



5 | 2 PETER 2:1-10

UNMASKING FALSE PROPHETS

God rescues his righteous people from false teachers. We are predestined to be conformed to Christ, Real Christians do not practice a life of sin in secret or follow those who do. We expose sin and wolves because they will damn people's souls.

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Call to Worship

Come, bless the Lord, all you servants of the Lord, who stand by night in the house of the Lord! ² Lift up your hands to the holy place and bless the Lord! ³ May the Lord bless you from Zion, he who made heaven and earth! —Psalm 134:1-3

Songs

Cornerstone
Rejoice the Lord is King
Jesus Paid it All
Man of Sorrows
I Surrender All

Announcements

WELCOME: We are glad you are here! Be sure to grab a Welcome Packet if you are visiting with us.

Introduction

We remember the 1930s film “**The Wizard of Oz**” which is really not about the wizard, but about Dorothy. She learned that “**there’s no place like home.**” One of the pinnacles of the movie is when we find out that **the wizard isn’t actually a wizard at all.** He’s just a **pretender.** He’s a traveling circus act that got lost flying in his hot air balloon. His famous quote was, “**Pay no attention to the man behind the curtain.**” He was pretending to be someone with great power.

So it is with false teachers today. They want to take advantage of God’s people. They will use every deception to do it. But in reality, they have no power unless you give it to him by believing their lies.

Wolves come among true believers throughout history. Claiming to teach truth, these purveyors of demonic error disguise themselves as angels of light (*cf* 2 Cor 11:14), attempting to creep into the fold unnoticed. As a result, throughout redemptive history, God has repeatedly warned believers to be on the alert against such men (and women).¹

Second Peter does sound a bit gloomy and doomy. As you read through it, it’s just full of very intense and dire warnings and constant discussions of destruction and judgment. Before you get turned off to parts of the Bible like this, just remember that very often **the most loving thing to do is to warn,** and the most positive thing you can do is be negative. Sometimes the most positive thing you can do is be negative.²

Key thought: God rescues his righteous people from false teachers. We are predestined to be conformed to Christ, Real Christians do not practice a life of sin in secret or follow those who do. We expose sin and wolves because they will damn people’s souls.

1. REALIZE THE PRESENCE OF FALSE TEACHERS (2:1)

Peter begins by reminding us that false prophets have been around since the beginning. They were present in Israel, and they are here with us today. **There are wolves in the churches.** Don’t be surprised by this. False teachers are present in all ages as representatives of Satan. They ultimately deny the Lord by their filthy lives. You know them by their rotten fruit.

2 Peter 2:1 | But false prophets also arose among the people, just as there will be false teachers among you, who will secretly bring in destructive heresies, even denying the Master who bought them, bringing upon themselves swift destruction.

“False prophets” means they **falsely claimed to be prophets, or that they prophesied false things;** and sometimes both. The men were as untrustworthy as the message they preached.

FALSE TEACHERS ARE PRESENT IN EVERY AGE

2 Peter 2:1a | But false prophets also arose among the people, just as there will be false teachers among you.

False teaching really is as old as time. It **started in the Garden of Eden** with the deceptive serpent. The devil is determined to pack the churches with wolves. There have always been false prophets.

¹ MacArthur, *2 Peter and Jude*, 67–68.

² Timothy J. Keller, “The Dangerous Life” Studies in 2 Peter—August 15, 1993 from 2 Peter 2:1–9, *The Timothy Keller Sermon Archive* (New York City: Redeemer Presbyterian Church, 2013).

False prophets arose among the people of Israel. Those people have had their false prophets from the beginning. As soon as they left Egypt, they were deceived by **Balaam to worship the fertility god, Baal Peor of the Moabites** (cf Num 25). Balaam led them into sexual sin related to their **false worship of Baal that haunted them their entire existence** until the captivity.

As the father of lies (Jn 8:44), Satan is constantly using deception and false doctrine to attack the church today—**employing false teachers** to infiltrate the true flock.³ False prophets are determined at all times, in every age, to bring God’s people into sin. They do it by attacking the core teachings of Christianity.

Peter’s readers had false teachers in their midst.⁴ False teachers today bring into question the foundational doctrines of the faith.

FOUNDATIONS OF OUR FAITH

We believe in the inspiration of the Bible (both the Old and the New Testaments)

The one eternal, triune God in three persons: Father, Son, and Holy Spirit

The creation of man by the direct act of God

The fall of humanity into sin by one man, Adam

Christ’s virgin birth, sinless life, substitutionary death for sin, miraculous bodily resurrection, and literal future return

Christ’s power to save men from sin

The new birth through the regeneration by the Holy Spirit

The free gift of eternal life by grace alone through faith alone in Christ alone

The eternal life of believers and condemnation of unbelievers

False prophets are **present in every age**, and they are busy.

False prophets either (1) deny the foundational doctrines of our faith, or (2) they teach good doctrine, but live sensually and lead God’s people to excuse themselves from true holiness.

But they are determined to bring people into their influence, just as they have been of old.

FALSE TEACHERS ARE SNEAKY

False teachers are active, just as they have always been. They are **secretly bringing in lies into the church**. Peter calls them “destructive heresies.”

2 Peter 2:1b | There will be false teachers among you, who will secretly bring in destructive heresies.

The devil doesn’t come into a church and announce himself. Neither do wolves. Satan comes, not as some scaly monster with horns and hooves and a pitchfork. But he comes as an “angel of light,” standing declaring ideas as an apostle or faithful pastor, but he’s really a false teacher. **He’s a wolf in sheep’s clothing.**

They are very subtle and sneaky.

False teachers are **never honest and straightforward** about their operations or their personal lives. After all, the church would never embrace them if their schemes were unmasked. Instead, they secretly and deceptively enter the church, **posing as pastors, teachers, and**

³ MacArthur, *2 Peter and Jude*, 67.

⁴ Green, *2 Peter and Jude*, 115–117.

evangelists.⁵ According to Paul, false teachers will disguise themselves as angels of light and servants of righteousness.

2 Corinthians 11:13-15 | Such men are false apostles, deceitful workmen, disguising themselves as apostles of Christ. ¹⁴ And no wonder, for even Satan disguises himself as an angel of light. ¹⁵ So it is no surprise if his servants, also, disguise themselves as servants of righteousness.

They are sneaky with their error. A **heresy is a false teaching that divides the saints**. False teachers specifically **promote heresies that are “destructive”**—that is, **they ruin this life and the life to come**. They lead to “utter ruin” not only now but in the final and eternal condemnation of the wicked. If a person believes them, they will end up in eternal destruction in the lake of fire. **They are usually heresies that give people assurance of salvation, even though they are living immoral lives.**

FALSE TEACHERS ARE HYPOCRITICAL

2 Peter 2:1c | Even denying the Master who bought them.

False teachers preach Christ who laid down his life for sinners, but they deny him by their fruit. They proclaim that Jesus paid it all, and they claim to belong to Jesus, because he bought them. But they misunderstand grace. **Grace is not a license to sin**. Jude speaks of these kinds of false teachers.

Jude 1:4 | Ungodly people, who turn the grace of our God into a license to sin and deny our only Master and Lord, Jesus Christ.

They don't understand that the grace and love of God leads us to **holiness**. Jesus told the woman who was forgiven much to “go and sin no more” (Jn 5:14). We are given a new heart and God's Spirit who “**causes us to walk in his statutes and keep his judgments**” (Eze 36:26-27).

There are false prophets who teach the gospel of freedom but live in slavery. God's grace never gives us a license to sin. Romans 6 tells us that God's grace is the power over sin.

Romans 6:14-15, 22 | Sin will have no dominion over you, since you are not under law but under grace. ¹⁵ What then? Are we to sin because we are not under law but under grace? By no means! ²² But now that you have been set free from sin and have become slaves of God, the fruit you get leads to sanctification and its end, eternal life.

We as true believers are free not to sin! Perhaps you know of someone who, when confronted about his or her adulterous relationship, simply said, as if it were a matter of fact, “Well, I'm under grace, so you can't condemn me.” Or maybe the person has shown no desire to stop a lifestyle of sin and defends himself or herself by saying, “God's grace covers me.” **This is the sentiment of false teachers**. They live contrary to sound doctrine.

FALSE TEACHERS ARE DAMNED

2 Peter 2:1d | Bringing upon themselves swift destruction.

Are such false teachers saved? According to what Peter writes in this chapter, we can conclude that those guilty of teaching doctrines at extreme odds with the historic doctrines of Christianity

⁵ MacArthur, *2 Peter and Jude*, 71.

are not, in fact, Spirit-regenerated believers.⁶ Those who deny or twist the person and work of Christ are not believers.

The goal of the false teacher is to bring damnable heresies. The lies they teach cut themselves and others off from faith in Christ. Their teachings may seem plausible, but they will lead you away from Christ into lawlessness. They will lead you to hell! They will always give you many excuses not to live a holy life. Don't let them come near, for they are determined and present in every age, ready to trap you. Watch out for them!

False Gospels Today

The Prosperity Gospel

The Poverty Gospel

The "Carnal Christian" Gospel

The Self-Help Gospel

The Signs and Wonders Gospel

The Social Justice Gospel

The Easy-Believism Gospel

Today, false prophets preach many false gospels. Here are a few of them. They will preach the false **prosperity gospel**. It's dangerous because it **teaches people to love money**. Prosperity preachers love to ride **on their jets** and go to the poorest of countries and **prey on impoverished people** and rob them. They teach falsely Following Jesus is the pathway to riches, when Jesus says it's a narrow way, and to take up your cross and die. **This is no good news at all, but pure greed and human selfishness.**

The **poverty gospel** says real Christians should vow to be poor. Poverty is a false requirement. Rather, God requires us to be **good stewards and content** with whatever state we are in (Phil 4:13).

The carnal Christian gospel says the gospel doesn't need to change your life. As long as you know the facts of the gospel you are saved no matter how you live. They forget that the "devils also believe and tremble" (Jas 2:19).

There is the **false gospel of self-help**, that the Bible is a manual for psychology, to make you feel better about yourself. It's false because we don't exist to feel good, but to glorify God in all we do.

There is the **false gospel of signs and wonders**. This teaches that if you were truly saved then you'd speak in tongues and see miracles, and if you had enough faith, you can be healed and you can heal others. Tongues and miracles are not signs of salvation, but they are gifts for some of the saints. If you want to verify the presence of the Spirit in every believer, then you must look for the fruit of the Spirit, which is a heart transformed to the image of Christ. Let's realize that not everyone speaks in tongues, and while God loves to grant miracles, he also brings many of his saints to Christlikeness through suffering.

There is the **social justice gospel**. While all Christians ought to be against racism and inequality, the social justice gospel's solution is not the cross, but the cancel culture. The only solution for injustice is justification by the blood of Jesus. As believers we seek for people to be saved by the blood, since it is the cross of Jesus Christ that justifies. His Holy Spirit can tear down the walls of hostility. We believe that God can save racists, and that the new birth is the solution to all the inequalities on earth. We also believe that ultimate justice occurs after this life, when we see God face to face.

⁶ Swindoll, *Insights on James and 1 & 2 Peter*, 287–288.

There is the **legalism gospel**. If I pray the sinner’s prayer and change my outward lifestyle, I must be a Christian. This is merely repackaged Phariseeism. True believers understand that real transformation begins with the new birth in the heart. You can change the outside, and never really change at all.

There is the **easy-believism gospel**. It says 1-2-3, pray after me, and you are in the kingdom. It is a false gospel because it requires no true heartfelt repentance, only acknowledgement of the facts. Even the devils acknowledge the facts about God, and they tremble. Satan himself believes in that way.

SUDDEN DESTRUCTION

None of these false gospels can save. Those who reject Christ’s sovereign lordship will face **sudden destruction** –they will think **they are on their way to heaven**, but suddenly, they **wake up in the flames of hell** (cf Mt 7:13; Jn 17:12; 2 Thess 2:3). This horrible fate, coming either at death or at Christ’s return (Jn 12:48; 2 Thess 1:7–10) awaits false teachers and all who follow their unrepentant path.⁷ These false teachers will be shocked at the sudden destruction at the day of judgment Jesus describes in the Sermon on the Mount.

Matthew 7:21-23 | Not everyone who says to me, ‘Lord, Lord,’ will enter the kingdom of heaven, but the one who does the will of my Father who is in heaven. ²² On that day many will say to me, ‘Lord, Lord, did we not prophesy in your name, and cast out demons in your name, and do many mighty works in your name?’ ²³ And then will I declare to them, ‘I never knew you; depart from me, you workers of lawlessness.’

Jesus has a message for false teachers. “**You may claim to know me**, but I never knew you. Depart from you immoral, lawless person.”

2. RECOGNIZE THE POWER OF FALSE TEACHERS (2:2-3)

How do false teachers get so many followers? They “have a form of godliness” but they “deny the power” that brings holiness in their lives (2 Tim 3:5). They have a “free grace” message that the world sees through.

THE POWER OF THEIR SENSUALITY

2 Peter 2:2 | And many will follow their sensuality, and because of them the way of truth will be blasphemed.

False teachers attract sinners, not with something that will radically change them, but what will excuse their sin.

The **world sees through this** and blasphemes Christianity because of the false gospel of **antinomianism**. Antinomian means “no law” or “lawless.” To say that **God’s grace covers sin so we should “sin so that grace abounds”** is blasphemy.

Romans 6:1-2 | Are we to continue in sin that grace may abound? ² By no means! How can we who died to sin still live in it?

Yet false teachers attract so many to say that they know Christ while promoting a Christianity that covers sin. We are instead to walk in the light confessing and forsaking our sins! **There is**

⁷ John F. MacArthur Jr., *2 Peter and Jude*, MacArthur New Testament Commentary (Chicago: Moody Publishers, 2005), 76.

no such thing as an unholy Christian. That’s why we are called “saints”. On December 24, 1882, Charles Haddon Spurgeon uttered these sober words:

Are you nominally a Christian, and yet your Christianity does not make you holy? I implore you to throw such worthless Christianity to the dogs, for it is worse than useless to you.⁸

A regenerated heart has the power to conquer sin in some measure. How can this be? It is possible because of the work of Jesus Christ. God the Father has “delivered us from the domain of darkness and transferred us to the kingdom of his beloved Son” (Col 1:13). We are now “light in the Lord” (Eph 5:8). We have been resurrected from spiritual death to “walk in newness of life” (Rom 6:4).

False teachers have lives that are lustful and lasciviousness. Many are strangely **attracted to a life where you can say you love Jesus** and live whatever way you want. Peter says that many people are attracted to false teachers and will follow after their shameful ways.⁹

Attracted to License

“Many will follow their **sensuality**” (2:2a). I’ve seen this play out in two extremes. First, you have those who believe grace is a **license to sin**. The term for “sensuality” is a vivid Greek word that means license to be sensual or licentiousness.

We see this in the churches that love every new fad. They are trying to copy the world. They emphasize a **kind of cheap grace where the saints are just as sinful as the unbelievers**. They celebrate God’s forgiveness **without any real repentance** or change. God’s job is to forgive, so their false gospel is one of antinomianism, lawlessness. You just keep on sinning, and God keeps on forgiving.

Attracted to Legalism

Even though they secretly sensual and immoral, **they may outwardly be legalistic**. They emphasize outward change with little attention to inward change. As long as you are following all the rules, you are considered to be right with God, even if you are living a double life. What ends up happening is they keep all the rules and look great on the outside, but often these teachers are incredibly immoral with little or no accountability. They live in sensuality with legalism as a covering.

Deceived by Liars

The world sees through these lies, and they blaspheme Christ. I might mention one other deceptive type of false teacher, and we’ll call this one the **liar**. This is the kind of false teacher that uses sound doctrine to cover their lascivious living. This is probably the most devastating kind of false teacher because they actually teach in ways that edify the saints, but they live contrary to what they teach. When they are discovered, the saints are most devastated and confused, and the **lost have more reason to blaspheme the name of Christ**. Peter says, “the way of truth will be blasphemed” or slandered. It literally means, **“to injure the reputation of someone.”** The reputation of Christ and the Christian way of truth is brought to discredit when those who say they identify with Christ involve themselves in obvious immoral behavior.¹⁰

⁸ Charles Spurgeon. *Metropolitan Tabernacle Pulpit, Volume 35*, Sermon 2120, “The Security of Believers; or, Sheep Who Shall Never Perish” (London: Passmore & Alabaster, 1889), 685.

⁹ David Walls and Max Anders, *I & II Peter, I, II & III John, Jude*, vol. 11, Holman New Testament Commentary (Nashville, TN: Broadman & Holman Publishers, 1999), 125.

¹⁰ Walls and Anders, *I & II Peter, I, II & III John, Jude*, 125.

Sadly, the scandals in the lives of false teachers seem to attract more and more people to the **false gospel of license**.

Instead, be Devoted to the Living God
Neither license nor legalism nor liars please God but **love for God from the heart**.

Luke 10:27 | You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your strength and with all your mind, and your neighbor as yourself.

Let the love of God consume you and holiness will follow! Oh, that we may love God and live holy lives for him with complete surrender and devotion to our holy God.

THE POWER OF THEIR SELFISHNESS

2 Peter 2:3a | And in their greed they will exploit you with false words.

These people are willing to go to extremes to exploit God's dear sheep. These are **spiritual psychopaths**. They are selfish and only think of themselves.

False teachers love themselves, and because of that, they love to exploit the sheep. They are not in the ministry to help the kingdom of God expand. They want to expand their own kingdom.

They love power and money. Underlying their love for money, false teachers may have a fascination with false doctrine, rebelliousness, or even a penchant for sexual immorality. To be sure, they actively participate in each of those activities. But people can do all such sins without being teachers. Instead, the primary motivation driving false teachers is **an unbridled love of money**. Later in this chapter Peter describes false teachers as "having a heart trained in greed" (2:14). They crave as much money as possible (*cf* 1 Tim 6:3–5, 10) and are **experts at bilking people in the church out of their wealth**. This is a standard biblical indictment and characterization of religious charlatans (*cf* Jer 6:13; 8:10; 1 Tim 6:3, 5, 9–11; Titus 1:7, 11; 1 Pet 5:1–3; Jude 11, 16).¹¹

They use "plastic words." False teachers love the earthly comfort that power and money can bring, because in the end it's all they have. False preachers and teachers use "false" or **literally "plastic" words**. In keeping with its etymological roots, *plastic* originally had the connotation of something not completely authentic. After all, **plastic items often masquerade** as another substance, such as wood, metal, china, and so forth. Thus, plastic at first glance "deceives" consumers. In a similar way, false teachers deal in heretical doctrine that masquerades as truth. Their theology is often plausible but twists the word of God (*cf* Col 2:8, 20–23; 2 Tim 2:14–18).¹²

They promote themselves. They **exploit** the sheep for their own kingdom and their own gain, but that's all they have. Their skill is exploiting the sheep, forming their "plastic" fake doctrine to suit the ears of the hearers, giving what they want.

THEIR EARTHLY POWER LEADS THEM TO ETERNAL HELL

All their power and advantage over the sheep leads these false teachers **straight to hell**. Their end is coming swiftly. Damnation, Peter says, is hunting them down. False teachers may think they are living the high life, but God will take them down.

2 Peter 2:3b | Their condemnation from long ago is not idle, and their destruction is not asleep.

¹¹ MacArthur, *2 Peter and Jude*, 78.

¹² *Ibid.*

Peter reiterates that the *condemnation*, pronounced against false teachers long ago in the Old Testament, is “not idle” but active and **impending**.¹³ Their impending destruction in hell is “not asleep.” Peter personifies eternal damnation as if it were an **executioner**, who remains fully awake, ready to administer God’s just sentence of condemnation on those who falsify his word.¹⁴

GOD IS NOT ASLEEP

God as our good Shepherd doesn’t sleep. He takes care of his own sheep. He loves them. It’s a comforting doctrine for the saved.

But for the wolves, we remember that God is also not sleeping, but is **like a hunter following his prey**, false teachers will be taken down. There is a judgment hanging over them. Truly damnation in hell waits for them from the Almighty God who pursues these false teachers **with unsleeping eyes**.

Jesus is coming for all who do not know him and sadly **many lost are in churches led by wolves**. The Bible describes Christ coming in power and glory when the lost will be chased down by the wrath of God. Rebels both small and great run for their lives, but they cannot outrun the wrath of God.

Revelation 6:15-16 | Then the kings of the earth and the great ones and the generals and the rich and the powerful, and everyone, slave and free, hid themselves in the caves and among the rocks of the mountains, ¹⁶ calling to the mountains and rocks, “Fall on us and hide us from the face of him who is seated on the throne, and from the wrath of the Lamb, ¹⁷ for the great day of their wrath has come, and who can stand?”

False teachers are think that they can outrun the wrath of God. They think they are safe in church under the sound of these false teachers. No church can protect us from the wrath of God. It is **only the blood of Jesus that can shelter us** from the wrath we deserve.

3. REMEMBER THE PAST OF FALSE TEACHERS (2:4-10)

God will not ignore false teachers, nor will he forget those who stand resolutely against them.¹⁵ Peter now gives three examples from three realms: **the heavenly realm, the earthly realm, and the political realm.**

To see how these false prophets operate, just look to their past. **Be warned** by their misery and perdition. Peter continues his denouncement of false teachers by referencing three well-known accounts of divine judgment from the book of Genesis.¹⁶ In each case, these examples seemed to be flourishing, but judgement came down swiftly from the Lord.

These three representative and typological examples of God’s judgment demonstrate that God’s character has not changed. He will rescue the righteous, and he will judge the wicked.

REMEMBER THE ANGELS (HEAVEN)

2 Peter 2:4 | For if God did not spare angels when they sinned, but cast them into hell and committed them to chains of gloomy darkness to be kept until the judgment.

¹³ Green, *2 Peter and Jude*, 120.

¹⁴ MacArthur, *2 Peter and Jude*, 83–84.

¹⁵ Douglas Harink, *1 & 2 Peter* (Grand Rapids, MI: Brazos Press, 2009), 99.

¹⁶ MacArthur, *2 Peter and Jude*, 84.

False teachers have transgressed just like **the wicked fallen angels of old**. God will rescue the elect, but there is no hope for false teachers. If God did not spare the angels, how will God spare those who lead God’s flock astray? God’s got a bullseye of judgement on false teachers.

The first story Peter talks about occurs in the *heavenly realm*. Peter tells us to remember the angels fell from their first estate, when they rebelled at creation (Eze 28:15) and one third of the angels fell from glory (Rev 12:4) and became demons. Or perhaps he may be referring to when fallen angels intermingled with women (*cf* Gen 6:1-4).¹⁷

The fallen angels are the great uncontrollable cosmic and historical beings whose **rebel powers** we see in the form of powerful ideals, all false religions, isms, worldviews, causes, movements. These **wicked creatures lay hold of epochs**, empires, peoples, nations, societies, institutions, and persons, and they enslave them, and make them serve systems of hostility, exploitation, destruction, war, and violence—the systems of sin and death. They are the “diverse manifestations of a seamless web of reality hostile to God” (1 Pet 3:18–22).¹⁸ Make no mistake, Peter says, **they have invited God’s swift judgment**.

God judged the angels swiftly. If God did not even spare his angels, neither will he spare the false teachers. Judgment will come. Remember the specific judgment upon the angels.

The angels sinned. All the angels sinned and fell from grace. Remember the witness of Jesus.

Luke 10:18 | I saw Satan fall like lightning from heaven.

Some of the cosmic suprahuman powers (angels) rebel against the authority of God and their rightful role in the cosmic order.¹⁹ Rather than serving God and God’s purposes for his creatures, as they were created to do, these angels turn to serve themselves and to bend the minds, wills, and bodies of human beings to their own unrighteous ends. They become the “evil rulers and authorities of the unseen world, ... mighty powers in this dark world, and ... evil spirits in the heavenly places” (Eph. 6:12) who are opposed to God and his reign.

Some angels were confined. God conquered those powers through the cross of Christ.

Colossians 2:15 | He disarmed the rulers and authorities and put them to open shame, by triumphing over them in him [Christ].

The rebellious powers, Peter says, **God confined some of them into hell**—not the lake of fire, but the underworld (i.e., Tartarus—in Hellenistic thought, the place of divine punishment).²⁰ There are some demons who roam the earth, but many others are committed to “**chains of gloomy darkness** to be kept until the judgment.” Some demons are already confined to Hades, the place where the lost go when they die, awaiting final judgment at the second coming of Christ.

Fallen angels will face final judgment. There is coming a day of final judgment for Satan, his angels, and the lost. Satan and his demons all know their time is short (Rev 12:12). That day of judgment is coming sooner rather than later. One day it will finally arrive.

Revelation 20:10-15 | The devil who had deceived them was thrown into the lake of fire and sulfur where the beast and the false prophet were, and they will be tormented day and night forever and ever. ¹¹ Then I saw a great white throne and him who was seated on it. From his presence earth and sky fled away, and no place was found for them. ¹² And I saw the dead, great and small, standing before the throne, and books were opened. Then another book was opened, which is the book of life. And the dead were judged by what was

¹⁷ Bruce B. Barton, *1 & 2 Peter and Jude—Life Application Bible Commentary* (Carol Stream, IL: Tyndale, 1995), 165.

¹⁸ Marva J. Dawn, *Powers, Weakness, and the Tabernacling of God* (Grand Rapids, MI: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing, 2001), 19.

¹⁹ See John Howard Yoder, *The Politics of Jesus: Vicit Agnus Noster*, 2nd ed. (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1994), 134–61; and Marva J. Dawn, *Powers, Weakness, and the Tabernacling of God* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2001).

²⁰ Harink, *1 & 2 Peter*, 100.

written in the books, according to what they had done. ¹³ And the sea gave up the dead who were in it, Death and Hades gave up the dead who were in them, and they were judged, each one of them, according to what they had done. ¹⁴ Then Death and Hades were thrown into the lake of fire. This is the second death, the lake of fire. ¹⁵ And if anyone's name was not found written in the book of life, he was thrown into the lake of fire.

If angels, who are a higher and stronger being than man cannot escape God's judgment, than what makes you think you can get away with following any false teacher?²¹ Don't follow false prophets. They follow the devil and his angels. They are leading people to the pit of hell. Jesus will separate the sheep from the goats on the Last Day, and he will say to the goats who think they know him, but are completely lost:

Matthew 25:41 | Depart from me, you cursed, into the eternal fire prepared for the devil and his angels.

Remember the fallen angels. God put some of the angels in confinement. And those who now harass you have a judgment that is coming. Be assured that God will preserve you from their demonic harassment in the heavenly realm (Eph 6:10-13). Final judgment is coming for all the angels, the false teachers and the lost souls that follow them.

REMEMBER THE ANCIENT WORLD (EARTH)

The next story Peter tells from Genesis takes place in the *earthly realm* of the ancient world where Noah and his family are the only righteous people left on earth. **If God can rescue Noah** in the midst of the wickedness of the ancient (Gen 6-8), he can rescue you! Don't give in to the false teachers.

2 Peter 2:5 | If he did not spare the ancient world, but preserved Noah, a herald of righteousness, with seven others, when he brought a flood upon the world of the ungodly.

Peter refers to the global flood three times in his two letters (*cf* 1 Pet 3:20; 2 Pet 2:5; 3:6). God's judgment is coming. It came so suddenly in Noah's day.

Noah's difficulty. **How hard it must have been for Noah to live in the ancient world.** He didn't belong there. He hated the wickedness. Yet God rescued and preserved him and his family. God did not spare the ancient world.

Noah's duty. **Salvation had been available to all.** Certainly, Noah, as a "herald of righteousness" was **faithful to proclaim the way to God by grace through faith.** However, few had chosen to believe. All those years Noah spent building the ark were a time of proclamation of the coming judgment, and of delayed judgment. Sadly, the people of Noah's day mocked him in their unbelief.

God destruction. "Flood" translates *kataklysmos*, from which the English **cataclysm derives.** The Genesis account, along with current geological evidence, indicates that the flood truly was *cataclysmic* in every sense (*cf* Gen 7:10–24).²² Because of man's sinfulness, God destroyed every person and every land animal (except those in the ark), covering the entire planet with water—even the peaks of the highest mountains (Gen 7:19–20).²³

Noah's deliverance. The great sinfulness of all mankind led the Lord to destroy the entire mass of humanity, sparing only the godly among them. **Like then, judgment is coming today, this time not with water, but with fire.** Yet because we as Christ followers know the Lord, there is nothing to fear in our own day of unbelief, since the Lord powerfully protected those who

²¹ Mbuvi, *Jude and 2 Peter*, 74.

²² MacArthur, *2 Peter and Jude*, 88.

²³ See John C. Whitcomb, Jr., and Henry M. Morris, *The Genesis Flood* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1961).

followed him, eight people in all: Noah and seven of his family (his wife, three sons, and their wives, Gen 8:16).

This is, as Peter says, the “world of the ungodly” (2 Pet. 2:5) that **presses in upon Noah from all sides** and ridicules the seeming irrationality of his faith in God’s coming judgment and new creation as he builds a huge seaworthy boat in a dry land.

Hebrews 11:7 | By faith Noah, warned by God about events as yet unseen, respected the warning and built an ark to save his household; by this he condemned the world and became an heir to the righteousness that is in accordance with faith.

Noah was indeed a righteous man in his world, but **he could not deliver himself from it**. He stood firm and trusted God to rescue him from that corrupt world through the flood. But the flood did not wipe out the sinful inclination of the human heart itself, as God himself acknowledges (Gen. 8:21). The world of humankind, the very progeny of righteous Noah, remains the world of the ungodly, the world of sinners and enemies of God. Since God is not wishing that any should perish again in a flood, the worlds’ violent and destructive evil inclination must be met with an even more radical act of God to deal with it: it requires the atoning and reconciling death of Jesus Christ (Rom 5:6–11), “the righteousness of our God and Savior Jesus Christ” (2 Pet 1:1) who delivers us “from the corruption that is in the world because of lust” (1:4).

God punishes the ungodly. His punishment is not arbitrary. Those who deserve punishment will receive his punishment; those who trust in him will receive his mercy and grace. As it was in Noah’s day, it is today. **God will destroy the ungodly and preserve anyone who comes to him by faith in his Son.**²⁴ Remember the ancient world and flee from false teachers! Look how **God spared Noah**. He can rescue you from the ungodly as well.

REMEMBER SODOM AND GOMORRAH (POLITICAL)

Peter’s final story from Genesis takes place in the city or we might say the *political realm*—that sphere in which worship, history, culture, politics, economics, and social order might come together for the sake of the common good and human flourishing.²⁵ Yet in Lot’s day, as today, **the people worshipped the creation in place of the Creator**—they loved the wrapping paper more than the gift as it were. It led them to **unspeakable immorality**. As believers, we live very uncomfortable lives in the earthly sphere, longing for the new creation where there is no sin or rebellion against God. I can’t wait for that day. But like Lot, we are lured by the comforts of this world even while we are vexed by the world.

There in Sodom, Lot lived among the ungodly with his righteous soul afflicted day after day. **God delivered Lot** from the wickedness of Sodom and Gomorrah, and he can deliver you.

2 Peter 2:6-8 | If by turning the cities of Sodom and Gomorrah to ashes he condemned them to extinction, making them an example of what is going to happen to the ungodly. ⁷And if he rescued righteous Lot, greatly distressed by the sensual conduct of the wicked ⁸(for as that righteous man lived among them day after day, he was tormenting his righteous soul over their lawless deeds that he saw and heard).

The ruin of Sodom and Gomorrah. False teaching leads to false behavior and ultimately always produce suffering and disaster, be it in Lot’s day, in Peter’s, or in our own.²⁶ God

²⁴ Barton, *1 & 2 Peter and Jude*, 159.

²⁵ Bernd Wannewetsch, “Representing the Absent in the City: Prolegomena to a Negative Political Theology according to Revelation 21,” in *God, Truth, and Witness: Engaging Stanley Hauerwas*, ed. L. Gregory Jones, Reinhard Hütter, and C. Rosalee Velloso Ewell (Grand Rapids: Brazos, 2005), 167–192.

²⁶ Green, *2 Peter and Jude*, 123.

condemned these infamous cities “to extinction,” never to be inhabited again. These cities were “an example of what is going to happen to the ungodly.” All the cozy comfortable places that the wicked find shelter will also be condemned to extinction. All the nice houses and cars we see—the beautiful vacation spots—all the banks—all the sporting arenas—all of it will be “condemned to extinction” when the Lord comes again.

The reprobation of the ungodly. The destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah may seem extreme, but **it's only a dress rehearsal for the great and frightening day of the Lord.** These cities were merely “an example of what is going to happen to the ungodly” (vs 6). Christ will condemn the wicked to the lake of fire. The day is coming when the souls of the ungodly will receive the full vengeance of the living God.

2 Thessalonians 1:7-8 | When the Lord Jesus is revealed from heaven with his mighty angels ⁸ in flaming fire, inflicting vengeance on those who do not know God and on those who do not obey the gospel of our Lord Jesus.

The rescue of Lot. **Daily, as he lived in these fertile but filthy cities, Lot's soul was vexed** (KJV) and greatly distressed day after day as he saw the immoral conduct of the wicked. His righteous soul was tormented. Lot, righteous though he is, **is not able to save himself.** According to the Genesis story, he is a man also deeply attracted to the city—no doubt by its great power and beauty, its rich cultural and social life, and its economic wealth. So in the end **Lot is unable to leave the city of his own will**, even though it faces imminent destruction.²⁷

Righteous Lot didn't want to relinquish his comfort and standing in society. Lot differs from Noah since Noah is a preacher of righteousness on the outskirts of the political realm. Noah lives a separated life from the world. **Lot on the other hand is smackdab in the middle of the politic of his age.** Because he is predestined for holiness (Rom 8:29), God does what Lot is unwilling to do. He sends angels to drag him out of Sodom.

Genesis 19:15-16 | As morning dawned, the angels urged Lot, saying, “Up! Take your wife and your two daughters who are here, lest you be swept away in the punishment of the city.” ¹⁶ But he lingered. So the men seized him and his wife and his two daughters by the hand, the Lord being merciful to him, and they brought him out and set him outside the city.

Can you imagine? God's angels urge Lot to leave, but “he lingered.” So the angels had to seize Lot and his family. This was “the Lord being merciful to him.” God is also merciful to us. **If you do not leave your place of comfort as a believer, God will drag you from it.** He delivered righteous Lot, and he will deliver you.

So the church and its members linger and hesitate and ask whether some realistic compromise might not be possible when we should flee unrighteousness and live for our heavenly city, living out our heavenly citizenship.

Philippians 3:20 | Our citizenship is in heaven, and from it we await a Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ.

We as kingdom citizens are vexed by the world we live in. We **cannot allow the world to infiltrate us** as it did righteous Lot. We are all vulnerable to attack.

REMEMBER THAT YOUR PAST WILL TELL YOU YOUR FUTURE

Why all this remembering? Because the righteous and the wicked are on two cosmically different pathways. The pathway of the godly leads to mercy and rescue. The pathway of the unrighteous leads to punishment and judgment.

²⁷ Harink, *1 & 2 Peter*, 100-101.

2 Peter 2:9-10a | Then the Lord knows how to rescue the godly from trials, and to keep the unrighteous under punishment until the day of judgment,¹⁰ and especially those who indulge in the lust of defiling passion and despise authority.

What does Judgment Day mean for the saints of God?

A Word for the Saints

2 Peter 2:9a | Then the Lord knows how to rescue the godly from trials.

The **Lord will rescue the saints from their trials and suffering**. Peter insists that God's coming judgment will not sweep up the righteous with the wicked. Because God is just, he will **spare the righteous believers in Christ, rescuing them from coming judgment**.²⁸ There is "no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus" (Rom 8:1). Jesus paid it all!

You may have attacks from the *heavenly realm* by the fallen angels who influence the false prophets. You may have attacks from the *earthly realm* because you are living separated from the world. Even if you have fallen like Lot in the *cultural realm* and succumbed to the comfort of this world, the Lord will rescue the true believer. But the wicked stand condemned, awaiting future wrath.

A Word for Sinners

2 Peter 2:9b | And to keep the unrighteous under punishment until the day of judgment.

The lost are "under punishment" awaiting their final judgment. They cannot escape. Those who Jesus turns away are reserved for the lake of fire.

The lost are "under punishment" because they live under the misery of the devil each day, slaved to him, and also they live under the displeasure of God.

John 3:36 | Whoever believes in the Son has eternal life; whoever does not obey the Son shall not see life, but the wrath of God remains on him.

Second, the lost are "under punishment" because while they wait, **they continue to accumulate more guilt** (cf Rom 2:3–6). The guilt of the heart must be cleansed by the blood of Christ, but the lost live without this mercy. They are harassed by their own bad choices with no remedy for their guilt. They drown out the noise of their conscience through drink and substance, through mindless entertainment, through short-lived relationships. They will try to fill the eternal void in their heart that only the one true God can fill.

A Word for Scoffers

2 Peter 2:10a | And especially those who indulge in the lust of defiling passion and despise authority.

Peter brings the discussion full circle, again recounting the false teachers' two primary characteristics. They scoff at **holiness** and **accountability**. Peter says that **judgment is "especially" reserved** for scoffers who know the truth but **sin in the light**.

SINNING IN THE LIGHT

Most sin in the darkness, not knowing the word of God and have not clearly heard of the love of our Savior. But there are those in the pulpits and pews who are **sinning not in the darkness**,

²⁸ Swindoll, *Insights on James and 1 & 2 Peter*, 295.

but in the broad daylight. They are especially guilty of the greatest condemnation and the darkest and deepest part of hell with its bottomless pit and lake of fire.

Though they preach, cast out demons, and see miracle occur, they have no part in the body of Christ, because they are **devoid of inward holiness** (cf Mt 7:21-23). The righteous, on the other hand are constantly **dragging their sin into the light**, confessing their sins to one another, and bearing each other's burdens. Real Christians are not hiding their sins but walking in the light (1 Jn 1:7-9). We confess and forsake sin.

Proverbs 28:13 | Whoever conceals his transgressions will not prosper, but he who confesses and forsakes them will obtain mercy.

Let me ask you, **are you participating in anything illicit or immoral?** Are you indulging in pornography? Drunkenness? Are you popping pills or taking other substances to numb yourself? Do not rest in your Bible knowledge. The true faith of those who are born again have **the power to live holy lives**. If you are a true believer, you will stop the immorality. You will stop the substance and the drunkenness, and you will, right now, renew your covenant with Christ. Don't be coy, scoffing at holiness. Be sober, judgment is coming. Scoffing at it is very fashionable today, but it God will not delay. Flee to Christ or face unavoidable judgment.

Conclusion

Dear saints, don't be fooled by false preachers. They only desire followers so they can fleece them. They feed their own lusts. They do not spare the flock, but only protect themselves. They are cowards, and their judgment is certain and imminent. What can we do? What can anyone do? Flee to Christ.

It reminds me of the story of **the pioneers who went west on the Oregon Trail**. They traveled in covered wagons. Progress was unusually slow. One day they found out why. A wildfire was raging, stretching for miles across the prairie, coming toward them rapidly. One man only seemed to understand what could be done. He gave the command to set fire to the grass behind them. Then when a space was burned over, the whole company moved back upon it.

As the flames roared on toward them from the west, a little girl cried out in terror, "Are you sure we shall not all be burned up?"

The leader replied, "**My child, the flames cannot reach us here, for we are standing where the fire has been!**"

What a picture of the believer, who is safe in Christ! The only safe place from the judgment of God is in the one who has already received judgment: in Christ alone.²⁹

BENEDICTION

Romans 8:38-39 - For I am sure that neither death nor life, nor angels nor rulers, nor things present nor things to come, nor powers, nor height nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord.

²⁹ H.A. Ironside, *Illustrations of Bible Truth* (Chicago: Moody Press, 1945), 34-35.