

## *A Study of Second Peter*

### How to Expose a Counterfeit (2 Peter 2:1-10a)

*"Error, indeed, is never set forth in its naked deformity, lest, being thus exposed, it should at once be detected. But it is craftily decked out in an attractive dress, so as, by its outward form, to make it appear to the inexperienced . . . more true than truth itself."*

*~ Irenaeus, second-century Church leader*

## I. Introduction

Beginning in chapter 2, Peter comes to the reason for his letter: the need to address the false teachers. These heretics have abandoned the faith and have redefined and twisted the teachings of Christianity for their own gain. However, while the rhetoric and practices of the false teachers are alarming, far worse is the impact these false teachers are having upon the Church. In this section, Peter exposes the wickedness of these heretics (vv. 1-3) and then notes the future judgment that awaits them (vv. 4-10a). This future judgment of the unrighteous also is wedded with the promise that the Lord will preserve the righteous in the midst of endurance.

## II. A Recognition of the False Teachers (2:1-10a)

### A. The Ungodliness of the Heretics (vv. 1-3)

v. 1 - Having highlighted the accuracy and importance of the prophetic word in 1:19-21, Peter now turns to the false prophets. The dangers of such heretics is seen throughout Scripture (e.g., Deut 13:1-5; Isa 9:15; 28:7-8; Jer 23:9-40; Ezek 12:1-23; Mic 3:5-12; Zeph 3:4).

As we noted at the beginning of our study, the characteristics of these false teachers entail the following:

- *They are skeptical of prophecy.* These teachers applaud doubt and are dogmatic concerning their uncertainty.
- *They deny any future judgment.* These teachers seek to strip Christianity of so-called "embarrassing" teachings of the Church.
- *They applaud freedom and hold to a truth-set determined by each person for himself/herself.* For these teachers, truth is infinitely pliable and ultimately unknowable in any objective sense.
- *They endorse a lifestyle that fulfills personal desires while wearing a cloak of religiosity.* These teachers have redefined right and wrong in terms of subjective feelings and personal experiences.

As noted by one commentator, Peter describes the false teachers as believers "because they made a profession of faith and gave every appearance initially of being genuine believers . . . their denial of Jesus Christ reveals that they did not truly belong to God" (Schreiner, *1, 2 Peter, Jude*, 331; also, see 1 Peter 1:5; 2 Peter 1:3; and Matt 7:21-23).

v. 2 - Their practice reiterates the truth that “one’s morals are no higher than his/her theology.”. The negative result of the false teachers’ instruction is a license for ungodly behavior and an undermining of the Gospel.

v. 3 - Unlike words overseen by God Himself (1:21), the false teachers speak with “fabricated words”.

In his work, *Wealth and Poverty in the Old Testament*, David Baker observes: “The commonest motivation for breaking almost any of the commandments is greed or self-interest, whereas the nature of the covenant community requires that members focus their attention not on self-fulfillment but on the worship to God and service of neighbor” (p. 36).

“Wrong belief leads not only to wrong conduct and social rupture, but also to eternal separation from God” (Green, *Jude and 2 Peter*, 240).

## B. The Future Judgment of the Heretics (vv. 4-10)

This section constitutes one long conditional sentence in the Greek. The “if” clause is found in verses 4 through 8, and the “then” clause is highlighted in verses 9 through 10. Peter provides three examples that demonstrate that God judges the unrighteous, and he gives two examples of how God sustains the righteous.

### 1. *The Judgment of the Angels (v. 4)*

Peter refers to the sin angels committed with women in Genesis 6:1-4—a common view in Jewish tradition (also, see 1 Enoch 6-19, 21, 86-88; 106:13-17; CD 2:17-19; Josephus, *Ant.* 1.73). The certainty of their judgment contradicts the heretics’ denial of a future judgment (also, see 1 Peter 3:19-20 and Jude 6).

### 2. *The Judgment of Noah’s Generation (v. 5)*

This verse highlights the truth that God preserves His people even in the mist of judgment upon humanity.

“herald of righteousness” - Jewish tradition taught that Noah preached repentance to his contemporaries (Josephus, *Ant.* 1.74; *Jub.* 7:20-29). Noah’s preaching provided a means for salvation, but also, it provided justification for God’s judgment.

### 3. *The Judgment of Sodom and Gomorrah (vv. 6-8)*

These two cities become a leading example of not only wickedness, but also, an example of God’s judgment (see Gen 19:23-29). One scholar writes, “The judgment of Sodom and Gomorrah is not merely a historical curiosity but functions as a type of what transpires for those who refuse to obey God” (Fornberg, *An Early Church in a Pluralistic Society*, 43).

v. 7 - How can Peter describe Lot as righteous?

v. 8 - "tormented in his righteous soul" - Surrounded by wickedness, Lot was internally oppressed and distressed.

The phrase "saw and heard" implies moral perception (see Matt 13:13-17; Rom 11:8).

#### 4. *The Judgment of the Future (vv. 9-10)*

v. 9 - God is intimately involved with this world. He created it, He sustains it, and He will judge it. The eschatological truths contain a promise of deliverance for the righteous and a promise of judgment of the unrighteous.

v. 10 - "despise authority" - This phrase most likely refers ultimately to Christ's sovereignty and authority (see Schreiner, 345).

### III. The Intersect

A. One of the greatest dangers for followers of Jesus is the danger of compromise. An individual who is living for the Lord will stand out in this dark world.

2 Thessalonians 2:13-15 -

B. As followers of Jesus, we need to be burdened about the state of our world. The sin that surrounds us should cause us to pray to God for a revival.

Mark 3:5 -

C. No matter the darkness of the hour, the Lord promises to deliver His people. History testifies to this fact!

Psalms 62:5-7 -

*"Those Christian leaders who shook the world were one and all men of sorrows whose witness to mankind welled out of heavy hearts." ~ A. W. Tozer*

**For further thought . . .**

*Based upon our study this morning, I invite you to spend some additional time this week reflecting on the following:*

What trial are you currently encountering?

Spend some time reading the following two passages of Scripture. Be sure to note what ways God rescues us during difficult times.

1 Corinthians 10:13 -

James 5:11 -

In prayer, commit to walk in obedience—even in the midst of your trial.