

Persecution and Perversion

Year 5, Quarter 1

Our attention now turns to three epistles which are concerned with two major threats to the church: growing persecution against the faith and gross doctrinal perversion. Persecution and perversion have plagued brethren from the beginning but are now becoming more systematized and intense. We will study Peter's two epistles and the short letter penned by Jude.

Outline

Week 1: 1 Peter

- ◆ Introduction
- ◆ Salutation (1 Pet 1:1-2)
- ◆ An Incorruptible Inheritance (1 Pet 1:3-5)
- ◆ Trials of Faith (1 Pet 1:6-9)
- ◆ Salvation: The Fruition of Prophecy (1 Pet 1:10-12)

Week 2: 1 Peter

- ◆ Holy Conduct (1 Pet 1:13-16)
- ◆ Sojourning in Fear (1 Pet 1:17-19)
- ◆ The Foreordained Lamb (1 Pet 1:20-21)
- ◆ Reborn of Incorruptible Seed (1 Pet 1:22-25)
- ◆ Spiritual Growth (1 Pet 2:1-3)

Week 3: 1 Peter

- ◆ A Spiritual House; A Holy Priesthood (1 Pet 2:4-5)
- ◆ The Chief Cornerstone (1 Pet 2:6)
- ◆ A Stone of Stumbling (1 Pet 2:7-8)
- ◆ God's Own Special People (1 Pet 2:9-10)
- ◆ Sojourners and Pilgrims (1 Pet 2:11-12)

Week 4: 1 Peter

- ◆ Good Citizens (1 Pet 2:13-18)
- ◆ Unjust Punishment (1 Pet 2:19-21)
- ◆ Jesus: A Suffering Shepherd (1 Pet 2:22-25)

- ◆ Believing Wives and Unbelieving Husbands (1 Pet 3:1-6)
- ◆ Faithful Husbands (1 Pet 3:7)

Week 5: 1 Peter

- ◆ “Love as Brothers” (1 Pet 3:8-9)
- ◆ Prophetic Confirmation (1 Pet 3:10-12)
- ◆ Suffering for Righteousness (1 Pet 3:13-14)
- ◆ “Be Ready to Give a Defense” (1 Pet 3:15)
- ◆ Overcoming Evil with Good (1 Pet 3:16-17)

Week 6: 1 Peter

- ◆ The Spirits in Prison (1 Pet 3:18-20)
- ◆ The Answer of a Good Conscience (1 Pet 3:21-22)
- ◆ “Arm Yourselves with the Same Mind” (1 Pet 4:1-2)
- ◆ The Break from Sinful Living (1 Pet 4:3-4)
- ◆ Man’s Judgment vs. God’s Judgment (1 Pet 4:5-6)

Week 7: 1 Peter

- ◆ Constant Watchfulness (1 Pet 4:7-9)
- ◆ Speak as the Oracles of God (1 Pet 4:10-11)
- ◆ Joy in Fiery Trials (1 Pet 4:12-14)
- ◆ Suffering as a Christian (1 Pet 4:15-16)
- ◆ Triumph in Judgment (1 Pet 4:17-19)

Week 8: 1 Peter

- ◆ Exhortation to Elders (1 Pet 5:1-4)
- ◆ Humble Submission (1 Pet 5:5-7)
- ◆ The Roaring Lion (1 Pet 5:8-9)
- ◆ God’s Eventual Comfort (1 Pet 5:10-11)
- ◆ Closing Greetings (1 Pet 5:12-14)

Week 9: 2 Peter

- ◆ Introduction (2 Pet 1:1-2)
- ◆ Partakers of the Divine Nature (2 Pet 1:3-4)
- ◆ Facets of Christian Character (2 Pet 1:5-7)
- ◆ Fruitfulness Before God (2 Pet 1:8-9)
- ◆ The Kingdom’s Open Door Policy (2 Pet 1:10-11)

Week 10: 2 Peter

- ◆ A Call to Remember (2 Pet 1:12-13)
- ◆ The Folding of Peter's Tent (2 Pet 1:14-15)
- ◆ Eyewitnesses of Majesty (2 Pet 1:16)
- ◆ The Voice on the Mountain (2 Pet 1:17-18)
- ◆ The Assurance of Prophecy (2 Pet 1:19-21)

Week 11: 2 Peter

- ◆ Unscrupulous Teachers of Error (2 Pet 2:1-3)
- ◆ Chains of Darkness (2 Pet 2:4-11)
- ◆ Brute Beasts (2 Pet 2:12-14)
- ◆ The Spirit of Balaam (2 Pet 2:15-17)
- ◆ The Curse of Apostasy (2 Pet 2:18-22)

Week 12: 2 Peter

- ◆ "I Stir Up Your Pure Minds" (2 Pet 3:1-2)
- ◆ Scoffers Will Come (2 Pet 3:3-7)
- ◆ The Window of Opportunity (2 Pet 3:8-9)
- ◆ The Day of the Lord Will Come (2 Pet 3:10-13)
- ◆ Beware, Lest You Also Fall (2 Pet 3:14-18)

Week 13: Jude

- ◆ "Contend Earnestly for the Faith" (Jude 1-4)
- ◆ The Long History of Apostasy (Jude 5-11)
- ◆ Judgment Against the Ungodly (Jude 12-15)
- ◆ Murmurers, Complainers and Mockers (Jude 16-19)
- ◆ Exhortations and Doxology (Jude 20-25)

MEMORY VERSES: YEAR 5, QUARTER 1

Week 1: In this you greatly rejoice, though now for a little while, if need be, you have been grieved by various trials, that the genuineness of your faith, being much more precious than gold that perishes, though it is tested by fire, may be found to praise, honor, and glory at the revelation of Jesus Christ.

🔗 1 Peter 1:6-7

Week 2: Since you have purified your souls in obeying the truth through the Spirit in sincere love of the brethren, love one another fervently with a pure heart, having been born again, not of corruptible seed but incorruptible, through the word of God which lives and abides forever.

🔗 1 Peter 1:22-23

Week 3: But you are a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, His own special people, that you may proclaim the praises of Him who called you out of darkness into His marvelous light.

🔗 1 Peter 2:9

Week 4: For to this you were called, because Christ also suffered for us, leaving us an example, that you should follow His steps: "Who committed no sin, nor was guile found in His mouth."

🔗 1 Peter 2:21-22

Week 5: But sanctify the Lord God in your hearts, and always be ready to give a defense to everyone who asks you a reason for the hope that is in you, with meekness and fear.

🔗 1 Peter 3:15

Week 6: There is also an antitype which now saves us, namely baptism (not the removal of the filth of the flesh, but the answer of a good conscience toward God), through the resurrection of Jesus Christ.

🔗 1 Peter 3:21

Week 7: If anyone speaks, let him speak as the oracles of God. If anyone ministers, let him do it as with the ability which God supplies, that in all things God may be glorified through Jesus Christ, to whom belong the glory and the dominion forever and ever. Amen.

🔗 1 Peter 4:11

Week 8: Therefore humble yourselves under the mighty hand of God, that He may exalt you in due time, casting all your care upon Him, for He cares for you.

🔗 1 Peter 5:6-7

Week 9: Therefore, brethren, be even more diligent to make your calling and election sure, for if you do these things you will never stumble; for so an entrance will be supplied to you abundantly into the everlasting kingdom of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.

✠ 2 Peter 1:10-11

Week 10: ... No prophecy of Scripture is of any private interpretation, for prophecy never came by the will of man, but holy men of God spoke as they were moved by the Holy Spirit.

✠ 2 Peter 1:20-21

Week 11: For if, after they have escaped the pollutions of the world through the knowledge of the Lord and Savior Jesus Christ, they are again entangled in them and overcome, the latter end is worse for them than the beginning.

✠ 2 Peter 2:20

Week 12: But the heavens and the earth which now exist are kept in store by the same word, reserved for fire until the day of judgment and perdition of ungodly men.

✠ 2 Peter 3:7

Week 13: Beloved, while I was very diligent to write to you concerning our common salvation, I found it necessary to write to you exhorting you to contend earnestly for the faith which was once for all delivered to the saints.

✠ Jude 3

Day 1: Introduction

In our chronological journey through the first century, Peter's early prominence has given way to the work and epistles of Paul. Perhaps this is due to the division of labor as documented in Gal 2:9: "*that we (Paul and Barnabas) should go to the Gentiles and they (James, Peter and John) to the circumcised.*" The inspired records detail Paul's work as it has a more universal aspect. We now hear from Peter later in life as he writes two letters, the first of which is devoted to strengthening disciples in the midst of growing persecution. Suffering is mentioned in all five chapters of 1 Peter, and the main word in reference to suffering, *pascho*, is found 12 times. For various reasons most scholars date 1 Peter to AD 64-68.

1. From where does it appear that Peter wrote this epistle (1 Peter 5:13)?
2. Who is with him?

Day 2: Salutation (1 Pet 1:1-2)

Peter addresses brethren primarily in the northern areas of Asia Minor. If the date of the epistle is indeed the mid AD 60s, the persecution being endured may be fallout from Nero's attack against Christians in Rome. Short of an empire-wide policy, the persecution nonetheless could be severe in certain localities. The "*pilgrims of the Dispersion*" could refer literally to dispersed Jews who were believers or figuratively to any Christian as a sojourner scattered among the ungodly of the earth. It is likely that most any group addressed by the epistle would be comprised of both Jew and Gentile. Peter immediately draws attention to the privileged position of these Christians: they are God's elect people by virtue of the sanctifying work of the Spirit and the redemptive work of Christ (1:2). As such, they have all the resources necessary to endure persecution.

3. List the Roman provinces mentioned and find them on a map.
4. What is the significance in the OT of sprinkling with blood (comp. Heb 9:18-22)?

Day 3: An Incorruptible Inheritance (1 Pet 1:3-5)

Peter was initially hesitant to believe in the resurrection of Jesus but now sees it as the basis of a "living hope" for heavenly inheritance. His description in 1:4 is reminiscent of Jesus' teaching on treasures in heaven: "*where neither moth nor rust destroys and where thieves do not break in and steal*" (Mt 6:20). The inheritance of the Christian is, in a word, salvation (1:5). In one sense, salvation has already been revealed (Tit 2:11; Eph 2:8), but Peter says it is "*ready to be revealed in the last time.*" Though currently living in a state of fellowship with and forgiveness from God, the Christian will not receive his

ultimate inheritance until Jesus comes again. Then the fullness of what God has promised to the faithful will no longer be prospective but possessed.

5. By what means are we kept or guarded for future salvation?

6. What does Peter say will not fade away (1:4; 5:4)?

Day 4: Trials of Faith (1 Pet 1:6-9)

Faithful service unto God does not preclude trials; in fact, such times even produce stronger faith if it is genuine. Persecution has come upon Peter's readers. While presently "*grieved by various trials*," Peter speaks of their inexpressible joy and the glory to be revealed at the coming of Christ. Note the emphasis upon faith's quality: it is powerful (1:5); it must be genuine (1:7); and it endures (1:9). Salvation comes *after* faith has been perfected within us.

7. Christians _____ Christ in spite of not visually beholding Him.

8. Where did Jesus speak of those who would not see Him and yet would believe?

Day 5: Salvation: the Fruition of Prophecy (1 Pet 1:10-12)

Peter has already mentioned the foreknowledge of God in providing redemption for people of faith (1:2). In harmony with that foreknowledge, God gradually revealed his plans for the future through His prophets, thus demonstrating His omnipotence in making His will a reality. An interesting note is here given regarding those prophets: they had a keen interest in the future events they were publishing and "searched diligently" to learn the full story. But God merely revealed to them that they were prophesying for a future generation and they would not see the fullness of God's plans. What a great blessing to enjoy what "*many prophets and kings have desired to see*" (Lk 10:24)!

9. What did the Spirit testify beforehand of Christ?

10. What has "now been reported"?

11. What do angels have interest in?

12. Express in your own words what these opening twelve verses of 1 Peter teach you about your view of and attitude toward the future.

Day 1: Holy Conduct (1 Pet 1:13-16)

Peter turns from the wonders of redemption to the obligations it brings to the saved. God's demand of proper conduct from His children is not annulled by difficult circumstances. In the heat of persecution, Christians must "*gird up the loins of your mind*" and think soberly about their obligations. The present must be measured against the future, and behavior must conform to God's holiness rather than self-centered lusts.

1. In what should our hope rest?
2. What kind of children must we be?
3. What does ignorance of God and His will promote?

Day 2: Sojourning in Fear (1 Pet 1:17-19)

Two other considerations are added to motivate proper conduct: 1) God judges each one according to his work without partiality, and 2) the price to redeem or ransom us from sin was far greater than material payment. Rather, we were redeemed "*with the precious blood of Christ.*" A true appreciation of this fact will obligate us to live a better life, one worthy of such a price.

4. T/F Our works have nothing to do with our ultimate salvation.
5. From what had Peter's readers been redeemed (1 Pet 1:18)?
6. What is "sojourning" and how does it apply to earthly life?

Day 3: The Foreordained Lamb (1 Pet 1:20-21)

Nearly every word in this opening chapter of 1 Peter is of tremendous significance. Peter condenses the greatest concepts of redemption into a few verses and paints a sweeping picture of the major themes of redemption. In elucidating upon the Lamb – the Lord Jesus as a sacrifice for sin – Peter says he was "foreordained" (NKJ), "foreknown" (NAS) before the foundation of the world. The word used here is the same as in 1 Pet 1:2; there was no need to translate it other than "foreknown." God knew from before creation that His redemptive plan involved the offering of the Son. This is what the prophets wrote about (1:10-12), and Jesus pointed to those writings upon His resurrection (e.g. Lk 24:25-27, 44-45). The point was not lost on Peter. He who was so deeply shaken by the Lord's death and his own denial of Him rests his hope upon God through Christ and His resurrection. So it must be with all of God's children. Faith in God rests squarely upon one's acceptance of redemption including the death and resurrection of Jesus.

7. Where are the following key words from 1 Pet 1:20-21 found earlier in the chapter?
Foreordained (foreknown) _____; last time _____; resurrection _____;
glory _____; faith _____; hope _____.

Day 4: Reborn of Incorruptible Seed (1 Pet 1:22-25)

Peter elaborates on the process by which ignorant people steeped in their lusts can become children of God and qualified for eternal inheritance (1 Pet 1:14, 4). This transformation is not some cosmetic make-over but a cosmic rebirth. This occurs by the implantation of “incorruptible seed” variously referred to as “the truth” (1:22), “the word of God” (1:23) and “the gospel” (1:25). The implantation occurs when the truth, appreciated for what it is, is “obeyed” (1:22). Compliance with the gospel enables a person to do and become something not otherwise attainable. One cannot become a child of God through personal achievement, will-power, psychology, drugs or any other alternative self-help method. This transforming power is perpetual as *“the word of the Lord endures forever”* (1:24).

8. What effect does obedience to the truth have upon the soul?
9. How does a pure heart express itself toward others in the spiritual family?
10. What is the grass that withers?

Day 5: Spiritual Growth (1 Pet 2:1-3)

Keeping with the birth imagery, Peter now admonishes his readers to progress from spiritual infancy to adulthood. “Sincere love of the brethren” (1:22) is inconsistent with such attitudes as malice, guile, hypocrisy, envy, etc. The motivation for such characteristics is that they *“have tasted that the Lord is gracious”* (2:3; cf. Ps 34:8). That is, as they themselves have been recipients of the Lord’s favor and kindness, they owe it to Him to cultivate godly character and love others so blessed as they. As we have seen in our survey, the NT is full of moral imperatives. One cannot be a person of faith without a corresponding development of godly attributes. There is nothing in the concepts of grace and faith to promote lax efforts to mature.

11. How is the desire for the word of God described by Peter?
12. What would be the opposite of the “milk of the word”?

Day 1: A Spiritual House; A Holy Priesthood (1 Pet 2:4-5)

Peter further pursues the topic of man's relationship with God by changing figures from a family to a house. Whereas Christ shed His blood "*as of a lamb without blemish and without spot*" (1 Pet 1:19) to secure men a place in God's family, He is here a "living stone" by which other living stones are aligned to form a spiritual house. This image parallels Paul's temple wherein the Spirit of God dwells (1 Cor 3:16; cf. Eph 2:19-22). Peter then switches figures again to that of a priesthood (1 Pet 2:5). The NT asserts that all Christians are priests by virtue of their ability to offer spiritual sacrifices directly to God. All are on an equal footing through the one High Priest, Jesus Christ, and no hierarchy exists among believers. All are brothers (Mt 23:8), living stones in the house, priests in the priesthood, etc. Is it not peculiar that one considered by many to be the first "pope" wrote so vividly of equality among all of God's people?

1. How was the living stone viewed differently by God and men?
2. What kind of sacrifices are offered by the spiritual priesthood? Give a NT example.

Day 2: The Chief Cornerstone (1 Pet 2:6)

Peter now calls the prophet Isaiah as a witness to bolster his case. The quotation of Is 28:16 establishes that 1) God would lay the chief cornerstone of His spiritual temple, and 2) men would not be vainly aligned according to that stone. Those who have genuine, comprehensive faith in Christ will not come to judgment only to find that their hope has been misplaced. **God** is the builder of His spiritual house, and His own Son is the cornerstone. "*He who believes in Him will by no means be put to shame.*"

3. T/F Approximately 700 years elapsed between Isaiah's prophecy and its fulfillment.
4. What two words describe the cornerstone?

Day 3: A Stone of Stumbling (1 Pet 2:7-8)

The stone analogy continues as a contrast is drawn between those who believe in Jesus and those who reject Him. Jesus became a "*stone which the builders rejected*," a process which Peter saw unfold firsthand. An interesting comparison arises when Jesus says of the temple of Herod, "... *not one stone shall be left here upon another, that shall not be thrown down*" (Mt 24:2). The Jews had stumbled over the precious stone that stands at the corner of the spiritual temple of God; therefore, the stones of their physical temple would be demolished.

5. What two OT passages are quoted?

6. Those who stumble are _____ to the word.

Day 4: God's Own Special People (1 Pet 2:9-10)

The overall theme of the Scriptures is the creation by God of a special people. These people aren't arbitrarily chosen; they are not forced slaves. They choose fellowship with God on the basis of His goodness, mercy and grace. These who willingly respond to God and align themselves with His chosen stone become "*a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, His own special people*" (1 Pet 2:9). While God made man "in His image," with unique characteristics that make him superior to everything else in creation, he does not reach his full status until entering this special relationship. It is here, and only here, that men can rightly "*proclaim the praises of Him who called you out of darkness into His marvelous light*" (1 Pet 2:9). This summation of the Christian life stresses the glory and praise due God by virtue of His reclamation of sinners.

7. Describe the darkness out of which sinners are called.

8. Before being saved Peter's readers were not what (1 Pet 2:10)?

Day 5: Sojourners and Pilgrims (1 Pet 2:11-12)

Peter returns to the distinction of God's people from the world by calling them sojourners (comp. 1 Pet 1:17) and pilgrims (comp. 1 Pet 1:1). The closer they get to God via spiritual transformation the less at home they are in this life. As temporary residents they must not become entangled with worldly affairs, viz. lusts, which "*war against the soul*" (1 Pet 2:11; comp. 1:14). In 1 Pet 2:12 Peter again brushes across the theme of persecution (see 1:6-7). Because of the different values and perspectives of the lost and the saved, Christians will be slandered as evildoers when they uphold what is right. But if God's people maintain honorable conduct during severe and unwarranted attack, unbelievers will be persuaded to "*glorify God in the day of visitation.*" The meaning of this is uncertain due to the different ways "visitation" may be construed. Note the following:

"The idea here may be that the good conduct of Christians makes this a visitation of grace (i.e., they are converted to Christ, jj), or that the Gentiles will be forced to see God's glory manifested therein on the day of judgment when everything is brought to light" (TDNT, p. 245).

Even in persecution God's purposes can be fulfilled by faithful people who act properly. We will not always be appreciated for our principles, but we will be vindicated before our enemies in due course as they come to glorify God.

9. What should worldly people observe in the lives of mistreated Christians?

10. What contrast is drawn between flesh and soul?

Day 1: Good Citizens (1 Pet 2:13-18)

Part of maintaining “honorable conduct among the Gentiles” (1 Pet 2:12) is living as a law-abiding citizen – regardless of the ruling political system. Peter, echoing Paul in Rom 13:1-7, affirms civil government is “*for the punishment of evildoers and for the praise of those who do good*” (1 Pet 2:14). Thus if Christians submit to the ordinances of man, honor other people (especially the brethren) and duly respect the higher powers – the king in Peter’s culture, the president in ours – they will have the best chance of silencing “*the ignorance of foolish men*” (2:15). Likewise, Christian slaves must be submissive to their masters, even harsh and heartless ones. Anarchy brings just retribution.

1. For whose sake ultimately should Christians submit to government authority?
2. How do some abuse Christian liberty?
3. What overriding factor governs our liberty?

Day 2: Unjust Punishment (1 Pet 2:19-21)

Peter uses the platform of mistreated slaves to introduce a broader discussion of persecution. In spite of the Christian’s good behavior, or perhaps even *because* of it, occasions of unjust punishment will still arise. But Peter places such treatment in a higher context: God commends the man who “*endures grief, suffering wrongfully*” (1 Pet 2:19). Such experiences approximate the trials of Christ who “*also suffered for us, leaving us an example.*” They heighten our appreciation of what He endured on our behalf and what we therefore owe Him in return. Tribulation produces resiliency.

4. T/F To suffer for wrongdoing is commendable before God.
5. Which is the predominant factor in our decision-making: conscience or consequences?

Day 3: Jesus: A Suffering Shepherd (1 Pet 2:22-25)

Three explanatory “who’s” begin vs. 22-24. Jesus was sinless and completely honest in all His ways, yet He suffered immensely at the hands of ignorant and foolish men (1 Pet 2:15, 22). He did not retaliate against those who mistreated Him; instead He “*committed Himself to Him who judges righteously*” (2:23). That is, Jesus Himself viewed His own circumstances in a higher context: He was content to entrust the situation to God for a fair resolution. Jesus focused upon His duty: He “*bore our sins in His own body on the tree.*” By attending to His God-appointed obligations, by avoiding distractions of dealing with His enemies Himself and by maintaining a pure heart, Jesus provided spiritual healing

and became the Shepherd and Overseers of our souls. These are the footsteps in which we should walk (2:21).

6. What did Jesus not do in response to His mistreatment?

7. How should the example of Jesus affect our view of sin (1 Pet 2:24)?

Day 4: Believing Wives and Unbelieving Husbands (1 Pet 3:1-6)

Peter now extends the principle of submission into the family with a view to the good which can be accomplished. The believing wife who humbly submits to the authority of her unbelieving husband becomes a powerful, living testimony of the gospel. Experience abundantly demonstrates that family relations often hinder verbal persuasion, especially when, as it often happens, the believer is the female. Peter urges his sisters to stress chaste conduct, reverence and a gentle and quiet spirit as the most effective way to win their husbands “*without a word.*” Unfortunately, the tendency of some women is to put more creative effort into their visible appearance than “*the hidden person of the heart.*” Peter cites the ancient example of Sarah as worthy of emulation. But note carefully Sarah’s motivation: she “*trusted in God*” (3:5). Like Jesus, she concentrated upon her divinely appointed role and left the rest to God. Women today who do likewise become “daughters of Sarah;” i.e., like her in spirit. While covenant structures change, the basic roles of man and woman remain unchanged.

8. What spirit is “*very precious in the sight of God*”?

9. Is the “not/but” comparison of 1 Pet 3:3-4 relative or absolute? Explain.

10. How might well-meaning Christian women violate Peter’s inspired advice?

Day 5: Faithful Husbands (1 Pet 3:7)

While the husband is not to submit to the authority of the wife, he is to bestow “*honor to the wife, as to the weaker vessel.*” While many wish to quibble about Peter’s wording – does he mean she *is* the weaker vessel, or the husband should consider her *as* a weaker vessel? – common sense perceives the inherent weakness of the female. First, she is (as a class; there are individual exceptions) **physically** weaker; secondly, she is weaker in **position**, being subordinate to the husband; thirdly, woman is weaker in **natural aggression**, being more nurturing and tender. This being true, women are vulnerable to exploitation by callous, self-centered men. But if a Christian so behaves toward his wife, his prayers are hindered.

11. Husbands must dwell with their wives with _____. Discuss.

12. What phrase indicates a spiritual equality between men and women?

Day 1: “Love As Brothers” (1 Pet 3:8-9)

Peter has been addressing the Christian’s various relationships – the world, civil state, masters, Christ, marital partners – and now mentions fraternal sympathy. Christians are *family* and as such hold common views on the most critical aspects of human experience. They of all people should have the best manners and motivations among each other. Alas, such isn’t always the case, so Peter reminds his readers that when they are the target of hurtful speech and evil dealings, they must return blessings. Again, so many things that Peter urges upon others he learned firsthand from Lord, Himself.

1. What things grow out of a gentle Christian spirit?
2. What is inherited when Christians behave as God directs?

Day 2: Prophetic Confirmation (1 Pet 3:10-12)

The notion of enduring evil and constantly maintaining a benevolent spirit toward others in spite of foul treatment is not new. Regardless of the covenant, God has demanded such responses from faithful people because they reflect His own character. Peter cites Ps 34:12-16, a psalm written by David when he experienced the rejection of his own people. Note the anthropomorphic references: God’s *eyes* are on the righteous; His *ears* are open to their prayers; His *face* is against those who do evil. God oversees and blesses those who do good and pursue peace. *There are no excuses*. If we are not the people we should be, we cannot blame it upon the mistreatment of others. Like Jesus, we must entrust our welfare unto God and do what is right regardless (comp. 1 Pet 2:21-23).

3. “Tongue” and “lips” are figures of speech for what?
4. What assurance do righteous people have regardless of their circumstances?

Day 3: Suffering for Righteousness (1 Pet 3:13-14)

Peter now reintroduces the subject of suffering and will explore it in some detail. This section is the heart of the epistle. As noted by Clinton Hamilton, “Job is the great book on suffering in the OT and 1 Peter is the book on suffering in the NT” (**Truth Commentary on 1 Peter**, p. 156). Verse 13 is a proverbial question: those who devote themselves wholeheartedly to doing good drastically reduce their enemy list. Proverbs are not absolutes but general principles. Jesus was the ultimate doer of good but provoked many to opposition. But Peter says if trouble comes anyway, know that you are blessed of God and acceptable in His sight. We in modern America have no point of reference for widespread social rejection and aggressive persecution. Just how would we fare if we became public enemies – as was the case with Peter’s readers?

5. With what mental state should Christians face persecution?

Day 4: “Be Ready to Give a Defense” (1 Pet 3:15)

The key to dealing with opposition is preparation. Christians must soberly anticipate the hostility of the world, for the Scriptures reveal that this is inevitable to one degree or another. Adversaries of Christianity are often filled with myths and misconceptions. Thus it is imperative that Christians are ever prepared “*to give a defense to everyone who asks you a reason for the hope*” that is within them. Such a defense must be made to “everyone.” That is, the skeptic must be answered accordingly, and likewise the atheist, the hedonist, et. al. How thoroughly grounded are our convictions? In times of prosperity, our beliefs may be muddled, matters of thoughtless habit. But persecution has a way of focusing our thoughts. There’s nothing like the threat of harm to force a reevaluation of our deepest principles.

6. With what attitude should we answer our adversaries?

7. What must be done first before a defense of our faith can be prepared?

Day 5: Overcoming Evil with Good (1 Pet 3:16-17)

The Christian must not only “preach” (1 Pet 3:15), he must practice what he preaches. Peter here emphasizes a good conscience; that is, behavior that is consistent with one’s convictions. Note yet again the concept of evil speech: “*defame you as evildoers ... revile your good conduct*” (3:16; comp. 2:12, 23; 3:9). The Greek word for “suffer” is *pascho* and it is found 12 times in 1 Peter (along with other accompanying words of ill treatment). It may be the will of God in a given circumstance that His people “*suffer for doing good*” (3:17). We may not understand the reason for such a judgment, but we do know that if we face the suffering as God has instructed us, we retain His approval. This knowledge bolsters us against whatever assault Satan may make against us, including feeling guilty for the suffering which has visited us.

8. What reaction might our godly behavior under duress produce in our persecutors?

Day 1: The Spirits in Prison (1 Pet 3:18-20)

This passage has generated much unwarranted speculation. In considering difficult passages, one must take special care to honor the overall context wherein they are found. Peter's main topic has been Christians suffering at the hands of unbelievers and their responsibility to maintain good conduct and verbally uphold the truth while under duress (1 Pet 3:13-17). The word "for" at the beginning of 3:18 signals the continuation of thought. Both Jesus and Noah are used by Peter as illustrations of faithful men who endured unjust treatment from unbelievers and yet were rewarded by their righteous behavior. Jesus died a physical death, "the just for the unjust," but was raised to continued existence in the spiritual realm (3:18). Earlier, in His pre-carnal existence but in the physical person of Noah, Jesus preached to another disobedient generation to no effect. Only eight people were saved, and the rest of that era are now in prison awaiting final judgment. Thus a pattern is noted: from Noah to Christ to Peter's contemporaries to twentieth-century America, God's people endure persecution from unbelievers even as they proclaim salvation to them. In the end, though they may suffer for a while, life will be given to Christians for their faithfulness.

1. What was the purpose of Christ's suffering?
2. Why did God wait in the days of Noah?

Day 2: The Answer of a Good Conscience (1 Pet 3:21-22)

Peter, the one who first proclaimed "*Repent, and ... be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins*" (Ac 2:38), now takes the analogy of Noah a step further in regard to baptism. As Noah was "*saved through water*" (1 Pet 3:20) by his obedience in respect to it, this presents a pattern of that "*which now saves us, namely baptism*" (3:21). Unfortunately, Peter's parenthetical clarification – "*not the removal of the filth of the flesh, but the answer of a good conscience toward God*" – has become the very lever by which many overturn the force of his teaching. Granted, baptism is not empty ritual or ceremonial washing of the outward man. Rather, it is faithful compliance with the stated will of God regarding the removal of the sin by which he stands condemned. Thus, as Noah enjoyed a good conscience with respect to the command of God by his building of an ark, Christians have the same by their immersion. As water separated the living from the dead in Noah's day, so it separates the spiritually living and dead today. Those who would trivialize baptism today make the same mistake as those who ridiculed the ark in Noah's back yard.

3. What does the resurrection of Christ have to do with baptism's role in salvation?
4. After suffering for sin (1 Pet 3:18), where is Jesus now?

Day 3: “Arm Yourselves with the Same Mind” (1 Pet 4:1-2)

Again Peter calls his brethren back to the suffering of Christ and urges them to have the same attitude as the Lord. Particularly, he reminds them that their suffering indicates that they have chosen to renounce sin and live for God come what may. This attitude must be maintained. They must not succumb to the temptation to return to the world in order to save themselves from hardship. Peter’s admonitions are reminiscent of Paul’s in Romans 6:6-7, 11-12.

5. In what two conflicting ways do men live in this world?

Day 4: The Break from Sinful Living (1 Pet 4:3-4)

Peter acknowledges what Christians in every age have observed from their own personal experience: the world often turns upon those who forsake it. Those who find the strength to extricate themselves from the web of lust, drunkenness and revelry will be savagely attacked as fanatical puritans by those who still live for sensual pleasure. It is so difficult, yea impossible, for spiritually destitute people to appreciate the values of the godly, *“for everyone practicing evil hates the light and does not come to the light, lest his deeds should be exposed”* (Jn 3:20).

6. What is the “will of the Gentiles?”

7. How will the wicked often speak about the righteous?

Day 5: Man’s Judgment vs. God’s Judgment (1 Pet 4:5-6)

These wicked tormentors will *“give an account”* to God for their actions (1 Pet 4:5), but so will the righteous (4:6). However, *“the gospel was preached also to those who are dead, that they might ... live according to God in the spirit.”* In other words, godly men will be judged harshly by their former associates, but they will find favor with God through the gospel. On the other hand, the ungodly will answer for their crimes with no gospel, no baptism, no good conscience and no resurrected Christ to protect them. How insignificant the slights, taunts and insults of the world seem when measured against the approval of God Almighty! The Christian must remain focused upon the future when all wrongs will be redressed and blessings awarded. **Note:** Compare 1 Pet 4:6 with 3:19-20. The similarity is that preaching to people while they were physically alive is under consideration. The difference is that in 3:19-20, the antediluvians refused to hear and thus were now “in prison” awaiting final judgment while those in 4:6 obeyed and thus “live according to God in the Spirit.” In neither case does Peter speak of preaching to people *after* they have died.

8. What is God “ready” to do? How does death affect this process?

Day 1: Constant Watchfulness (1 Pet 4:7-9)

The remaining portion of Peter's epistle contains several difficulties which must be approached with care. Failure to consider contextual elements and harmonize with other passages have led to erroneous conclusions. Peter's observation that "*the end of all things is at hand*" ("at hand" = *eggus*) has generated much debate. Those who hold that the Scriptures are inspired of God must reject the idea that Peter thought the Lord's return was imminent. "At hand" may contextually refer to something soon to happen, but it also has the application of "next in order of occurrence." For example, when Ac 7:17 states "*the time of the promise drew near ...*" ("draw near" = *eggus*), i.e., for the nation of Israel to come of age and inherit the land promised to Abraham, the realization of this promise was yet many years in the future. Still to come was Egyptian disfavor, 80 years preceding Moses' rise to leadership, the exodus and 40 wilderness years. A similar usage is found in Heb 8:13 of Jeremiah's prophecy the fulfillment of which was 600 years in the future ("ready" = *eggus*). Peter is simply indicating that the *next* phase of God's redemptive scheme is the *last* – the end of all things and judgment – and this *may* occur, though not necessarily so in Peter's day or ours, at any moment. This being true, Christians must be "*serious and watchful in your prayers.*"

1. What does love cover? What does this mean? Compare Proverbs 10:12.
2. How can hospitality be ruined?

Day 2: Speak as the Oracles of God (1 Pet 4:10-11)

As persecution and suffering increase, Christians are to speak and act so as to glorify God. They should speak with all the authority of God's word behind them and minister "*with the ability which God supplies, that in all things God may be glorified through Jesus Christ*" (1 Pet 4:11).

3. What must we be good stewards of? What does "manifold" mean?

Day 3: Joy in Fiery Trials (1 Pet 4:12-14)

Words like joy, rejoice, blessed, etc. are found throughout this book on suffering (comp. 1 Pet 1:6-9). Peter warns his brethren not to be shocked by the coming trials for they are to be expected. For the fourth time (1 Pet 2:21; 3:18; 4:1 and 4:13) the suffering of Christ is Peter's reference point. When persecuted for doing right, Christians are sustained by their anticipation of the Lord's glorious return, for they will share in it (Col 4:4: "*When Christ who is our life appears, then you also will appear with Him in glory.*"). God's people should not allow suffering to unsettle their minds. Instead they should revel in this shared experience with Christ and welcome the joys to come.

4. What blessing rests upon the Christian?
5. How is Christ blasphemed in 1 Peter 4:14?

Day 4: Suffering as a Christian (1 Pet 4:15-16)

Once again Peter stresses the kind of suffering under consideration. We may bring suffering upon ourselves by our own sinful actions. In fact, much of life's misfortunes can be traced to impure motives, foolish decisions, ignorance or combinations thereof. Those who engage in the ungodliness mentioned in 1 Pet 4:15 suffer financial penalty, incarceration, societal rejection and possibly forfeiture of life. While a man may repent of such deeds and be forgiven, many unpleasant consequences may remain. But suffering *"as a Christian"* is a badge of honor, so long as one has not unnecessarily martyred himself for personal glory.

6. What personal insight would Peter have to his admonition in 1 Peter 4:16?

Day 5: Triumph in Judgment (1 Pet 4:17-19)

It is hard to imagine a passage more misunderstood than this one. Completely departing from the context, some have taught that the Christian's spiritual salvation is a matter of doubt and uncertainty: Christians are "scarcely" or "barely" saved by the skin of their teeth. But woven throughout the contextual fabric of the passage is a period of suffering *"according to the will of God"* (1 Pet 4:19; 3:17; 5:9-10). God, for His own purposes, is allowing His family (temple, or house – 4:17) to undergo a trial of fire. The righteous person will be subjected to intense stress; he will come through the trial "scarcely" or with extreme difficulty and challenge (4:18 – *"if it is with difficulty ..."* [NAS]; *"if it is hard ..."* [NIV]). The issue is **not** his spiritual salvation **but** his endurance of the trial for the sake of Christ after which *"an entrance will be supplied ... abundantly into the everlasting kingdom of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ"* (2 Pet 1:11). Based on this truth, two rhetorical questions contrast the fate of the wicked: "What will be the end of those who do not obey the gospel of God?" (4:17) and "Where will the ungodly and the sinner appear?" (4:18). The answer to the first question is "condemnation" and the answer to the second is "hell" or "torment."

Clinton Hamilton's observation summarizes: "Many have assumed erroneously from the translation of **scarcely** that one is *barely* saved. There is no doubt that one is saved and this concept of *barely* is against the truth. The difficulty in Christians' being saved arises from the fiery trials through which they go in life. If God's judgment or verdict commences from his own house or temple in whom he dwells and who have his approval, then the sinner cannot stand, and he cannot be saved in his impious and wicked condition" (**Commentary on 1 Peter**, p. 276). Even in the midst of suffering we must commit our souls to God in doing good, for so our faith is refined and purified.

7. Even though God's people may suffer, what kind of Creator is He?

Day 1: Exhortation to Elders (1 Pet 5:1-4)

Crucial to guiding these brethren through coming distress are the elders “among them” who are now addressed by Peter. To gain an accurate picture of the qualifications, authority and function of elders it is imperative to study the subject comprehensively. Peter here summarizes some crucial factors of the elders’ role:

Nature of the work: Elders shepherd the flock, overseeing them not as lords or taskmasters but as examples of faithfulness and wisdom.

Scope of the work: Elders oversee Christians whom they are “among.” Other NT references specify this scope as the local church wherein the elder teaches and exhorts.

Attitude toward the work: Elders are not to serve merely for financial gain or from a sense of duty for these motives will undermine their leadership. Elders have a stewardship; the souls of God’s people are “entrusted” to them and thus they jointly oversee with the Chief Shepherd His flock.

Reward for the work: *“The crown of glory that does not fade away”!* If the elders lead the flock effectively through the coming trials both they and the sheep will be eternally blessed.

1. In what three ways does Peter describe himself?
2. What two things does Peter expect to appear or be revealed in the future?

Day 2: Humble Submission (1 Pet 5:5-7)

The concepts of humility and voluntary submission are foreign to self-centered people. Peter admonishes his readers as one who was formerly self-willed but has finally learned meekness. Having already stressed submission in various relationships (1 Pet 2:13, 18; 3:1, 5), he now encourages that *“all of you be submissive to one another, and be clothed with humility”* (5:5). This exhortation is based upon an eternal truth: *“God resists the proud, but gives grace to the humble.”* Pride brings one into conflict with God; it produces self-seeking which evokes God’s resistance rather than receptiveness. The condition of suffering may create the perception that God doesn’t care, thus producing rebelliousness. Peter assures his brethren that come what may *“He cares for you.”*

3. List three things about exaltation from 1 Pet 5:6.
4. Since God cares for each and every one of us, what should we do?

Day 3: The Roaring Lion (1 Pet 5:8-9)

Christians undergoing tribulation must see things as they really are, not as they appear. Suffering makes it appear that God is weak when actually He has a “mighty hand” (1 Pet 5:6). Suffering makes it seem that God doesn’t care when actually He does (5:7). Suffering seems like losing when the truth is that through it Christians win the “crown of glory” (5:4). The one who produces suffering is Satan, not God, whom Peter portrays as a hungry lion on the prowl. Christians are hunted by an intelligent, resourceful and cunning predator who with great skill lures men away from divine protection. One tactic he uses to great effect is to make people feel they are unique or singled out in their suffering. A sense of isolation intensifies despondency. Peter, however, reminds his readers *“that the same sufferings are experienced by your brotherhood in the world”* (5:9). Rest assured: others face suffering as we do and overcome it. So can we.

5. What two admonitions are given in 1 Pet 5:8 in view of Satan’s predatory nature?

6. What is the scope of Satan’s work?

Day 4: God’s Eventual Comfort (1 Pet 5:10-11)

We may never know the whole story behind the occasional suffering which comes our way, but the Scriptures do not base “steadfast faith” (1 Pet 5:9) on explanations. Rather, our faith is based upon confidence in *“the God of all grace”* who has eloquently and powerfully expressed His love for us in offering eternal glory (5:10). Another tactic of Satan is to make suffering feel interminable, unrelenting. But Peter promises that suffering will eventually end and God will shower with blessings.

7. What would God do for those who endure suffering for His sake?

Day 5: Closing Greetings (1 Pet 5:12-14)

In his urgency to arrest the attention of his readers and focus their minds upon sublime principles of redemption, Peter bypassed personal pleasantries in the introduction of his epistle. He now mentions Silvanus (Silas) as the amanuensis of the epistle or its bearer or both. Greetings are sent from Mark who assisted both Peter and Paul in their latter years. “She who is in Babylon” also sends greetings, apparently referring to the church where Peter resided and among whom he presently served as an elder (1 Pet 5:1). Speculation abounds as to the identity of this “Babylon,” but figurative applications should be avoided in the absence of compelling evidence. Thus this concise, rich epistle ends with Peter’s encouraging affirmation: *“I have written to you briefly, exhorting and testifying that this is the true grace of God in which you stand.”*

8. How does Peter refer to Mark? Had Peter ever been in Mark’s home before? When?

9. How does Peter instill confidence in his readers concerning the grace of God?

Day 1: Introduction (2 Pet 1:1-2)

Peter identifies his target audience by his notation in 2 Pet 3:1: *“Beloved, I now write to you this second epistle ...”* (see 1 Pet 1:1). This short epistle evidently soon followed his first, for extra-Biblical evidence suggests that Peter died in A.D. 68. Whereas Peter formerly wrote concerning persecution, he takes aim in this epistle at doctrinal perversion. These false doctrines seem to have several features: 1) gnosticism, wherein the nature of Jesus was brought into question, 2) antinomianism, which denied the implications of fleshly indulgence and 3) doubts about the promised return of Jesus to terminate worldly affairs. In his first epistle Peter was comforting and encouraging as he dealt with threats from the outside. In this letter he is decidedly more militant as he defends the gospel against opportunists who would mislead his brethren for personal gain.

1. What is Peter confident that his readers have obtained?
2. Through what “vehicle” are grace and peace with God attained by a sinner?

Day 2: Partakers of the Divine Nature (2 Pet 1:3-4)

In these two verses Peter says a lot in a short space. Summarized, divine power enables sinners to partake of divine nature. What is the source of such stupendous transformation? *“All things that pertain to life and godliness”* have been given by God via a true, accurate knowledge of His Son. This is more than casual acquaintance; it is knowledge leading to imitation. God had so foreordained that fellowship with Him (“partakers” is *koinonos* and means fellowship or sharer) would be based upon acknowledgement of and relationship with His Son. To this we are “called” by God, and we answer that call on His terms. In so doing we gradually and increasingly meld with the divine nature.

3. How does Peter describe such wonderful promises as these in Christ?
4. What must the sinner escape in order to be a partaker of the divine nature?

Day 3: Facets of Christian Character (2 Pet 1:5-7)

The next few verses directly obligate the individual believer to expend cooperative effort with God to become what God expects him to be. God has provided the resources and will assist in our development, but make no mistake: each individual is responsible to give *“all diligence”* in possessing spiritual attributes. To fail in this is to be lost.

Faith: This is the foundation stone of salvation. Without absolute conviction of the existence of and obligation toward God one will never respond to Him as He wishes. Such belief includes recognizing Jesus as God’s Son and complete submission to His will.

Virtue: Moral excellence as defined by the character of God, Himself.

Knowledge: True knowledge as revealed by God, not naïve, gullible speculations and perversions peddled by men.

Self-control: The believer must labor to gain mastery over himself. This, as is made clear in other passages, involves his attitudes, thoughts, words and actions. Christianity is not theoretical but practical. It is belief translated into behavior.

Perseverance: Whereas self-control points to the inner man, perseverance involves maintaining one's convictions in the face of any conceivable obstacle.

Godliness: Respect and reverence for God and a corresponding desire to please Him.

Brotherly kindness: Fraternal warmth which appreciates spiritual relationship.

Love: The transcendent concern for the absolute well-being of others which stems from the nature of the possessor rather than the value (or lack thereof) of the object. This is the love God has for man which provoked the sacrifice of His own Son.

5. Are these qualities sequential? Must each be gained before acquiring the next?

Day 4: Fruitfulness Before God (2 Pet 1:8-9)

The first of two crucial “ifs” relative to salvation is in 2 Pet 1:8: “*if these things are yours and abound ...*”. Again Peter stresses knowledge leading to service; Christianity is not merely an intellectual pursuit. His stress of this principle anticipates the full-fledged gnosticism of the second century. Peter adds that stunted spiritual growth is an indication that one's gratitude toward God for his salvation has faded. We are obligated by the death of Christ to make every effort to grow in spirit until our last breath.

6. What does Jesus say about barren and unfruitful branches in John 15:2, 6?

7. Describe a “blind” Christian.

Day 5: The Kingdom's Open Door Policy (2 Pet 1:10-11)

The power of these verses is so often short-circuited by well-meaning but misguided brethren who believe that the hope of heaven is uncertain. Three words/phrases are particularly worthy of note: “sure”; “never stumble”; “an entrance will be supplied ... abundantly”. Peter qualifies the hope by again stressing diligence and issuing a second “if” warning: “*if you do these things ...*”. But rest assured: those who walk by faith and increase in divine attributes should be confident of their eternal welfare.

8. What two things should we be diligent to make “sure”?

Day 1: A Call to Remember (2 Pet 1:12-13)

The human capacity to forget even the most important events or concepts is astounding. Peter, aware of this weakness, is determined not to let that happen to these brethren if he can help it. While he considers them “*established in the present truth*,” he wishes to stir them up by this epistle of reminder. We must be cautious that even the grand awareness of heaven and the privileges of regenerated life not become commonplace. A great deal of preaching is designed to clean the tarnish off of precious truths.

1. How does Peter refer to his physical body?

Day 2: The Folding of Peter’s Tent (2 Pet 1:14-15)

Peter is aware of his approaching death. He has known for a long time by Jesus’ prophecy that he would not die in peaceful circumstances (Jn 21:18-19). Rather than becoming despondent over such knowledge, he did all he could to serve the Lord before that time came to pass. Our present possession of this epistle is a testament to his resolve.

2. Did Peter know he would live a relatively long life?
3. What details, if any, did Peter know about his future? What did Jesus tell Peter to do in spite of (or in view of) his eventual demise?

Day 3: Eyewitnesses of Majesty (2 Pet 1:16)

Peter emphatically denies what is a perpetual charge of skeptics: that the accounts of the life and works of Jesus are merely fabrications, “*cunningly devised fables*.” The fact that men do concoct religious fantasies is evident, but Peter bases his teaching on eyewitness observations. That is, Peter affirms he *saw* and *heard* the evidence provided by God that Jesus was His Son. Either he is a credible witness or he is not. Eyewitness testimony is a staple of our judicial process today; we determine the guilt or innocence of a defendant based upon firsthand knowledge of his actions. Peter’s critics must advance arguments which impeach his testimony, even as is done in a court of law.

4. What two aspects of Jesus had the apostles made known?
5. What specifically did Peter witness about Jesus?

Day 4: The Voice on the Mountain (2 Pet 1:17-18)

Out of all the magnificent events witnessed by Peter, one particular occasion stands above the rest: the transfiguration (Mt 17:1-13). Several stupendous things happened

that day: Jesus was transfigured, His appearance gloriously altered (Mt 17:2); Moses and Elijah appeared to discuss Jesus' impending death (Mt 17:3; Lk 9:31); a bright cloud overshadowed those assembled (Mt 17:5). But the thing that surpassed all else in Peter's memory was **the voice**. He declares that the voice of God, Himself, settled forever the identity of Jesus: "*This is My beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased*" (2 Pet 1:17). Perhaps these words made a great impression on Peter because they were spoken in reference to his misguided suggestion of building tabernacles to honor Moses, Elijah and Jesus (Mt 17:4). At any rate, when God spoke Peter, James and John "*fell on their faces and were greatly afraid*" (Mt 17:6). This seemed to be a defining moment in Peter's life, and he thereafter lived with great consciousness of the honor and glory of the Lord. We should strive for a similar awareness.

6. What admonition did the Father give based on the Sonship of Jesus (Mt 17:5)?

7. What does Peter call the Father?

Day 5: The Assurance of Prophecy (2 Pet 1:19-21)

Casual reading and ignoring of context has led to erroneous views of this passage. Peter is reminding his readers of "the present truth" (2 Pet 1:12), the "things that pertain to life and godliness" (1:3) through the knowledge of Christ. He is concerned about the damaging influence of "cunningly devised fables" (1:16) and seeks to ground all believers in that which is ultimately trustworthy and unassailable. Having just spoken of his eyewitness acquaintance with the Lord's majesty, he now directs them to something even more sure than apostolic testimony: "the prophetic word"; "prophecy of Scripture." From his vantage point, Peter casts a sweeping gaze upon all the revelations of God over the centuries and concludes that *God has spoken*. That is, the evidence of history supports the conclusion that Scripture did not originate with the prophets; they did not communicate their own thoughts, judgments or will but "*spoke as they were moved by the Holy Spirit*" (1:21).

The phrase which has caused difficulty is "private interpretation" (1:20). Without thinking it is assumed that the *reader* of the Bible is meant, that the reader somehow doesn't have the right to interpret what he reads. The NKJ footnote reads "origin" and properly indicates that it is the interpretation of the *writer* which is under consideration. In other words, the prophets were not inspired by their personal assessments but by the same voice that Peter says he heard from heaven. God spoke to him on the "holy mountain," and God spoke to the prophets via the Holy Spirit. Both the apostle and the prophets are legitimate sources, but Peter indicates that the writings of the prophets are time-tested while his observations are yet contemporary. Given the Spirit-generated writings of the ages, we would "*do well to heed (them) as a light that shines in a dark place*" (1:19).

8. To what do you think "morning star" refers?

9. According to Peter, is "prophecy" merely natural teaching or inspired revelation?

Day 1: Unscrupulous Teachers of Error (2 Pet 2:1-3)

Peter launches a scathing attack upon false teachers whom he considers a threat to the spiritual well-being of his readers. Peter does not refer to genuine differences of conscience or ambiguous interpretations but “destructive heresies” which result in “denying the Lord” and blaspheming the way of truth. Note the words which indicate deliberate preying by these heretics: “secretly” (2:1), “covetousness” (2:3), “deceptive” (2:3). These men, whatever their doctrinal peculiarities, are dishonest predators. They advance their ideas with the intent of personal profit.

1. What were among the people even as “men of God spoke ... by the Holy Spirit”?
2. How successful will these false teachers be?
3. What is the ultimate end of men who pervert the truth?

Day 2: Chains of Darkness (2 Pet 2:4-11)

In stressing the ultimate doom of these false teachers Peter refers to three other examples of God’s punishment against rebellious people: sinning angels (2:4), the ancient ungodly world of Noah’s generation (2:5), and Sodom and Gomorrah (2:6). But corresponding to these objects of divine wrath are the godly who are delivered by God from trials: righteous angels (2:11), Noah and Lot (2:7-8). Thus “*the Lord knows how to deliver the godly out of temptations and to reserve the unjust under punishment for the day of judgment*” (2:9). The influence of false teachers will always have to be dealt with, but history shows that men can have a sufficient grasp of the truth to avoid being ensnared by these men.

4. To whom were Sodom and Gomorrah made an example?
5. Describe further the qualities of these false teachers from 2 Peter 2:10.
6. In what condition now are “the angels who sinned”?

Day 3: Brute Beasts (2 Pet 2:12-14)

The men Peter is describing function on an animalistic level, “*like natural brute beasts made to be caught and destroyed.*” The epithets pile up: “spots and blemishes”; “eyes full of adultery”; “cannot cease from sin”; “a heart trained in covetous practices”; “accursed children.” These false teachers are living debased, immoral lives and are seductively drawing the unwary into their web. Peter takes umbrage at the audacity of these imposters and spares no words in identifying them for what they are.

7. What are these men really up to as they feast with the brethren?
8. Who are beguiled by such men? What is the remedy for this?
9. How is the brazenness of these false teachers described in 2 Peter 2:13?

Day 4: The Spirit of Balaam (2 Pet 2:15-17)

Balaam is suggested as an ante-type of these false teachers, himself a man who “*loved the wages of unrighteousness*” to the point of “madness” (see Num 22:1-35). Balaam knew God and His power, and at first he respected the word of God and refused to violate it to pronounce curses upon Israel. But gradually his resistance was worn down and he succumbed to the allure of the world (comp. Num 31:16). While Peter addresses men of the basest sort, all those who make their living by teaching God’s word must carefully assess their own attitudes. Some preachers fall victim to the flesh and use their influence for sexual conquest. Others may alter their preaching to ensure an income. The highest motivation of some is to gain respectability among unbelievers and they sell out the truth to achieve it. How vital it is to handle the word of truth with integrity!

10. What have these false teachers forsaken?
11. What kind of wells and clouds are these men? What does this mean?
12. What is reserved for them?

Day 5: The Curse of Apostasy (2 Pet 2:18-22)

Peter’s final description of the false teachers makes clear their spiritual decline. These men were truly (not apparently) saved but then lost: “*they have escaped the pollutions of the world through the knowledge of the Lord and Savior Jesus Christ,*” and then “*they are again entangled in them and overcome*” (2 Pet 2:20). They had known the way of righteousness and then turned from the holy commandment (2:21). Peter graphically likens such a process to a dog eating the regurgitated food that had made him sick or the clean sow returning to wallow in the mud (2:22). False teachers today who deny that saved people can be lost place themselves in the accursed category to which Peter refers. Such doctrines have the same effects as those opposed by Peter: they encourage participation in sin under the false promise that such behavior will not have spiritual implications. The Scriptures speak harshly of any who would so minimize sin and one’s personal responsibility to pursue godliness. These verses stand in stark contrast to eternal security doctrines which deceive so many. We must be on guard against men who would pervert the truth for their own gain.

13. What promise is made by these false teachers to their followers (2 Peter 2:19)?
14. What would have been better for these false teachers? Why?

Day 1: “I Stir Up Your Pure Minds” (2 Pet 3:1-2)

Peter again expresses his obligation to rekindle the memories of his readers concerning the truths denied by the false teachers. Christians must constantly review and reinforce their convictions because they will be challenged in intricate and persuasive ways. Peter’s last concern is false doctrine regarding the promised return of Jesus.

1. Of what must Christians always be mindful?

Day 2: Scoffers Will Come (2 Pet 3:3-7)

Christians are asked to maintain an ongoing belief that the Lord may come at any moment to conclude the affairs of the material world. Both Jesus and His apostles left an open-ended promise that could be fulfilled in any generation. We are presently twenty centuries removed from this promise, and multiplied millions of people have lived and died wondering if the promise would be realized in their lifetime. This span of time gives those “*walking according to their own lusts*” leverage to deny that Jesus will ever return for judgment. These scoffers are making a fatal mistake: they “*willfully forget*” that a similar promise of cataclysmic destruction has already occurred in the history of the world. This describes much false teaching; it rests upon willful ignorance of what the Bible clearly says. Religious confusion does not exist because of the ambiguity of God’s revelation but the stubborn will of man to obfuscate and circumvent what is plainly stated.

2. Upon what basis do these scoffers assert that the Lord is not coming back?
3. What was the energizing force of creation (2 Peter 3:5)? How will this same force be applied to the creation in the future (2 Peter 3:7)?

Day 3: The Window of Opportunity (2 Pet 3:8-9)

Peter clarifies the delay in the fulfillment of the promise. God is not “slack”; that is, it is not through neglect, inattention or change of heart that Jesus hasn’t returned. We must not attribute human frailties to God. Rather, God is giving mankind ample time to grow spiritually and increase His heavenly family. God waits in hope that more and more men and women will repent and escape destruction.

4. What indicates that God does not act on a human time schedule?
5. How does 2 Peter 3:9 help us understand why God doesn’t rectify injustices sooner?
6. How many times have “remind” or “forget” (and related forms) occurred in 2 Peter?

Day 4: The Day of the Lord Will Come (2 Pet 3:10-13)

Though the scoffers deny it, and the longsuffering of God delays it, “*the day of the Lord will come*” (2 Pet 3:10). And when it does it will be unexpected, sudden and terminal. Fire is the consuming agent: celestial bodies – stars, black holes, nebulae, quasars, pulsars and every other heavenly wonder – will be dissolved and pass away with a great noise; the earth – the land, the seas, the atmosphere and all the life supported by the delicate interaction of terrestrial forces, including the creations of mankind – will be burned up. This is not just some superficial, refining fire as a wildfire which leaves seeds behind for new growth. Peter says “*the elements*,” that is, the basic constituent parts of the universe, those things which combine to create material reality (atomic particles, if you will), “*will melt with fervent heat*” (2:10, 12). The material world at its most fundamental level will be destroyed. If Peter only meant “*refurbished*,” why didn’t he say so? And how much more thoroughly could he have described total annihilation? Yet many today cling to the notion that the earth will simply be “*renovated*.” They are of the same ilk as the scoffers who say that “*all things continue as they were from the beginning of creation*” (2 Pet 3:4) and who desperately wish for them to remain that way. But the person of faith accepts that such is not to be and lives accordingly (3:11).

The phrase that confuses many at this point is “*Nevertheless we ... look for new heavens and a new earth ...*” (3:13). Other Scriptures clearly point out that the future hope of God’s people is where God dwells (see 2 Cor 5:1-8; Phil 3:20-21; Col 3:1-4; Mt 6:19-21; etc.). The phrase “*new heaven and new earth*” is an old Jewish phrase simply indicating a new circumstance. For example, Is 65:17 uses the phrase in reference to the coming Messianic age (see also 66:22; 51:16). I believe the reference in Rev 21:1, 4 refers to the new arrangement wherein the Lord’s church is triumphant and its dreaded foe, the Roman Empire, is defeated and destroyed. Peter’s “*new heavens and new earth*” is one “*in which righteousness dwells*” (3:13). It is the *quality* that is being emphasized, not the *location*. A similar usage is the phrase “*a new pair of eyes*”; i.e., contacts or eyeglasses (a new circumstance of sight).

7. What kind of living should belief in the Lord’s return inspire?

Day 5: Beware, Lest You Also Fall (2 Pet 3:14-18)

In his final exhortations Peter refers to Paul’s epistles which agree with Peter’s present observations. Several things are noteworthy: Paul’s writings are well-known; they are classified by Peter with “*the rest of the Scriptures*”; Paul wrote extensively of Jesus’ eventual return; he wrote “*some things hard to understand*” which give occasion for the ignorant and unstable to “*twist to their own destruction*.” The antidote to “*being led away with the error of the wicked*” is to “*grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ*” (3:17-18). Note the various “*warning words*” throughout 2 Peter: be diligent, beware, be mindful, do not forget, etc. We must proceed with caution.

8. When the Lord comes, how should we desire to be found by Him?

Day 1: “Contend Earnestly for the Faith” (Jude 1-4)

The author of this book is commonly held to be the half-brother of Jesus. He identifies himself as the brother of James (Jude 1; see Mt 13:55). This most logically refers to James, the brother of the Lord, who enjoyed such prominence and influence in the Jerusalem church. The process of elimination of the six other Judas' in the NT makes Jesus' brother the most likely author. A cursory reading of Jude reveals a great deal of similarity with 2 Peter, almost word for word in some places. Doctrinal corruption was a growing concern in the latter half of the first century and is addressed in most all the later epistles. A stylistic feature of this short letter is the use of triads, listing items by threes.

As Jude wrote concerning “*our common salvation*” (Jude 3) he urged his readers to “*contend earnestly for the faith which was once for all delivered to the saints.*” By the time of this epistle all the elements which comprised “the faith” were in place, that is, revealed or “delivered.” Jude recognized what other inspired writers knew: once truth was given, there would be an ongoing battle to defend and preserve it. This battle continues today, and it must *earnestly*, not casually, be waged.

1. Find three different triads (lists containing three elements) in Jude.
2. What did the apostates of both Jude and 2 Peter deny (Jude 4; 2 Peter 2:1)?

Day 2: The Long History of Apostasy (Jude 5-11)

This section closely parallels 2 Peter 2 almost to the point of repetition. The flow of thought is that God will eventually destroy His enemies, from angels who “*did not keep their proper domain*” to Sodom and Gomorrah who had “*given themselves over to sexual immorality and gone after strange flesh.*” An intriguing feature added by Jude is the dispute between Michael and the devil over the body of Moses. Nothing more of this episode is known, but the point emphasized is that Michael acted with a restraint and deference toward God that is absent in the false teachers (Jude 9-10). These men rail against things they do not understand (Jude 8, 10); they act instinctively, like animals, rather than intelligently, like men enlightened by the knowledge of God.

3. To what three OT figures does Jude refer to illustrate greed and self-will?
4. What is Michael's title? What did he on his own authority refuse to do?

Day 3: Judgment Against the Ungodly (Jude 12-15)

These false teachers had certain qualities that made them attractive to others: a measure of intelligence, eloquence, flattery and an arrogant sense of self-assurance. Jude's objec-

tive is to shatter these illusions and portray them as they really are. He uses very concrete imagery from nature to do this: hidden reefs (spots, NKJ), waterless clouds, dead trees, raging waves and wandering stars (or comets). These figures emphasize lurking danger, lack of substance, instability, aimlessness. Whatever their present appeal, Jude again emphasizes that such self-serving men are destined for destruction when *“the Lord comes with ten thousands of His saints, to execute judgment on all, to convict all”* (Jude 14-15). Much ado is made of the “love feasts” in Jude 12 in an attempt to incorporate social meals into the worship. But while it is evident that Christians dined together out of familial love (Ac 2:46), it is just as clear that they were prohibited from corrupting the worship with such: *“What! Do you not have houses to eat and drink in? ... But if anyone is hungry, let him eat at home, lest you come together for judgment”* (1 Cor 11:22, 34). Jude’s point is that these false teachers are mingling with and gaining acceptance among the brethren in their social settings. How many brethren have been deluded by the charm, friendliness and generosity of a false teacher?

5. Who gives the prophecy in Jude 14-15?

6. What word does Jude use repeatedly to describe the character of these men (v. 15)?

Day 4: Murmurers, Complainers and Mockers (Jude 16-19)

Jude further describes the attitudes and behavior of these people who threaten the spiritual well-being of the brethren: they walk *“according to their own lusts”*; *“they mouth great swelling words, flattering people to gain advantage.”* Such people are dissatisfied with God’s ways, so they murmur and complain against what is right and manipulate weak-minded people to side with them and support their self-aggrandizing schemes. These *“cause divisions”* (Jude 19). How this scenario been played out among churches in our own generation!

7. What prophets does Jude now refer to? How should these prophecies help brethren?

Day 5: Exhortations and Doxology (Jude 20-25)

Jude exhorts his readers to be *“building yourselves up”* and thus fortified against the false teachers (Jude 20-21). He then outlines responsibility toward those who have been disturbed by the apostates (v. 22-23). The confused and doubting need gentle reassurance while those who have fallen further into immorality demand more urgent, drastic measures. Note the observation by Clinton Hamilton: “Christians should deal with all sin with an even hand of total opposition, but make a difference in how we deal with a person depending upon his peculiar situations, characters, and dispositions. This is very important in corrective discipline and almost universally ignored ...” (**Commentary on 2 Peter & Jude**, p. 503). Jude concludes by extolling God and reminds his readers that He, not the false teachers, is the One *“who is able to keep you from stumbling.”*

8. What elements are mentioned by Jude which provide spiritual strength and stability?