Lordship. At the end of 2 Peter, Peter reaches an even greater height in the title: "Our Lord and saviour Jesus Christ" (3:18). He brings together in one title all the different aspects of his Lord he had learnt and come to appreciate in the course of his life. And this should surely be the climax of every life of discipleship.